

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Glenwood Springs Field Office
2300 River Frontage Road
Silt, CO 81652

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2010-0029-EA

CASEFILE NUMBER: 0507689

PROJECT NAME: Grazing Lease Renewal on the Albertson (King Mtn. Pasture) and Strubi A Nick Allotments.

LOCATION: T1S R85W Secs. 24 & 25, T1S R84W Secs. 19 & 30. Refer to the attached allotment maps.

APPLICANT: Grazing Lessee

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action is to renew a term grazing lease for the above applicant. The number/kind of livestock, period of use, percent public land and Animal Unit Months (AUMS) will remain the same as the previous permit with exception of the Albertson (King Mtn. Pasture) Allotment. The grazing lessee has requested a change in the period of use on that allotment. The above change has been requested through the Application for Grazing Lease Renewal. In addition to the above change, the Albertson (King Mtn. Pasture) will be renamed to Albertson-King Mtn. Allotment and assigned a new allotment number (not available at this time). This would avoid confusion with another allotment, Albertson (Maiden Springs Pasture) which will also be renamed to Albertson-Maiden Springs¹.

The lease 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 describe the scheduled grazing use and grazing preference for the previous permits and any changes proposed.

Mandatory Terms and Conditions **Scheduled Grazing Use:**

¹ The Albertson Allotment consists of two parcels that are geographically separated by five miles. Although grazing use for both parcels was formerly authorized under one lessee, grazing transfer action in 2006 resulted in two separate leases for each parcel (i.e., a separate lease for Albertson-Maiden Springs Pasture and another lease for the Albertson-King Mtn. Pasture). Since both parcels are geographically separated and are under two different grazing leases, this precipitates the need to form two separate allotments.

Allotment Name & No.	Livestock No. & Kind	Period of use	Percent Public Land	AUMs
Strubi A Nick 08665	10 Cattle	07/01 – 09/30	100	30
Albertson King Mtn. Pasture 08653	33 Cattle	06/01 – 10/01	100	133

Proposed Changes in Grazing Use for Albertson (King Mtn. Pasture) Allotment:

Allotment Name & No.	Livestock No. & Kind	Period of use	Percent Public Land	AUMs
Albertson-King Mtn.	33 Cattle	06/15 – 10/15	100	133

Grazing Preference AUMS:

Allotment Name & No.	Active	Suspended	Total
Albertson King Mtn. Pasture 08653	133	0	133
Strubi A Nick 08665	30	0	30

The following Other Terms and Conditions were included on the previous (expiring) lease and will be carried forward on the renewed lease:

- 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 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 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).
- The Albertson (King Mtn. Pasture) and the Strubi A Nick Allotments have temporary travel restrictions as per the Federal Register, Vol. 58, No. 106, June 4, 1993, pages 31745 – 31747, as amended. In summary the travel restriction limited motorized vehicle use to designated roads and trails year round. The grazing lessee and all persons associated with allotment operations shall comply with the travel restrictions except as provided by the following exemption in the travel restriction: Grazing lessees are exempt from the restriction during the permitted grazing season for grazing related purposes provided such motorized use is limited to existing roads and trails and subject to any additional conditions in the grazing lease. Any motorized use before or after the permitted grazing season necessary for maintenance and operation of range facilities shall require advance approval by the authorized officer specifically authorizing such use and subject to whatever restrictions are deemed necessary. The grazing lessee and all persons associated with allotment operations shall comply with any subsequent administrative access agreement developed by the BLM and grazing lessee.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED:

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

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

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

The renewal of the grazing permit is needed for the following reasons: (1) to meet the livestock grazing management objective of the Resource Management Plan of providing 56,885 animal unit months of livestock forage commensurate with meeting public land health standards, (2) to continue to allow livestock grazing on the specified allotment, (3) to meet the forage demands of local livestock operations, (4) to provide stability to these operations and help preserve their rural agricultural lands for open space and wildlife habitat, and (5) to allow use of native rangeland resource for conversion into protein suitable for human consumption.

The change in period of use was requested to better coincide with the average date of range readiness on the Albertson Allotment which is relatively high in elevation. There is insufficient forage growth or the allotment still has snow cover on the current begin grazing date of June 1.

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 – Record of Decision for the Approval of Portions of the Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan Amendment; and amended in March 2009 - Record of Decision for the Designation of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern for the Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan.

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.

In 2006 the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office conducted the Burns to State Bridge Watershed Land Health Assessment which included both the Strubi A Nick and Albertson- King Mountain Pasture Allotments. The Land Health Assessment Report and Determination Document were signed on January 29, 2008.

Both the Strubi and Albertson-King Mountain Allotments were meeting all the Standards for Public Land Health at the time of the assessment. Overall, vegetative cover and diversity was very good and ground cover was adequate to protect soils.

The impact analysis must address whether the proposed action would result in impacts which would improve, maintain or deteriorate land health conditions for each of the parameters found in the Standards for Public Land Health.

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

Table 1. Critical Elements of the Human Environment									
<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/ 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 #1010-10) was completed for the Alberston-King and Strubi A Nick Allotments on March 16, 2010 following the procedures and guidance outlined in the 1980 National Programmatic Agreement Regarding the Livestock Grazing and Range Improvement Program, IM-WO-99-039, IM-CO-99-007, IM-CO-99-019, CO-2001-026, and CO-2002-029. The results of the assessment are summarized in the table below. A copy of the cultural resource assessment is available at the GSFO office.

Allotment Number	Acres Inventoried at a Class III level	Acres NOT Inventoried at a Class III Level	Percent (%) Allotment Inventory data Class III level	Number of Cultural Resources known in allotment	High Potential of Historic Properties (yes/no)	Management Recommendations (Additional inventory required and historic properties to be visited)
Alberston-King Mtn	163	982	14	0	No	No additional acres need to be inventoried for the renewal. 2% of the allotment has 30%+ slopes.
Strubi A Nick	0	204	0	0	No	No additional acres need to be inventoried for the renewal. 4% of the allotment has 30%+ slopes.
Total	163	1186	14	0	No	

Two Class III cultural resource inventories have been conducted in the Alberston-King Mtn allotment. No surveys have been conducted in the Strubi allotment. Heavy lodge pole timber and duff would restrict the potential of identifying surface manifestations of cultural resources. Historic properties are cultural resources that are considered eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. No areas of Native American concern were identified. 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 low potential for historic properties within these allotments.

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 no known areas of Native American concern within this allotment. On October 26, 2009 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 2010 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 location without consultation with the appropriate Native Americans.

Environmental Consequences: A change in the dates of use would not result in beneficial nor detrimental affects to cultural resources. The direct impacts that occur where livestock concentrate include trampling, chiseling, and churning of site soils, cultural features, and cultural artifacts, artifact breakage, and impacts from standing, leaning, and rubbing against historic structures, above-ground cultural features, and rock art. Indirect impacts include soil erosion, gullyng, and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. Continued grazing may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties.

No historic properties were identified during the inventories for this allotment and the change in the dates of use should not increase the potential to impact cultural resource. A determination of No Adverse Affect has been made for this renewal. The cultural resource specialist should be involved in discussions about improvements, maintenance, supplemental feeding areas, etc to ensure that the historic properties and areas of concern are avoided.

Mitigation:

New improvements or maintenance of existing range improvements, additional feeding areas, etc., may require cultural resource inventories, monitoring, and/or data recovery. In order to mitigate this potential affect to historic properties all ground disturbing activity, salt blocks, and the placement of supplemental feed, etc, must be at least 100 m from the areas of concern. The cultural resource specialist should be involved in discussions for improvements, maintenance, supplemental feeding areas, etc to ensure that the historic properties and area of concern is avoided. This allotment may also contain other 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.

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: The proposed action is to renew a term grazing permit on the Albertson and Strubi A Nick Allotments. Both allotments are located in the area known as King Mountain. A landscape wide noxious weed inventory has not been conducted on King Mountain. However, heavy infestations of Canada thistle are common throughout the area. No other noxious weeds are known to exist in the project area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The continuation of grazing livestock at the current numbers and period of use is not expected to cause any additional adverse effects to noxious weeds on the Albertson and Strubi A Nick Allotments. Canada thistle is an aggressive non-native weed and has been observed to invade areas in Eagle County without the influence of livestock grazing. Livestock can act as a vector to spread noxious weed reproductive vegetative plant parts and seed to previously uninfested areas. However, this affect is minimal as compared to other weed seed dispersal vectors such as vehicle routes and ground disturbing activities. The current weed management plan for the CRVFO is able to mitigate the expected effects of livestock grazing on noxious and invasive weed management. Furthermore, some of the funding from collected grazing fees is used for weed treatments, thereby offsetting some of the effects that livestock might incur on the above said allotments.

Migratory Birds

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.” The “*BIRDS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN 2008*” (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2008) is the most recent effort to carry out this mandate.

The MBTA prohibits the “take” of a protected species. Under the Act, the term “take” means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. The USFWS interprets “harm” and “kill” to include loss of eggs or nestlings due to abandonment or reduced attentiveness by one or both adults as a result of disturbance by human activity, as well as physical destruction of an occupied nest.

The conservation concerns are 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 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 for many species.

The Glenwood Springs Field Office is within the Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau Bird Conservation Region (BCR). The 2008 list of Birds of Conservation include the following: Gunnison Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*), American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*), Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrines*), Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus/tenuirostris*), Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*), Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*), Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*), Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), Gray Vireo (*Vireo vicinior*), Pinyon Jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), Juniper Titmouse (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*), Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*), Bendire's Thrasher (*Toxostoma bendirei*), Grace's Warbler (*Dendroica graciae*), Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*), Black Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte atrata*), Brown-capped Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte australis*), and Cassin's Finch (*Carpodacus cassinii*).

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. Many species of raptors (red-tailed hawks, Cooper's hawks, kestrels and owls) not on the Fish & Wildlife Service's Birds of Conservation Concern list also could occur in the area. Raptor surveys have not been conducted in the area.

Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). 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. 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 animals. Major threats include habitat loss, human disturbance and illegal shooting.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Limited specific bird count or species data exists for the area. No intentional take of native bird species is anticipated under the proposed action. Responses of individual bird species to land management activities are often habitat and species specific. Birds generally do not respond to the presence of livestock but are impacted by improper grazing. Improper livestock grazing has the potential to: reduce ground cover and forage, degrade riparian areas, the spread of exotic species, accidentally destroy ground nests through trampling, and alter natural fire regimes. Grazing can also affect riparian habitats which are vitally important to most migratory bird species. The abundance of food, water, and shade which attracts migratory birds to these areas also attracts livestock. On a landscape scale the greater concern is its cumulative impact on the fragmentation of habitats.

Given current overall existing habitat conditions/trends (see riparian and vegetation sections), it is unlikely that livestock grazing as proposed (i.e. numbers, duration, terms/conditions attached), would reduce the extent or quality of habitat available for migratory bird breeding functions or movement. In conclusion, the effects of the proposed action on migratory bird species is expected to be minimal and isolated, but not enough to influence populations of migratory birds on a landscape level or cause clear direct or indirect impacts.

Special Status Species – Aquatic Wildlife (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 4)

Affected Environment:

Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Aquatic Wildlife Species

According to the latest species list from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2008), the following Federally listed, proposed, or candidate aquatic wildlife species may occur within or be impacted by actions occurring within the GSFO (Table Table - Special Status Species – Aquatic Wildlife):

Table - Special Status Species – Aquatic Wildlife

Aquatic Wildlife Species	Habitat/Range	Eagle County	Garfield County	Mesa County	Pitkin County	Routt County
Greenback cutthroat trout (<i>Oncorhynchus clarki stomias</i>)	Cold, clear, gravely headwater streams and mountain lakes. Originally found in the mountain and foothill areas of the Arkansas and South Platte river systems in Colorado and part of Wyoming.	X	X	X	X	X

Aquatic Wildlife Species	Habitat/Range	Eagle County	Garfield County	Mesa County	Pitkin County	Routt County
Bonytail (<i>Gila elegans</i>)	Large, fast-flowing waterways of the Colorado River system.	X	X	X	X	X
Colorado pikeminnow (<i>Ptychocheilus lucius</i>)	Swift flowing muddy rivers with quiet, warm backwaters of the Green, Yampa, White, Colorado, Gunnison, San Juan, and Dolores rivers.	X	X	X	X	X
Humpback chub (<i>Gila cypha</i>)	Deep, fast-moving, turbid waters often associated with large boulders and steep cliffs such as canyon-bound portions of the Colorado River system such as Black Rocks and Westwater canyons.	X	X	X		X
Razorback sucker (<i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>)	Deep, clear to turbid waters of large rivers and reservoirs over mud, sand or gravel. Currently low numbers in the Yampa, Colorado and Gunnison rivers. Reproducing populations remain only in the Colorado River near Grand Junction.	X	X	X	X	X

These species: their status, their distributions, habitat associations, and as appropriate their association to the project area is summarized below.

Greenback Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*). Federally listed as threatened. The greenback cutthroat trout was not identified on the USFWS list for Garfield County; however, recent surveys have identified a population in Cache Creek, located several drainages east of the project area. The greenback is the subspecies of cutthroat trout native to the Platte River drainage on the Eastern Slope of Colorado, while the Colorado River cutthroat trout is the subspecies native to Garfield County and throughout the Western Slope of Colorado. Although the occurrence of greenbacks in Cache Creek and potentially elsewhere in the GSFO and WRNF areas is apparently the result of human intervention (e.g., sanctioned or *ad hoc* translocation of fish from the Eastern Slope), its status as threatened applies to Western Slope populations. However, because drainages within the project area do not support this species, it is not considered further.

Bonytail (*G. elegans*). Federally listed as endangered. This large chub is a member of the minnow family. Their current distribution and habitat status are largely unknown due to its rapid decline prior to research into its natural history. Historically, bonytails were present in the Colorado River system, which includes the Yampa, Green, Colorado and Gunnison rivers. The bonytail is extremely rare in Colorado and no self-sustaining population exist throughout the Colorado River basin. Only one has been captured in the state since 1980. Restoration stocking of bonytail in the wild to develop adult populations is the priority recovery action in Colorado.

Colorado Pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*). Federally listed as endangered. The Colorado pikeminnow (formerly Colorado squawfish) Colorado pikeminnow were once abundant in the main stem of the Colorado River and most of its major tributaries in Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, California and Mexico. Now, they exist primarily in the Green River below the confluence with the Yampa River, the lower Duchesne River in Utah, the Yampa River below Craig, Colo., the White River from Taylor Draw Dam near Rangely downstream to the confluence with the Green River, the Gunnison River in Colorado, and the

Colorado River from Palisade, Colo., downstream to Lake Powell. Biologists believe Colorado pikeminnow populations in the upper Colorado River basin are now relatively stable and in some areas may even be growing. Designated Critical Habitat for the Colorado pikeminnow includes the Colorado River and its 100-year floodplain west (downstream) from the town of Rifle.

Humpback Chub (*Gila cypha*). Federally listed as endangered. The nearest known habitat for the humpback chub and bonytail is within the Colorado River approximately 70 miles downstream from the project area. Only one population of humpback chub, at Black Rocks west of Grand Junction, is known to exist in Colorado.

Razorback Sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*). Federally listed as endangered. The razorback sucker was once widespread throughout most of the Colorado River Basin from Wyoming to Mexico. In the upper Colorado River Basin, they are now found only in the upper Green River in Utah, the lower Yampa River in Colorado and occasionally in the Colorado River near Grand Junction. Because so few of these fish remain in the wild, biologists have been actively raising them in hatcheries in Utah and Colorado and stocking them in the Colorado River. Designated Critical Habitat for the razorback sucker includes the Colorado River and its 100-year floodplain west (downstream) from the town of Rifle.

BLM Sensitive Aquatic Wildlife Species

According to the latest *Colorado BLM State Director's Sensitive Species List (Animals and Plants) June, 2000*, the following aquatic wildlife species may occur within or be impacted by actions occurring within the GSFO (Table - Colorado BLM Sensitive Species - Aquatic):

Table - Colorado BLM Sensitive Species - Aquatic

Name	Habitat	Habitat Potential Present / Absent
Northern leopard frog (<i>Rana pipiens</i>)	Wet meadows and the banks and shallows of marshes, ponds, glacial kettle ponds, beaver ponds, lakes, reservoirs, streams, and irrigation ditches.	Present
Flannelmouth sucker (<i>Catostomas latipinnis</i>)	Generally restricted to rivers and major tributaries.	Absent
Roundtail chub (<i>Gila robusta</i>)	Generally restricted to rivers and major tributaries.	Absent
Colorado River cutthroat trout (<i>Oncorhynchus clarki pleuriticus</i>)	Occurs in clear, cool headwaters streams with coarse substrates, well-distributed pools, stable streambanks, and abundant stream cover.	Absent

The following paragraphs address species with a habitat potential to be present in the project area.

Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*). Northern leopard frogs are generally found between 3,500 to 11,000 feet in Colorado, in wet meadows and in shallow lentic habitats. Northern leopard frogs require year 'round water sources, deep enough to provide ice free refugia in the winter. The presence of northern leopard frogs has been associated with sites with more herbaceous cover as opposed to sites with earlier successional stages of emergent vegetation. Leopard frogs feed

primarily on emergent adults of aquatic insects or on terrestrial insects attracted to the water. Within the GSFO, this species has been documented in various locales. Suitable habitat is abundant within the GSFO, and is located where quality riparian vegetation exists in conjunction with reliable perennial water sources. Larger populations of this species have been documented northwest of King Mountain within the small drainage that feeds and exits King Mountain (Ligon) Reservoir, June Creek and East Divide Creek south of Silt, Colorado, and in portions of the Rifle Creek watershed north of Rifle, Colorado. Population declines have been attributed to habitat alteration and loss, the effects of introduced bullfrogs and gamefish, aerial pesticide applications, and droughts that limit the availability of year ‘round water

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Aquatic Wildlife Species. Neither the greenback cutthroat trout nor the four species of federally listed big-river fishes are found within the area or the vicinity of the proposed action. Livestock grazing as proposed would have “No Effect” to these fishes or their habitat.

BLM Sensitive Aquatic Wildlife Species. The Bluehead sucker, Flannelmouth sucker, and Roundtail chub are endemic to the Colorado River basin and reside within the mainstem Colorado River and its major tributary rivers/streams. The proposed action would have negligible negative impact to these species or their habitats.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 4 for Aquatic Wildlife Special Status Species: (partial, see also Plants and Terrestrial Wildlife). The current grazing management does not appear to be impacting the structure and/or composition of native plant communities to a degree where it is changing the quality or usability of the area for any terrestrial wildlife species. Healthy, productive aquatic animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitats’ potential. Thus it is concluded the continuation of the current grazing system and stocking rates will continue to promote achievement of public land health standard 4 across the landscape.

Special Status Species – Terrestrial Wildlife (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 4)

Affected Environment:

Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate - Terrestrial Wildlife Species

According to the latest species list from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2008), the following Federally listed, proposed, or candidate terrestrial wildlife species may occur within or be impacted by actions occurring within the GSFO (Table 1):

Table 1.

Terrestrial Wildlife Species	Habitat/Range	Eagle County	Garfield County	Mesa County	Pitkin County	Routt County
Black-footed Ferret (<i>Mustela nigripes</i>)	In Colorado habitat includes the eastern plains, the mountain parks and the western valleys. Specifically grasslands or shrublands that supported some species of prairie dog, the ferret’s primary prey.	X				

Terrestrial Wildlife Species	Habitat/Range	Eagle County	Garfield County	Mesa County	Pitkin County	Routt County
Canada lynx (<i>Lynx Canadensis</i>)	Mesic forests of lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and quaking aspen in the upper montane and subalpine zones, generally between 8,000 and 12,000 feet in elevation.	X	X	X	X	X
Mexican spotted owl (<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>)	Mature montane forests, shady canyons, and steep canyons. The key components in montane forests are common to old-growth forests: uneven-age stands with high canopy closure and tree density, fallen logs and snags.	X	X		X	
Greater sage grouse (<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>)	Resident of relatively large, open sagebrush flats or rolling sagebrush hills. Uncommon and unlikely in this part of the GSFO or associated habitats	X				X
Yellow-billed cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>)	Mature riparian forests of cottonwoods and other large deciduous trees with a well-developed understory of tall riparian shrubs. Uncommon summer resident of Colorado.	X	X	X	X	X
Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly (<i>Boloria acrocnema</i>)	Patches of snow willow (<i>Salix spp.</i>) at high elevations.	X			X	

These species: their status, their distributions, habitat associations, and as appropriate their association to the project area is summarized below.

Black-footed Ferret (*Mustela nigripes*). Federally listed as endangered. Black-footed ferrets have ranged statewide but never have been abundant in Colorado. Their habitat included the eastern plains, the mountain parks and the western valleys – grasslands or shrub lands that supported some species of prairie dog, the ferret’s primary prey. Little is known about their natural history. They mate in early spring and give birth to a litter of three or four mouse-sized pups after a seven-week gestation period. Black-footed ferrets are reported to be killed. They are susceptible to distemper, predators like owls and coyotes, and vehicles. It is assumed that plowing for agriculture and programs to eradicate prairie dogs have driven the black-footed ferret to the verge of extinction. State and federal biologists have established two major black-footed ferret colonies: one at Coyote Basin (Colorado-Utah border west of Rangely) and another at the BLM's Wolf Creek Management Area southeast of Dinosaur National Monument (CDOW 2009). Because no known occurrences have been documented and the occurrence of the species in this area is unlikely due to range and habitat conditions, this species is not considered further.

Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*). Federally listed as threatened. Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) was listed as a federally threatened species, effective April 24, 2000 (Federal Register Volume 65, No. 58). Canada lynx occupy high-latitude or high-elevation coniferous forests characterized by cold, snowy winters and an adequate prey base (Ruggiero et al. 1999). The preferred prey of Canada lynx throughout their range is the snowshoe hare (*Lepus americanus*). In the western United States, lynx are associated with mesic forests of lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and quaking aspen in the upper montane and subalpine zones, generally between 8,000

and 12,000 feet in elevation. Although snowshoe hares are the preferred prey in Colorado, lynx in also feed on other species such as the mountain cottontail (*Sylvilagus nuttallii*), pine squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*), and blue grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*).

The majority of lynx habitat lies within National Forest lands, therefore lynx habitat contained within the area of the proposed action functions as part of a larger landscape. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has mapped suitable denning, winter, and other habitat for lynx within the White River National Forest (WRNF). The mapped suitable habitat in the WRNF comprises several areas known as Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs). Lynx analysis units (LAUs) are management areas that contain suitable lynx habitat and approximate the size of a female home range. Several LAUs border BLM lands however no areas large enough to be considered LAUs occur within the GSFO. BLM lands within the GSFO area generally support the movement of lynx dispersing to a new area or, potentially, moving to lower elevations during severe winter weather in search of prey. The allotment is part of the Egeria landscape linkage.

Greater sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced on Friday, March 5, 2010 that the greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) would be added to the Endangered Species Act “Candidate” list. The USFWS determined that proposing the species for protection is precluded by the need to take action on other species facing more immediate and severe extinction threats. As a result, the greater sage-grouse was placed on the list of species that are candidates for Endangered Species Act Protection. Evidence suggests that habitat fragmentation and destruction across much of the species’ range has contributed to significant population declines over the past century. If current trends persist, many local populations may disappear in the next several decades, with the remaining fragmented population vulnerable to extinction.

Sage grouse, as the name implies, are found only in areas where sagebrush is abundant, providing both food and cover. Although these birds are found at altitudes of 6000-8500 feet, they are not forest grouse and prefer relatively open sagebrush flats or rolling sagebrush hills. In winter, sagebrush accounts for 100% of the diet for these birds. In addition, it provides important escape cover and protection from the elements. In late winter, males begin to concentrate on traditional strutting grounds or leks. Females arrive at the leks 1-2 weeks later. Leks can occur on a variety of land types or formations (windswept ridges, knolls, areas of flat sagebrush, flat bare openings in the sagebrush. Breeding occurs on the leks and in the adjacent sagebrush, typically from March through May. Females and their chicks remain largely dependent on forbs and insects for food well into early fall. Cultivated herbaceous broad-leaved plants (alfalfa, clover) are important early fall food sources when available (CDOW 2009a).

The Northern Eagle/Southern Routt population, while small (<500 birds), probably has, or had, a relationship with the larger population in Moffat, Rio Blanco and western Routt counties, and probably with the Middle Park population to the east. Sage-grouse are still present in the Radium area between State Bridge and Kremmling (Northern Eagle/Southern Routt Greater Sage-Grouse Work Group 2004) and likely to occur in the Gypsum Hills area and the area north of Wolcott which includes the Ute Creek allotment.

Mexican Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis*). Federally listed as endangered. This owl nests, roosts, and hunts in mature coniferous forests in canyons and foothills. The only extant populations in Colorado are in the Pikes Peak and Wet Mountain areas of south-central Colorado and the Mesa Verde area of southwestern Colorado. Because no known occurrences have been documented and the occurrence of the species in this area is unlikely due to range and habitat conditions, this species is not considered further.

Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*). Candidate for Federal listing. This secretive species occurs in mature riparian forests of cottonwoods and other large deciduous trees with a well-developed understory of tall riparian shrubs. Western cuckoos breed in large blocks of riparian habitats, particularly woodlands with cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii*) and willows (*Salix* sp.). A few sightings of yellow-billed cuckoo have occurred in western Colorado along the Colorado River near Grand Junction (USFWS 2009b). Riparian areas in the project area do not provide suitable habitat for this species due to the patchy nature of the stands and the general lack of a tall-shrub understory. Because no known occurrences have been documented and the occurrence of the species in this area is unlikely due to range and habitat conditions, this species is not considered further.

Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly (*Boloria acrocne*). Federally listed as endangered. The butterfly has been verified at only two areas in the San Juan Mountains in Colorado. There is anecdotal evidence of other colonies in the San Juans and southern Sawatch ranges in Colorado. The butterfly exists above treeline in patches of its larval host plant, snow willow. The butterfly is most often found on north and east facing slopes, which provide a moist, cool, microclimate. The greatest known controllable threat is butterfly collecting. Climatological patterns, disease, parasitism, predation, and trampling of larvae by humans and livestock might pose additional threats. Because no known occurrences have been documented and the occurrence of the species in this area is unlikely due to range, elevation and habitat conditions, this species is not considered further.

BLM Sensitive - Terrestrial Wildlife Species

According to the latest *Colorado BLM State Director's Sensitive Species List (Animals and Plants) June, 2000*, the following terrestrial wildlife species may occur within or be impacted by actions occurring within the GSFO (Table - BLM Sensitive - Terrestrial Wildlife Species):

Table - BLM Sensitive - Terrestrial Wildlife Species

Name	Habitat/Range	Habitat Potential Present / Absent
Townsend's big-eared bat (<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>) and Fringed myotis (<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>)	Occur as scattered populations at moderate elevations on the Western Slope, along the foothills of the Front Range and the mesas of southeastern Colorado. Maximum elevation is 7,500 feet. Breeds and roosts in caves, trees, mines, and buildings; hunts over pinyon-juniper, montane conifer, and semi-desert shrubland habitats. Known occurrences - Potential in caves, mines or trees	Present
Northern goshawk (<i>Accipter gentilis</i>)	Resident in foothills and mountains and occasional in migration and winter at lower elevations. Predominantly uses mature stands of aspen, and pines (ponderosa and lodgepole). Uncommon - seasonal	Present

Table - BLM Sensitive - Terrestrial Wildlife Species

Name	Habitat/Range	Habitat Potential Present / Absent
Goldeneye, Barrow's (<i>Bucephala islandica</i>)	Rare winter resident and spring/fall migrant in lowlands and mountains; a few breed in the northern mountains. Uncommon - seasonal	Absent
Ibis, white-faced (<i>Plegadis chihi</i>)	Inhabits wet meadows, marsh edges and reservoir shorelines. Very rare, non-breeding, summer migrant to western Colorado valleys and mountain lakes. Main breeding area is in the San Luis valley.	Absent

The following paragraphs address species with a habitat potential to be present in the project area.

Fringed Myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*) and Townsend’s Big-eared Bat (*Plecotus townsendii*).

Occur as scattered populations at moderate elevations on the Western Slope of Colorado. Habitat associations are not well defined. Both of these bats will forage over water and along the edge of vegetation (pinyon-juniper woodlands, montane conifer woodlands, semi-desert shrublands) for aerial insects. Although they commonly roost in caves, rock crevices, mines, or buildings, they also may roost in tree cavities. Both species are widely distributed and usually occur in small groups. The animals roost in rock crevices, caves, mines, buildings and trees. Townsend’s big-eared bat is not very abundant anywhere in its range and this is attributed to patchy distribution and limited availability of suitable roosting habitat (Gruver, J.C. and D.A. Keinath 2006).

Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*). The Northern Goshawk is the largest North American accipiter. The goshawk is a forest habitat generalist that uses a variety of forest type, forest ages, structural conditions and successional stages. Goshawks prey on small-medium sized birds and mammals. It breeds in coniferous deciduous and mixed forests. The nest is typically located on a northerly aspect in a drainage or canyon and is often near a stream. Nest areas contain one or more stands of large, old trees with a dense canopy cover. A goshawk pair occupies its nest area from March until late September. The nest area is the center of all movements and behaviors associated with breeding from courtship through fledging.

Goldeneye, Barrow's (*Bucephala islandica*). This bird is a rare and local breeder in Flat Tops Wilderness Area in Garfield and adjacent counties. First confirmed record this century of fledged young or broods on 3 shallow lakes in Flat Tops Wilderness in 1990; also found in 1991 and 1994 (CLO 2009). Goldeneye’s prefer alkaline-freshwater lakes in parkland areas and to a lesser extent subalpine/alpine lakes/beaver ponds for breeding.

Ibis, white-faced (*Plegadis chihi*). The species inhabits primarily freshwater wetlands, especially cattail (*Typha* spp.) and bulrush (*Scirpus* spp.) marshes. This species feeds in flooded hay meadows, agricultural fields, and estuarine wetlands. This species breeds in isolated colonies in mainly shallow marshes with “islands” of emergent vegetation. This species is more commonly found on the eastern slope of Colorado. Sparse historical records indicate that this species is uncommon within the GSFO.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate - Terrestrial Wildlife Species

Due to the absence of any occupied or suitable habitat within or adjacent to these allotments, the proposed action would have “no effect” to Black-footed Ferret, Mexican spotted owl, Yellow-billed cuckoo, or the Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly.

All allotments were field checked in late summer and fall of 2009 to assess the habitat conditions as well as the continued suitability for the recovery of special status species such as the Canada lynx and greater sage grouse.

Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*). See “Biological Assessment (BA) for the Glenwood Springs Field Office Regarding Grazing Permit Renewals and Canada Lynx – FY 2010” for an allotment specific analysis. The CRVFO submitted a biological assessment to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in December of 2009. The consultation was tiered to the programmatic consultation (ES/GJ-6-CO-03-F-013) on the Field Office grazing program regarding Canada lynx. Through the issuance of a Biological Opinion (see appendix), the FWS concurred with the BLM’s “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination on February 9, 2010. After reviewing the status of the Canada lynx, the environmental baseline for the action area, the effects of the action, and the cumulative effects, it was the USFWS’s biological opinion that the proposed renewal of grazing permits on the subject allotments is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Canada lynx. Furthermore, the USFWS concurred with the “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination of the BA.

Greater sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*). The field assessments did not find any indication that livestock grazing was causing habitat fragmentation or destruction of the species’ range which has contributed to significant population declines over the past century throughout the west.

BLM Sensitive Terrestrial Wildlife Species.

Fringed Myotis and Townsend’s Big-eared Bats. Distribution seems is likely to be locally determined by availability of roosts, such as caves, mines, tunnels, crevices and masonry structures with suitable temperatures. No bat roosts or hibernaculum have been documented within the area of the proposed action.

The greatest threats to Townsend’s Big-eared Bat (and likely Fringed Myotis) are the: (a) loss/modification/disturbance of roosting habitat resulting from uninformed closure of abandoned mines, recreation and renewed mining at historical sites; (b) loss/modification/disturbance of foraging habitat resulting from elimination of forest canopy, elimination or alteration of wetland habitat and conversion of native shrub and grasslands to urban or agricultural uses; and (c) exposure to environmental toxins (Gruver, J.C. and D.A. Keinath 2006). It is plausible that over-grazing by livestock could contribute to the decline of the functionality of foraging habitat for bats. The allowable number of animal unit months and periods of use, along with land health standards and terms/conditions; should continue to maintain adequate habitat conditions (suitability and connectivity) for bats.

Northern Goshawk. It is plausible that over-grazing by livestock could contribute to the decline of the functionality of the habitat. A reduction in forage availability could limit prey population density. However no nest sites are known to occur within the area of the proposed action and nesting birds are unlikely in the predominant habitat types. The allowable number of animal unit months and periods of use, along with land health standards and terms/conditions; should continue to maintain adequate habitat conditions (suitability and connectivity) for Northern goshawks.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 4 for Terrestrial Wildlife Special Status Species: (also see Plants and Aquatic Wildlife Special Status Species). The current grazing management does not appear to be impacting the structure and/or composition of native plant communities to a degree where it is changing the quality or usability of the area for any special status species. Grazing standards and guidelines are maintaining acceptable residual herbivore forage and acceptable riparian conditions. The allotment is supporting a broad area of habitat where terrestrial wildlife can find food, shelter and security. Grazing as proposed is predicted to only result in insignificant and/or discountable effects to lynx and their habitat. Thus it is concluded the continuation of the current grazing system and stocking rates will continue to promote achievement of public land health standard 3 across the landscape and within landscape linkages; and public land health standard 4 in lynx habitat.

Special Status Species – Plants (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 4)

Affected Environment:

Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Plant Species

According to the latest species list from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/endspp/CountyLists/COLORADO.pdf>), there are no Federally listed, proposed or candidate plant species that may reside, have habitat, and/or be impacted by actions occurring in Routt County.

BLM Sensitive Plant Species

The only BLM sensitive plant species with habitat and/or occurrence records in Southern Routt County is Harrington's penstemon (*Penstemon harringtonii*). Harrington's penstemon is found in open sagebrush communities or sagebrush/mixed mountain shrub communities between 6,400 and 10,000 feet. The Strubi A Nick allotment and the Albertson-King Mountain Allotment are dominated by lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir and aspen woodlands. Several open grassy meadows are also found on the Strubi allotment. There is little or no sagebrush or sagebrush/mixed mountain shrub habitat in these allotments. These allotments do not contain suitable habitat for Harrington's penstemon.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Plant Species

Due to the absence of any known occurrences or suitable habitat for any listed, proposed or candidate plant species, the Proposed Action should have "No Effect" on these species.

BLM Sensitive Plant Species

Due to the absence of any known occurrences or suitable habitat for Harrington’s penstemon within or adjacent to the project area that could be impacted by the action, the Proposed Action should have no impact on BLM sensitive plant species.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 4 for Special Status Plant Species:

Based on the lack of any known occurrences or suitable habitat for Special Status Plant Species, the proposed action would not have any effect on the achievement of Standard 4 for plants.

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

Affected Environment: The Albertson and Strubi Allotments are located north of the Colorado River and are within a 66,364 acre unnamed 6th field watershed. The only mapped drainage within these allotments is an ephemeral drainage which is directly tributary to Tepee Creek to the south. This drainage is not currently listed on the State of Colorado’s *Stream Classifications and Water Quality Standards* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 33) list, *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). At this time, no current water quality data is available for the ephemeral drainage mentioned above but limited data is available for nearby Tepee Creek that was collected by the BLM Glenwood Springs Office in 2006 as part of the Burns to State Bridge Land Health Assessment (see table below).

Stream Name	Date (mm/dd/yr)	Flow (cfs)	Temp. (°C)	pH	Conduct. (µS/cm)	Hardness (mg/L)	Phenol. Alkalinity (mg/L)	Total Alkalinity (mg/L)
Tepee Creek (upper)	5/12/2006	1.06	7.4	8.4	45	40	0	40
Tepee Creek (lower)	5/12/2006	0.63	11.6	8.4	120	80	0	80

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Grazing activities could 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 and could lead to stream bank trampling. The introduction of livestock feces to waterbodies often leads to water quality degradation by increasing fecal coliform bacteria levels and often leads to algal blooms which increase water temperatures. However, based on the lack of perennial drainages of concern in the allotments and good vegetative cover, the potential for measureable water quality degradation in nearby perennial drainages of concern (i.e. Colorado River) associated with the proposed activities is minimal.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 5 for Water Quality: In 2006 the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office assessed water quality conditions in the area as part of the Burns to State Bridge Land Health Assessment. During the assessment, limited water quality parameters were collected but suggested overall good water quality. Some drainages within the assessment area

often transport considerable amounts of sediment following runoff events which can be attributed to natural geologic conditions. Based on the period of use, good vegetative cover and the lack of perennial drainages of concern within these allotments, the proposed activities would not likely prevent Standard 5 for Water Quality from being met.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Affected Environment: There are no un-studied rivers, rivers found to eligible or designated Wild and Scenic Rivers within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Not applicable.

Wilderness/WSAs

Affected Environment: There are no designated Wilderness areas, Wilderness Study Areas or citizens proposed wilderness areas within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Not applicable.

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.

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		
Soils*			X
Vegetation*			X
Visual Resources		X	
Wildlife, Aquatic*			X
Wildlife, Terrestrial*			X

*Public Land Health Standard

Recreation

Affected Environment: Both the Strubi and Albertson-King Allotments are located in the South King Mountain Unit, which is part of the King Mountain Area. The King Mountain Area is being managed to provide non-motorized recreation opportunities. There are 4 semi-developed trailheads for King Mountain Area. This area is used mainly for hiking, camping, horseback-riding, wildlife viewing, and Big Game hunting. Motorized travel restrictions exist within all or portions of T1S R85W Secs. 24 & 25, T1S R84W Secs. 19 & 30.

The South King Mountain Unit is an area that the Luark Ranch Outfitters have a Big Game hunting, trail riding and horse rental Special Recreation Permit (SRP). Sombrero Ranches Inc. also has a SRP in that area for providing pack and saddle livestock and packing services. The change in time period on the Albertson-King Allotment would affect these outfitters and other recreationists because the authorized grazing activities would occur later during Big Game hunting season.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The Other Terms and Conditions include “The grazing lessee and all persons associated with allotment operations shall comply with the travel restrictions except as provided by the following exemption in the travel restriction: Grazing lessees are exempt from the restriction during the permitted grazing season for grazing related purposes provided such motorized use is limited to existing roads and trails and subject to any additional conditions in the grazing lease.” This condition prohibits the grazing lessee from using the lease to gain authorized motorized use on existing roads and trails for any other reason than grazing related purposes. This mitigates any possibility that the grazing lessee is using the lease for recreational purposes; however, the proposed action will increase motorized use on existing roads and trails until October 15th and could lead to potential conflicts with early season hunters and packers.

Mitigation: To avoid conflicts with early season hunters and packers, include a term and condition on the grazing lease that the motorized travel exemption does not apply from Oct. 2 to October 15.

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

Affected Environment: At this time, there are no soils data available for the proposed action area. Area slope angles range from 0 to 30%.

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. Based on the scheduled period of use, good vegetative cover, and the lack of perennial drainages of concern within these allotments, the potential for measureable sediment transport and negative soil impacts is minimal.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 1 for Upland Soils: In 2006 the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office assessed area conditions as part of the Burns to State Bridge Land Health

Assessment. During that time, the above allotments were rated as achieving or moving towards achieving Standard 1 for Upland Soils. Based on the period of use in the proposed action and good vegetative cover, the proposed activities would not likely prevent Standard 1 from being met.

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

Affected Environment:

The primary vegetation types in the Strubi and Albertson-King Mountain Allotments are: lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) forests and aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) woodlands. Several small grassy parks dominated by smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) and Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) are also present in the Strubi Allotment.

At the time of the land health assessment in 2006, aspen woodlands were healthy with several age classes present. Aspen regeneration was good with numerous saplings. Browsing was noted on aspen saplings, however, it was not at a level that was negatively impacting the health or survival of clones. Understory species were very productive. Lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir forests were healthy with younger and mature trees present and few signs of mortality due to insects and disease. Conifer stands were dense, but had a fair cover of grasses and forbs given the amount of canopy cover.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

The proposed grazing schedule on the Strubi Allotment would be from July 1 to September 30th and on the Albertson-King Mountain Allotment would be from June 15 to October 15th. This is essentially season-long grazing. Season-long grazing can be detrimental to vegetative health because it does not provide adequate growing season rest or adequate rest and recovery time following grazing. However, the land health assessment did not note any concerns with vegetative conditions and recent site visits indicate livestock utilization levels have been in the slight range at all locations observed. Given the lack of any identified concerns with plant health on these allotments and the light grazing use, the proposed action should not result in a decline in the condition of the plant community.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): In 2006, the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office conducted the Burns to State Bridge Watershed Land Health Assessment which included both the Strubi A Nick and Albertson- King Mountain Pasture Allotments. Both allotments were meeting Standard 3 for healthy plant communities at that time. Overall, the allotments exhibited productive and diverse aspen woodlands; mixed conifer forests with little evidence of disease; and good diversity and abundance of perennial grasses and forbs. Given the current vegetative condition and recent site visits that indicated light livestock utilization levels, the proposed action should not result in a trend away from meeting Standard 3 for healthy plant communities.

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

Affected Environment:

Fish. No fish are known to exist within the area of the proposed action.

Amphibians. Several amphibians of interest are found within the GSFO, the Boreal Toad (*Bufo boreas boreas*) and the Great Basin spadefoot toad (*Spea intermontana*). The distribution of the boreal toad is restricted to areas with suitable breeding habitat in spruce-fir forests and alpine meadows generally between 7,500 and 12,000 feet elevation. Breeding habitat includes lakes, marshes, ponds, and bogs with sunny exposures and quiet shallow water. Great Basin spadefoot toads occupy arid grasslands and high sagebrush, desert shrub, and pinion-juniper woodlands. Great Basin spadefoot toad has been documented in the western third of the field office from the town of Rifle west to the boundary with the Grand Junction Field Office. This represents the eastern extent (fringe) of the species overall range and populations are believed to be small and sporadic.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Amphibians. It is plausible that over-grazing by livestock could contribute to the decline of the functionality of the habitat for amphibians. Overgrazing impacts on wetlands and riparian vegetation could impact individual animals and prey populations. Primary, the allotment is outside the range (overall, elevation, and habitat) of most amphibian species of interest and known to occur in the GSFO.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 3 for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The current grazing management does not appear to be impacting the structure and/or composition of native plant communities to a degree where it is changing the quality or usability of the area for any terrestrial wildlife species. Healthy, productive aquatic animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitats' potential. Thus it is concluded the continuation of the current grazing system and stocking rates will continue to promote achievement of public land health standard 3 across the landscape.

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

Affected Environment:

The CRVFO supports a wide variety of terrestrial wildlife species 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/wetland areas support many species. The current condition of wildlife habitats varies across the landscape. Some habitat is altered by power lines, pipelines, fences, public recreation use, residential and commercial development, vegetative treatments, livestock and wild ungulate grazing, oil and gas development, and roads/trails. These factors have contributed to some degradation/fragmentation of habitat as well as causing disturbance to some species.

Reptiles. Reptile species most likely to occur include the western fence lizard (*Sceloporus undulatus*) and gopher snake (bullsnake) (*Pituophis catenifer*) in xeric shrublands or grassy clearings and the western terrestrial garter snake (*Thamnophis elegans*) along creeks. Other reptiles potentially present along creeks, although more commonly found at lower elevations than the site, are the milk snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*) and smooth green snake (*Opheodrys vernalis*).

Birds. Passerine (perching) birds commonly found in the area include the: American robin (*Turdus migratorius*), Pinyon jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) western scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), and black-billed magpie (*Pica pica*). Two gallinaceous species, the wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) and the Dusky grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*), are found here.

Birds of prey (eagles, falcons, hawks, and owls) may migrate through the area or nest in cottonwoods, conifers, or very tall oaks, while the numerous songbirds and small mammal populations provide the primary prey base. Common raptor species in the area include the: red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), and sharp-shinned hawk (*A. striatus*).

Numerous streams, rivers, reservoirs, ponds, and associated riparian vegetation provide habitat for a wide variety of waterfowl and shorebirds. Common species include: great blue herons (*Ardea Herodias*), Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*), mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), pintails (*A. acuta*), gadwalls (*A. strepera*), and American wigeon (*A. americana*) are common.

Mammals. Numerous small mammals reside within the planning area, including ground squirrels (*Spermophilus* spp.), chipmunks (*Neotamias* spp.), rabbits (*Sylvilagus* spp.), skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*), and raccoons (*Procyon lotor*). Many of these small mammals provide the main prey for raptors and larger carnivores. These species are most likely to occur along the drainages, near the margins of dense oakbrush, in pinyon-juniper woodland, or in the small area of aspen and spruce/fir. Larger carnivores expected to occur include the bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) and the coyote (*Canis latrans*). Black bears (*Ursus americanus*) make use of oaks and the associated chokecherries and serviceberries for cover and food, while mountain lions (*Felis concolor*) are likely to occur during seasons when mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) are present.

Big Game. The mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) is a recreationally important species that are common throughout suitable habitats in the region. Another recreationally important big game ungulate (hoofed animal), the Rocky Mountain elk (*Cervus elaphus nelsonii*), is also present. Mule deer and elk usually occupy higher elevations, forested habitat, during the summer and then migrate to sagebrush-dominant ridges and south-facing slopes at lower elevation in the winter.

BLM lands provide a large portion of the undeveloped winter range available to deer and elk. The CRVFO's Resource Management Plan (RMP) allocated existing forage proportionately to livestock and big game, the criterion being active preference for livestock and 5-year average demand for big game. The RMP allocated all available forage on allotments in big game winter range -unavailable to livestock because of stocking rate limitations or slope restrictions - to big game. Summer range was not limiting to big game; therefore, allocating forage beyond CDOW population goals in summer range was deemed to be unnecessary since winter range is what limits herd size. In addition, the RMP allocated additional forage produced through vegetation manipulation on wildlife winter range first to big game and then to livestock up to active preference. On summer range, additional forage was allocated to livestock first.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Reptiles. It is plausible that over-grazing by livestock could contribute to the decline of the functionality of the habitat for reptiles. Impact on upland and riparian vegetation could impact individual animals and prey populations. Primary, the project area is outside the range (overall, elevation, and habitat) of most reptile species of interest and known to occur in the CRVFO. Secondly, land health standard 2 for riparian systems and standard 3 for productive plant communities are being achieved (BLM 2004). Thus

the allowable number of animal unit months and periods of use, along with land health standards and terms/conditions; should continue to maintain adequate habitat conditions (suitability and connectivity) to ensure reptiles are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential.

Birds and Mammals. Overgrazing affects bird and mammals by altering habitat structure and food availability. Grazing invariably reduces the height and ground cover of plants, at least temporarily, thus reducing the cover they need for protection, feeding, roosting and nesting. There is no indication or data to support that the proposed action would have any large scale negative impacts to density, composition, or frequency of terrestrial species or the quality or connectivity of terrestrial wildlife habitat. This area receives adequate growing season plant rest and recovery periods. The land health assessment data along with range compliance data indicates that current livestock grazing consistent with achieving land health standards for bird and mammal species.

Mule Deer. All allotments contain CDOW mapped mule deer summer range described as that part of the overall range where 90% of the individuals are located between spring green-up and the first heavy snowfall. Summer range is not necessarily exclusive of winter range; in some areas winter range and summer range may overlap.

Elk. The Albertson allotment overlaps with CDOW mapped elk production areas which represents that part of the overall range of elk occupied by the females from May 15 to June 15 for calving.

Most issues between domestic livestock and big game concerns forage allocation and land health.

Forage Allocation. Managing the timing and intensity of livestock grazing is critical to maintaining habitat conditions preferable to big game. For example, cattle grazing during the early season could improve the quality of winter forage for elk but cattle must be removed early enough to allow plants to re-grow. However, 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. The GSFO's RMP allocated existing forage proportionately (50/50) to livestock and big game and that seem to be adequate on this allotment.

Overall, elk populations since the late 1970s to present have been increasing while livestock numbers and periods of use have decreased. Qualitatively viewing the big game population trends and CDOW objectives in relationship to the proposed action (maintaining the existing level of livestock AUMs and periods of use, along with land health standards and terms/conditions), it can be assumed that the proposed action (based on the cumulative annual use of forage by big game and domestic livestock) remains compatible with the CDOW big game objectives while achieving public land health standards.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The current grazing management does not appear to be impacting the structure and/or composition of native plant communities to a degree where it is changing the quality or usability of the area for any terrestrial wildlife species. Healthy,

productive aquatic animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitats' potential. Thus it is concluded the continuation of the current grazing system and stocking rates will continue to promote achievement of public land health standard 3 across the landscape.

SUMMARY OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Wildlife. Cumulatively many of the future actions planned on private and other lands may have some undetermined effect on wildlife including special status species habitat. The proposed action is not anticipated to result in negative cumulative impacts to wildlife when viewed in conjunction with those activities currently occurring and reasonably certain to occur on adjacent private/other lands.

PERSONS AND AGENCIES CONSULTED:

A notice of public scoping was posted on the Colorado BLM's Internet web page and a news release was issued on October 20, 2009 regarding grazing permits and associated allotments scheduled for renewal in 2010. The public was provided an opportunity to offer any information or concerns, or to be considered as an interested public on a permit or allotment scheduled for renewal. There have been no responses received specific to the permit renewal or allotments addressed in this NEPA document. The Glenwood Springs Field Office Internet NEPA Register also lists grazing permit renewal NEPA documents that have been initiated. They are generally posted approximately one month prior to the estimated completion date.

The following individuals, groups, organizations and/or local governments were also consulted:

- Grazing permittee associated with the permit renewal
- Uintah and Ouray Ute Tribe
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Michael Kinser	Rangeland Management Specialist	NEPA Lead, Wetlands and Riparian Zones, Range Management
Carla DeYoung	Ecologist	ACEC, Vegetation, T/E/S Plants, Land Health Stds
Jeff O'Connell	Hydrologist/Geologist	Soil, Air, Water, Geology
Kimberly Miller	Outdoor Recreation Planner	ACECs, WSR, Wilderness/WSAs, Recreation
Greg Wolfgang	Outdoor Recreation Planner	VRM, Travel
Cheryl Harrison	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns
Brian Hopkins	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, Terrestrial Wildlife, Aquatic Wildlife, T/E/S Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife
Dereck Wilson	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-native Species

APPENDICES: Biological Opinion

ATTACHMENTS: Allotment Maps

NAME OF PREPARER: Michael R. Kinser

DATE: March 22, 2010



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Ecological Services
764 Horizon Drive, Building B
Grand Junction, Colorado 81506-3946

IN REPLY REFER TO:
ES/GJ-6-CO-03-F-013
TAILS 65413-2010-1-0043



February 9, 2010

Memorandum

To: Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado River Valley Field Office, Silt, Colorado
From: Acting Western Colorado Supervisor, Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Grand Junction, Colorado
Subject: Allotment Livestock Grazing Permit Issuance under Programmatic Biological Opinion ES/GJ-6-CO-03-F-013

Your letter dated December 22, 2010, included the project level biological assessment (BA) for the effects of renewing 10-year grazing permits on 9 allotments within the Field Office. Your letter was received in our office on December 23, 2010. Your project level BA tiers to programmatic biological opinion (ES/GJ-6-CO-03-F-013) (PBO), and provides information which updates our programmatic consultation. The programmatic opinion analyzed the effects of your grazing program on Canada lynx (Lynx canadensis) (Lynx).

Project Description

The proposed action consists of the renewal of 10-year grazing permits on nine allotments that are within a lynx landscape linkage or contain mapped lynx habitat. These allotments are located within the Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO). Five of the nine allotments have individual consultation history while the remaining four do not. The remaining four allotments have not been analyzed at the site-specific level and are addressed herein.

Allotments with prior section 7 consultation

Hells Hole

Section 7 consultation was completed for the Hells Hole allotment in 2000. However, the permittee has proposed to change the class of livestock from cattle to sheep. The proposal will allow sheep grazing on the 527 acre allotment as follows:

- 200 sheep/ grazing period from August 1 - November 15; 34 animal unit months (AUMs). Animal unit months within the allotment remain the same.

Ute Creek

The Ute Creek allotment contains 3,104 acres and is used to graze sheep (2,000), yielding 127 AUMs and horses (5) yielding 2 AUMs during a period spanning May 11 - June 25 and a second period spanning October 1 - November 20 yielding 141 AUMs and 2 AUMs respectively. Although this allotment does not contain lynx habitat, it falls within the Castle Peak linkage area. Assessment of the allotment conducted in 2009, concluded that the current grazing system and stocking rates continue to meet public land health standards for standard 2 (riparian areas) and 3 (healthy and productive plant and animal communities). The standards are considered appropriate within landscape linkages that do not contain lynx habitat, but are essential for providing landscape level connective habitats for Canada lynx.

Status of the Species and Environmental Baseline

The status of the species tiers to the extensive description of the status of the species in biological opinion ES/GJ-6-CO-03-F-013 and is updated with the following information.

Lynx in Colorado are considered a portion of the lower 48 distinct population segment currently listed under the Endangered Species Act (Act). The Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) is currently tracking approximately 43 adult lynx. Two hundred eighteen lynx have been released during the reintroduction program. There are 114 known mortalities and 61 missing animals (Shenk, CDOW, pers. comm., 2009). The CDOW continues to monitor the population to the extent possible. It has become nearly impossible to determine the extent of the lynx population in Colorado due to failed collars, unknown mortalities, etc. Highway mortality ranks as one of the highest human caused mortalities factors for the Colorado lynx reintroduction overall, only exceeded by animals that have been shot. Three release protocols were used during the initial releases of lynx. By adjusting the release protocol, CDOW observed a reduction in the number of starvation deaths (Shenk 2004). Shenk (pers comm. 2008) observed that 3 lynx have died of starvation under their current release protocol, one each in years 2000, 2001, and 2008. One hundred twenty six kittens have been born in Colorado including 10 in 2009 (Shenk 2009), but a survival rate of Colorado born kittens is currently unknown.

Table 2. Kittens born in Colorado

Table with 2 columns: Year, Number of Kittens. Rows for years 2003-2009.

In addition, on August 20, 2008, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) issued biological opinion ES/LK-6-CO-08-F-024, to the US Forest Service for a proposal to amend seven Forest Plans within the Southern Rocky Mountain Geographic area (i.e. Colorado and southeastern

Section 7 consultation has been completed on four additional allotments (see following list) in the past to address the effects of grazing on lynx. No proposed changes in livestock class, timing restrictions or other requirements are proposed in the following allotments. Specifics regarding livestock class, timing restrictions or requirements within these allotments are documented in the BA and PBO.

- Bellyache
East Castle Peak
North Thompson Creek Common
Strubi

Allotments without prior site specific section 7 consultation

The following allotments were identified in the PBO. However, site specific information was not provided and project level analysis under section 7 was never completed.

Albertson-King Mountain

The Antelope Creek allotment consists of 1,114 acres, grazes 33 cattle during a period spanning June 1 - October 1 and yielding 133 AUMs. Assessment of the allotment conducted in 2009, concluded that the current grazing system and stocking rates continue to meet public land health standards for standard 3 (healthy and productive plant and animal communities) and standard 4 (special status, threatened and endangered species) for Canada lynx.

Bocco Mountain

The Bocco Mountain allotment contains 3,967 acres, grazes 1,700 sheep during a period spanning May 16 - May 31 yielding 179 AUMs and a second period spanning September 1 - September 30, with 1,690 sheep, yielding 111 AUMs. Although this allotment does not contain lynx habitat, it falls within the Castle Peak linkage area. Assessment of the allotment conducted in 2009, concluded that the current grazing system and stocking rates continue to meet public land health standards for standard 2 (riparian areas) and standard 3 (healthy and productive plant and animal communities). The standards are considered appropriate within landscape linkages that do not contain lynx habitat, but are essential for providing landscape level connective habitats for Canada lynx.

Cabin Gulch

The Cabin Gulch allotment contains 3,240 acres, grazes 1,200 sheep, during a period spanning May 15 - June 3 yielding 158 AUMs and a second period spanning September 10 - November 1, with 1,200 sheep, yielding 182 AUMs. Although this allotment does not contain lynx habitat, the northeast portion of the allotment falls within the Castle Peak linkage area. Assessment of the allotment conducted in 2009, concluded that the current grazing system and stocking rates continue to meet public land health standard 3 (healthy and productive plant and animal communities). The standards are considered appropriate within landscape linkages that do not contain lynx habitat, but are essential for providing landscape level connective habitats for Canada lynx.

Wyoming). This biological opinion contains the latest range-wide status of the Canada lynx and is incorporated here by reference.

Environmental Baseline

The environmental baseline for the proposed action is generally described in PBO ES/GJ-6-CO-03-F-013. Standards and guidelines that direct livestock grazing on the Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) are designed to allow grazing at a sustainable level. However, conditions within individual allotments may be influenced by other things, including wild ungulate populations, drought, etc.

The BA reported that all 9 grazing allotments are in good condition within the lynx habitat areas and are meeting standards 2 through 4, of the Colorado Standards for Public Land Health.

Effects Analysis

The general effects of livestock grazing are contained in the PBO ES/GJ-6-CO-03-F-013.

The biggest potential effect to lynx is livestock competition with lynx prey species for forage resources. Any reductions in forage that would lead to a reduction in prey or prey density could result in lower lynx productivity over time. Given the existing and proposed grazing management strategies, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) believes that reauthorization of grazing permits for the allotments discussed herein will continue to meet the Public Land Health Standards. As stated in the programmatic opinion, we have concluded that the standards for public land health are adequate to support lynx conservation. The existence of these standards alone does not necessarily ensure compliance with the standards.

The lynx habitat components contained within the allotments considered herein make up only a portion of the lynx habitat within their respective landscapes including lynx analysis units and landscape linkages. The majority of lynx habitat lies within the US Forest Service boundary. Therefore, lynx habitat contained within the allotments described herein function as part of a larger landscape and management of the larger landscape for lynx requires a coordinated effort between land management agencies. Several of the allotments considered herein fall within one or more of the landscape linkages, and compliance to the standards for public land health ensure that the appropriate habitat conditions exist within each linkage to facilitate movement of lynx across the landscape.

Updated Cumulative Effects Analysis

In addition to public lands, the CRVFO planning area contains a large amount of private land, and some scattered parcels of State land and State wildlife area lands. An undetermined amount, and diverse variety of land management activities are ongoing on private and State lands adjacent to BLM administered lands within the CRVFO. Future actions reasonably certain to occur are numerous and varied on these lands. Human development is occurring at an ever-increasing rate as native rangelands and ranches are being converted to residential and

commercial properties. This trend is reasonably certain to continue to some degree. In addition, farming, ranching, and various recreational activities are ongoing and are reasonably certain to continue on other private and state lands. Livestock grazing is also occurring on some private and State lands within the area, and is reasonably certain to continue. In some areas there is an overall reduction in grazing and other agricultural activities due to the sale of ranches and resulting residential and commercial developments.

Cumulatively, many of the future actions planned on private and state lands may have some undetermined effect on lynx and lynx habitat. The proposed action is not anticipated to result in negative cumulative impacts to lynx when viewed in conjunction with those activities currently occurring and reasonably certain to occur on adjacent private and state lands.

Conclusion

After reviewing the current status of the Canada lynx, the environmental baseline for the action area, the effects of the action, and the cumulative effects, it is the Service's biological opinion that the proposed renewal of grazing permits on the subject allotments, is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Canada lynx. Furthermore, the Service concurs with the "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" determination of the BA.

On February 25, 2009, the Service published its final rule revising its designation of critical habitat for lynx. Habitats within Colorado were not included in the revised designation. Therefore, no adverse modification of critical habitat will result from the proposed action.

Rationale

Permit standards and guidelines that result in acceptable residual herbivore forage and acceptable riparian conditions are design features of all BLM livestock grazing permits/allotment management plans as directed in the *Glenwood Springs Resource Management Plan* (1984, revised 1988), and *Colorado Public Land Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing*. These same standards and guidelines are consistent with Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS) standards and guidelines. Therefore, grazing, as proposed, is predicted to only result in insignificant and/or discountable effects to lynx and their habitat.

Incidental Take Statement

Take is to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct (Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). Harm is an act which actually kills or injures wildlife. Such acts may include significant habitat modification or degradation where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering (50 CFR 17.3).

Harass is an intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering (50 CFR 17.3). Incidental

take is a taking that results from, but is not the purpose of, carrying out an otherwise lawful activity conducted by the Federal agency or applicant (50 CFR § 402.02).

Section 9 of the Act and Federal regulation pursuant to section 4(d) of the Act prohibit the take of endangered and threatened species, respectively, without special exemption. Under the terms of section 7(b)(4) and section 7(o)(2), taking that is incidental to and not intended as part of the agency action is not considered to be a prohibited taking under the Act, provided that such taking is in compliance with the terms and conditions of an Incidental Take Statement.

Amount or extent of take anticipated

In issuing an incidental take statement, the Service provides a statement of anticipated incidental take. Generally, incidental take is expressed as the number of individuals reasonably likely to be taken or the extent of habitat likely to be destroyed or disturbed, and over what time period the anticipated take will occur. We do not anticipate that the proposed action will result in take of lynx.

Comment/Recommendations

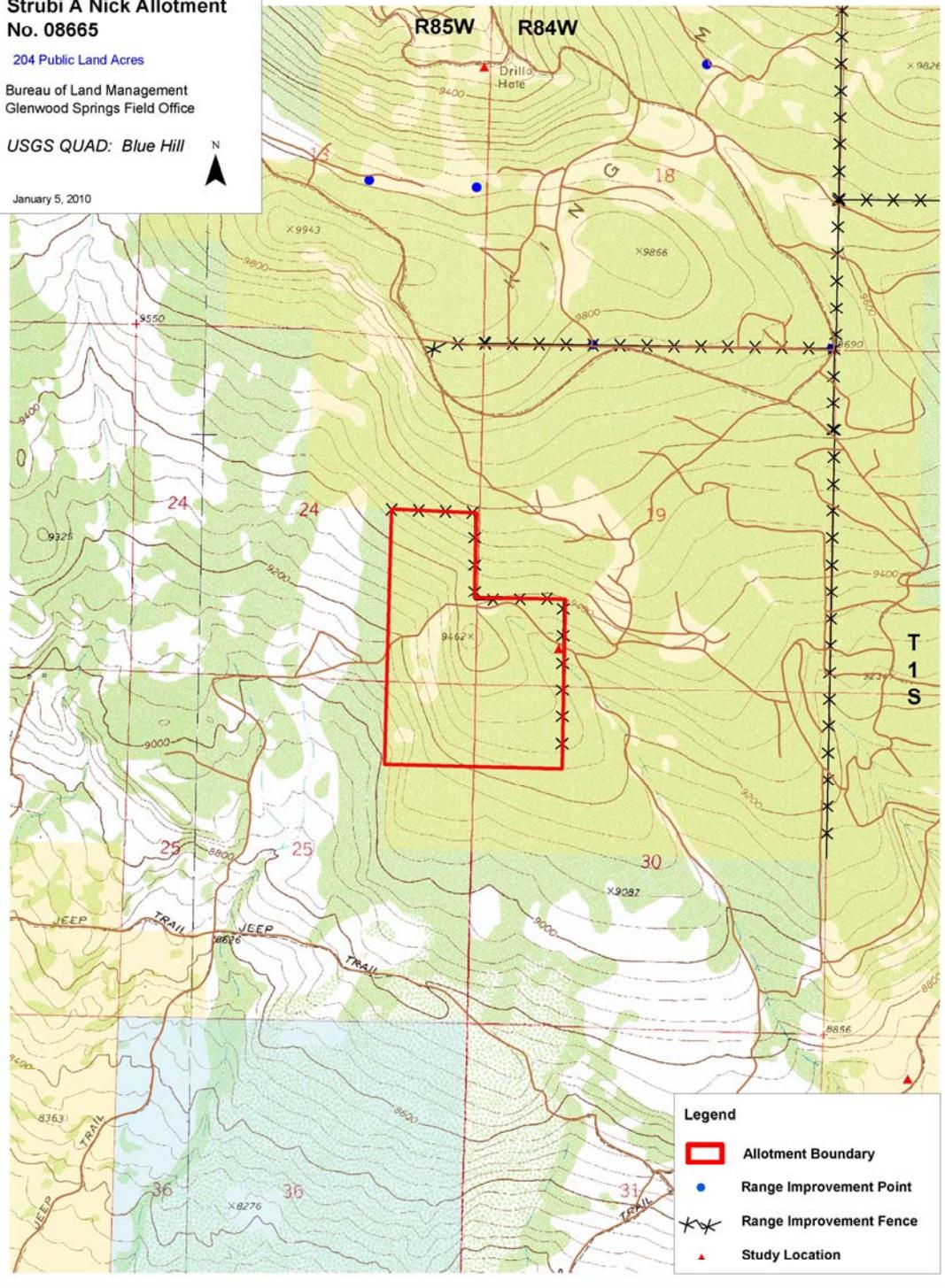
We will attach this project level analysis to biological opinion number ES/GJ-6-CO-03-F-013. It may be necessary to reinstate consultation at the programmatic level if an individual project generated by the BLM's grazing program results in jeopardy or adverse modification determination, or an adverse effect determination is made for any allotment permit renewal.

Literature Cited

- Shenk, T.M. 2004. Colorado Division of Wildlife Job Progress Report. Post Release Monitoring of Lynx Reintroduced to Colorado. 9 pp.
- Shenk, T.M. 2006. Colorado Division of Wildlife Research Report. Post Release Monitoring of Lynx Reintroduced to Colorado. 46 pp.
- Shenk, T.M. 2009. Colorado Division of Wildlife Research Report. Post Release Monitoring of Lynx Reintroduced to Colorado. 55 pp.

KBroderdorp:BLMCRVFOAllotmentLivestockGrazingPermitIssuanceBOF013.doc:020910:KM

**Strubi A Nick Allotment
No. 08665**
204 Public Land Acres
Bureau of Land Management
Glenwood Springs Field Office
USGS QUAD: Blue Hill
January 5, 2010



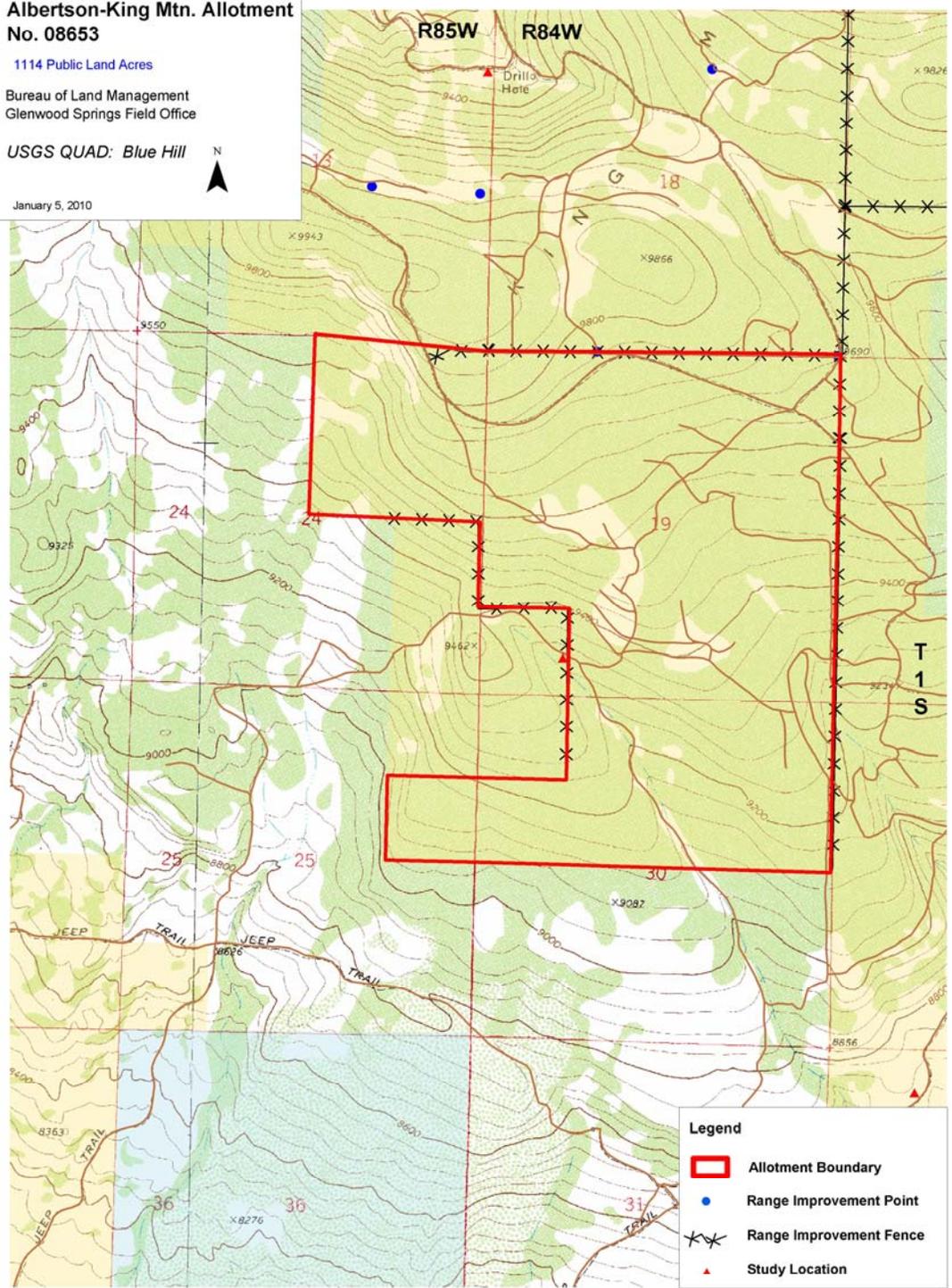
**Albertson-King Mtn. Allotment
No. 08653**

1114 Public Land Acres

Bureau of Land Management
Glenwood Springs Field Office

USGS QUAD: Blue Hill

January 5, 2010



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

Grazing Lease Renewal on the Albertson (King Mtn. Pasture) and Strubi A Nick Allotments

DOI-BLM-CO140-2010-0029-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 lease renewal on the Albertson (King Mtn. Pasture) and Strubi A Nick 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 lease 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.

No historic properties have been identified within these allotments. The EA did not identify any other unique characteristics that occur in the allotment.

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 Albertson (King Mtn. Pasture) and Strubi A Nick 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 EA discloses that cumulatively many of the future actions planned on private and other lands may have some undetermined effect on wildlife including special status species habitat. The proposed action is not anticipated to result in negative cumulative impacts to wildlife when viewed in conjunction with those activities currently occurring and reasonably certain to occur on adjacent private/other lands. No other cumulative impacts have been identified.

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 “No Adverse Affect” has been made for historic properties that occur in the allotment. No known historic properties have been identified within these 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. Through the issuance of a Biological Opinion for Canada lynx, the FWS concurred with the BLM’s “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination on February 9, 2010. After reviewing the status of the Canada lynx, the environmental baseline for the action area, the effects of the action, and the cumulative effects, it was the USFWS’s biological opinion that the proposed renewal of grazing permits on the subject allotments is not likely to jeopardize the

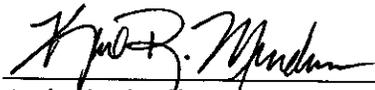
continued existence of the Canada lynx. Furthermore, the USFWS concurred with the “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination of the BA.

The EA discloses that the proposed action would have no effect to other 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

3/23/2010
Date