



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Colorado River Valley Field Office
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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

1. Introduction

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2012-0012 EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): 0501971

PROJECT NAME: Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal on the Whitman Allotment

PLANNING AREA: Garfield County, South of Silt, CO

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Whitman Allotment #08102, T6S R91W portions of Sec 18 and 19.
(see attached allotment map)

APPLICANT: Grazing Permittee

SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES:

A notice of public scoping was posted on the Colorado BLM's Internet web page on September 1, 2011 regarding grazing permits and associated allotments scheduled for renewal in 2011-2012. A news release was posted on September 8, 2011. 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 Colorado River Valley 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.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR 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.

2. Proposed Action and Alternatives Analyzed in Detail

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:

The Proposed Action is to renew a term grazing permit. The number/kind of livestock, season of use, percent public land and Animal Unit Months (AUMs) will remain the same as the previous permit. The permit would be issued for a 10-year period unless the base property is leased for less, but for purposes of the EA, we are assuming 10 years of grazing by this or another applicant (in case of transfer). The proposed action is in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.2. Scheduled grazing use and grazing preference for the permit are summarized below.

Table 2-1 Mandatory Terms and Conditions Scheduled Grazing Use:

Allotment Name & No.	Livestock No. & Kind	Period of use	Percent Public Land	AUMs
Whitman #08102	60 Cattle	5/1 to 5/31	100	61

Table 2-2 Grazing Preference AUMs:

Allotment Name & No.	Active	Suspended	Total
Whitman #08102	63	119	182

The following other terms and conditions will be included on the renewed permit:

Adaptive management will be employed on this allotment. The BLM will allow up to 14 days of flexibility in the start and end dates on this permit depending on range readiness. The range will be considered ready when there is a minimum of 4 inches of new growth on grasses. AUMs may not exceed Active Preference. Use different than that shown above must be applied for in advance.

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. Maintenance activities shall be restricted to the footprint (previously disturbed area) of the project as it existed when it was initially constructed. The Bureau of Land Management shall be given 48 hours advance notice of any maintenance work that will involve heavy equipment. Disturbed areas will be reseeded with a certified weed-free seed mixture of native species adapted to the site.

The permittee and all persons associated with grazing operations must be informed that any person who injures, destroys, excavates, appropriates or removes any historic or prehistoric ruin,

artifact, object of antiquity, Native American remains, Native American cultural item, or archaeological resources on public lands is subject to arrest and penalty of law. 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 further notified in writing to proceed by the authorized officer.

All ground disturbing activity and the placement of supplemental feed, etc, must be at a minimum of 100 meters from areas of Native American concern and/or historic properties.

NO GRAZING ALTERNATIVE:

Under this alternative the grazing permit described in the Proposed Action would not be reissued. As a result, no grazing would be authorized on the Whitman allotment. This alternative would initiate the process in accordance with 43 CFR parts 4100 and 1600 to eliminate grazing on the allotment and devote the land to some other purpose. This alternative would result in amendments to the resource management plan.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL:

The “**No Action alternative**” has 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. This action would essentially be the same action as the proposed action and therefore is not further analyzed.

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 Sept 2009 – 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.”

RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, OTHER PLANS:

- Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 as amended;
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976;
- Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978;
- Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations Subpart 4100 – Grazing Administration;
- Noxious Weed Act of 1974;
- Endangered Species Act of 1973;
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969;
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918;
- National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470f);
- Archeological Resources Protection Act;
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act;
- Indian Sacred Sites – EO 13007; and
- Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments – EO 13175
- Colorado Public Health Standards and Livestock Grazing Management Guidelines - March 1997

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH:

In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. The five standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands.

The Whitman allotment was included in a formal land health assessment of the Divide Creek Landscape in 2009. The assessment determined that this allotment was not meeting Standard 3 for healthy plant and animal communities. The primary factors for failure to achieve the standard were that cheatgrass and bur buttercup (introduced, annual species) had replaced native, perennial cool season species and sagebrush was in poor condition. Current livestock grazing was not considered to be a significant causal factor in the failure to achieve the standard.

The impact analysis addresses whether the proposed action or any alternatives being analyzed would result in impacts that would maintain, improve, or deteriorate land health conditions for each of the five standards. These analyses are located in the program-specific analysis in this document.

3. Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences

DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS, MITIGATION MEASURES:

This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the proposed action and alternatives. 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 environmental elements. Not all programs, resources or uses are present in the area, or if they are present, may not be affected by the proposed action and alternatives (Table 3-1). Only those elements that are present and potentially affected are described and brought forth for detailed analysis.

Table 3-1 Potentially Affected Resources

Component of the Environment, Supplemental Authorities	Potentially Affected?	
	YES	NO
Access and Travel		X
Air Quality		X
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern		X
Cadastral Survey		X
Cultural Resources	X	
Native American Religious Concerns	X	
Environmental Justice		X
Farmlands, Prime or Unique		X
Fire/Fuels Management		X
Floodplains		X
Forest Resources		X
Geology and Minerals		X
Law Enforcement		X
Livestock Grazing	X	
Noise		X
Paleontology		X
Plants: Invasive, Non-native Species (Noxious Weeds)	X	
Plants: Sensitive, Threatened, or Endangered		X
Plants: Vegetation	X	
Realty Authorizations		X
Recreation		X
Socio-Economics	X	
Soils	X	
Visual Resources		X

Wastes, Hazardous or Solid		X
Water Quality, Surface and Ground	X	
Water Rights		X
Wetlands and Riparian Zones	X	
Wild and Scenic Rivers		X
Wilderness/WSAs/Wilderness Characteristics		X
Wildlife: Aquatic - Endangered ,Threatened, or Sensitive		X
Wildlife: Aquatic		X
Wildlife: Terrestrial - Sensitive, Threatened, or Endangered	X	
Wildlife: Migratory Birds	X	
Wildlife: Terrestrial	X	

Cultural Resources

Affected Environment

Grazing authorization renewals are undertakings under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. During Section 106 review, a cultural resource assessment (CRVFO#1012-8) was completed for the Whitman allotment on December 8, 2011 by Erin Leifeld, Colorado River Valley Field Office Archaeologist. The assessment followed 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, and IM-CO-01-026. The results of the assessment are summarized in the table below. Copies of the cultural resource assessments are available at the Colorado River Valley Field Office archaeology files.

Data developed here was taken from the cultural program project report files, site report files, and base maps filed at the Colorado River Valley Field Office as well as information from General Land Office (GLO) maps, BLM land patent records, and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) site records, report records, and GIS data.

The table below is based on the allotment specific analysis for the allotment in this EA. The table shows known cultural resources, the potential of Historic Properties, and Management recommendations.

Table 3-2. Cultural Resources Assessment Summary						
Allotment Name and Number	Acres Inventoried at a Class III level	Acres NOT Inventoried at a Class III Level	Percent Allotment Inventoried at a 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)
Whitman #08102	445.4	844.8	52.7%	36	Yes	Recommend additional 21.5 acres to be surveyed; Revisit 6 sites (5GF.4263, 5GF.524, 5GF.527, 5GF.528, 5GF.529, 5GF.4184)

Thirteen cultural resource inventories have been previously conducted within the Whitman Allotment #08102 resulting in the survey coverage of 445.4 acres at a Class III level. Thirty-six cultural resources were discovered during inventory. Of the 36 cultural resources, five have been determined eligible or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Four sites are prehistoric open camp sites (5GF.4263, 5GF.527, 5GF.528, 5GF.529) and one (5GF.4184) multicomponent site of a prehistoric open camp and historic trash dump. Also, one site that needs further re-visitation is 5GF.524. Finally, looking at the GLO patents from 1888 indicated little potential for historic roads or homesteads within this area dating back to the late twentieth century.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

The direct impacts that occur where livestock concentrate, during normal livestock grazing activity, can include trampling, chiseling, artifact breakage, and churning of site soils, cultural features, and cultural artifacts. Impacts from livestock standing, leaning, and rubbing against historic structures, above-ground cultural features, and rock art can also have direct impacts to cultural resources. Indirect impacts include soil erosion and gullying, which can lead to increased ground visibility which has the potential to increase unlawful collection and vandalism. Continued livestock use in these concentration areas has the potential to cause substantial ground disturbance and in turn, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties.

The use of adaptive management will have little change on cultural resource impacts. The use of this management technique might in fact be beneficial to lessen ground disturbance because it requires four inches of new growth on grasses and therefore livestock will not be grazing when soils are more exposed or when the area is more susceptible to erosion.

It is recommended that 21.5 acres are inventoried within the allotment in the northern portion in areas of low slope and the area around "silt pond #1". Six sites (5GF.4263, 5GF.524, 5GF.527, 5GF.528, 5GF.529, 5GF.4184) are recommended to be revisited and monitored during the term of this permit.

No Grazing Alternative

Under this alternative, direct and indirect impacts to cultural resources from grazing would be reduced based on the absence of livestock and no related surface disturbing activities.

Mitigation Measures

New range improvements, maintenance of existing range improvements, or additional feeding areas may require cultural resource inventories, monitoring, and/or data recovery.

This allotment may contain undiscovered historic properties and/or resources protected under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, E.O. 13007, or other statutes and executive orders. If the BLM determines that grazing activities will adversely impact the properties, mitigation will be identified and implemented in consultation with the Colorado SHPO. The BLM may also 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.

Native American Religious Concerns

Affected Environment

American Indian religious concerns are legislatively considered under several acts and Executive Orders, namely the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (PL 95-341), the Native American Graves Environmental Assessment Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (PL 101-601), and Executive Order 13007 (1996; Indian Sacred Sites). These require, in concert with other provisions such as those found in the NHPA and ARPA, that the federal government carefully and proactively take into consideration traditional and religious Native American culture and life. This ensures, to the degree possible, that access to sacred sites, the treatment of human remains, the possession of sacred items, the conduct of traditional religious practices, and the preservation of important cultural properties are considered and not unduly infringed upon. In some cases, these concerns are directly related to “historic properties” and “archaeological resources”. In other cases, elements of the landscape without archaeological or other human material remains may be involved. Identification of these concerns is normally completed during the land use planning efforts, reference to existing studies, or via direct consultation.

The cultural resource evaluation of this allotment describing known cultural resources and their condition was sent to the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Uinta and Ouray Agency Ute Indian Tribe. The letter, sent on December 16, 2011, requested the tribes to identify issues and areas of concern within the allotment. No comments were received.

Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action

The Ute have a generalized concept of spiritual significance that is not easily transferred to Western models or definitions. As such the BLM recognizes that the Ute have identified sites that are of concern because of their association with Ute occupation of the area as part of their traditional lands. One site (5GF.524) was identified during the overview of cultural resources which has the potential to be a Ute sensitive site. Reevaluation of the site for potential impacts from grazing is required and additional consultation with Native American tribes might be necessary.

No Grazing Alternative

Under this alternative, direct and indirect impacts to cultural resources from grazing would be reduced based on the absence of livestock and no related surface disturbing activities. Therefore, areas of concern to Native American tribes would not be affected.

Mitigation Measures

Following the *Mitigation Measures* in the **Cultural Resources** section will help to ensure direct and indirect impacts are not occurring in areas where Native American religious concerns are unknown.

Livestock Grazing Management

Affected Environment

The Whitman allotment consists of 845 acres of public land ranging in elevation from 5,800-6,400 feet. The most usable portions of the allotment are the flat, open, sagebrush fields many of which have been treated to increase early seral species more favorable to livestock. Use in the

allotment is early in the spring and is focused on cheatgrass and other early growing cool season grasses. There are 4 ponds on the allotment providing sufficient water sources. Most use is concentrated around these ponds. There is no public access to the allotment. Currently the area is being developed for oil-gas resources. Development activities have increased the amount of disturbance and traffic on the allotment significantly.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Under this action grazing would continue to be authorized at the same levels as previous permits. Grazing utilization would continue to be light. Impacts from grazing would be minimal and would be focused around water sources. Fencing to prevent livestock trespass would not be needed.

No Grazing Alternative

Under this alternative this grazing permit would not be renewed. Cancelling grazing use on this allotment may result in economic harm to the permittee. The permittee or adjacent land owner, to protect themselves from trespass proceedings, may need to fence any unfenced portions of their private property where livestock would tend to cross onto public lands. The BLM would likely need to respond to more frequent trespass reports. This alternative would initiate the process in accordance with 43 CFR parts 4100 and 1600 to eliminate grazing on the allotment and devote the land to some other purpose. This alternative would result in amendments to the resource management plan.

Plants: Invasive Non Native Species (Noxious Weeds)

Affected Environment

A landscape-wide inventory has not been completed on this grazing allotment. However, given the widespread nature of noxious weed infestations throughout the area, it is assumed that some level of infestation does exist in this area.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Weeds generally germinate and become established in areas of surface disturbing activities. Livestock grazing can contribute to the establishment and expansion of noxious weeds through various mechanisms. Improperly managed grazing, (over-grazing), can cause a decline in desirable native plant species and ground cover which provides a niche for noxious weed invasion. In addition, noxious weed seed can be transported and introduced to new areas by fecal deposition or by seed that clings to the animal's coat. However, this effect is minimal as compared to other weed seed dispersal vectors such as vehicle routes and ground disturbing activities. Conversely, properly managed livestock grazing which does not create areas of bare ground and which maintains the vigor and health of native plant species, particularly herbaceous species, is not expected to cause a substantial increase in noxious weeds. Since the proposed action was designed to sustain and/or improve land health, no significant impacts to non-native, invasive species are expected. Noxious and invasive plant species are not expected to radically increase as a result of the continuation of livestock grazing practices and most infestations will be isolated to watering facilities, salting areas, and other livestock high concentration locations.

No Grazing Alternative

Under this alternative, no livestock grazing would occur on these allotments and there would be no direct or indirect impacts to weeds from livestock use. Trampling or removal of plant material may still occur from wildlife grazing and noxious weeds may still become established from adjacent areas disturbed for oil and gas development.

Plants: Vegetation

Affected Environment

The Whitman allotment is a low-elevation allotment just south of Silt. Elevation ranges from 5,800 to 6,400 feet. The allotment consists of low hills covered in Pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*) and Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) trees and several broad basins covered in Wyoming sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata Wyomingensis*). The sagebrush parks and basins were brushbeaten in 1993. The brushbeating thinned the sagebrush, but did not increase the cool season perennial species as expected. Cool season, native, perennial species have mostly been replaced by the noxious weed, cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and the introduced annual forb, bur buttercup (*Ranunculus testiculatus*).

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

The existing and proposed grazing schedule on the Whitman allotment is for 60 cows from May 1st to May 31st. Depending on the late fall and early spring weather patterns, cheatgrass should be actively growing and not have set seed during the grazing period. Since cheatgrass is fairly palatable to cattle during this time, much of the livestock forage consumed would consist of cheatgrass. Grazing on cheatgrass may retard its growth or even prevent individual plants from setting seed, which would give a competitive advantage to native grasses. Ending the grazing season by May 31st should provide opportunities for regrowth and seed dissemination for native perennial grasses in years of adequate precipitation. Continuation of livestock grazing, as proposed should maintain or improve current vegetative conditions.

No Grazing Alternative

Under this alternative, no livestock grazing would occur on the Whitman allotment and there would be no direct or indirect impacts to vegetation from livestock use. There would be an increase in vegetative biomass without the presence of livestock to remove vegetative material. Dead and dried stems and seed stalks may build up over time, reducing photosynthetic activity and resulting in less vegetative vigor and biomass in the long-term. Development of natural gas leases would continue, resulting in additional losses of vegetation associated with pads, roads, and other facilities. Big game animals would continue to use the allotment, particularly in the winter, resulting in hedging and decadence of sagebrush.

Land Health Standards

The Whitman allotment was included in a formal land health assessment of the Divide Creek Landscape in 2009. The assessment determined that this allotment was not meeting Standard 3 for healthy plant and animal communities. The primary factors for failing to achieve the standard were that cheatgrass and bur buttercup (introduced, annual species) had replaced native, perennial cool season species and sagebrush was decadent, heavily hedged and in poor vigor. Current livestock grazing was not considered to be a significant causal factor in the failure to achieve the standard.

Since the completion of the assessment, a cheatgrass control project has been initiated on the Whitman allotment. Sagebrush areas heavily infested with cheatgrass are targeted for spraying with Plateau for two consecutive years and then will be reseeded in the third year. These actions should help move the allotment towards meeting Standard 3 for healthy plant communities

Social and Economics

Affected Environment

The majority of CRVFO grazing permits are issued to individuals and businesses within the following counties of Colorado. The median household income within those counties is identified in the following table.

Table 3-3

Local Counties	Median Household Income (2010 US Census)
Garfield	\$62,716
Pitkin	\$69,352
Eagle	\$74,220
Routt	\$64,892

Local communities throughout rural areas in the western United States are often integrally tied to ranching and agriculture. Livestock grazing has been a significant part of the Colorado River valley and surrounding area for more than 100 years. Cattle companies began moving into western Colorado in the early 1870s, using the open range as winter feeding grounds for their herds (Church et al. 2007: 113). By the late 1880s, a more sedentary life of livestock raising became prevalent as ranchers established access to leased lands and irrigated pastures and were able to establish more permanent ranches (Church et al. 2007: 113-114). Many of these ranches, cattle companies, and homesteading families retain their long-standing social and economic ties to the area.

Benefits that local ranches and livestock companies bring to the surrounding communities include jobs, local business revenue, and locally produced meat (Huntsinger and Hopkinson 1996: 167-168). Additionally, reserving tracts of land for livestock grazing can preserve large expanses of contiguous property which are not open to development and segmentation. In combination, these large tracts of ranch land and public land can be beneficial to wildlife, recreation, watersheds, and aesthetics (Huntsinger and Hopkinson 1996: 168). In the West, “49.6% of all public land ranchers” are greatly dependent on ranching as a primary source of their income (Gentner and Tanak 2002: 11). Maintaining historic ties to the land through livestock grazing also preserves traditional family and community land uses. Studies show that ranchers are not only in the livestock business to make a profit, but place great value in the quality of life that comes with the ranching lifestyle (Bartlett et al. 2002).

Challenges to livestock grazing can include financial hardship, over-utilization, limitations from land development, and conflicts with other land users. Encroachment by land developers can raise property taxes and values which can create economic incentive for ranchers to fragment or

sell off their lands (Huntsinger and Hopkinson 1996: 167). Livestock price fluctuations can increase the challenge for ranchers to maintain a profit (Smith and Martin 1972: 224). Livestock owners who use public lands feel pressures from other land users, such as recreationists or oil and gas development, for access and use of land. For example, tension can occur when livestock are startled by mountain bikers or pasture gates are left open. Some public land users, such as hunters, can be affected by poor grazing practices and the resulting impacts to local wildlife and environmental quality. However, the multiple use mission of the Bureau of Land Management requires that the traditional land uses, such as grazing, are managed in a way that accommodates other public land users.

Social and economic impacts of ranching and agriculture can bring both benefits and challenges to the local community. Sustainably managed grazing supports a way of life that has been established since the early twentieth century and can be an opportunity to preserve community tradition, identity, and land use patterns while accommodating other land uses and environmental protections.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Under this alternative grazing would continue at past levels on the allotments. The ranching livelihood, local economic benefit, and cultural settings of the area would continue to be supported and no net increase or loss to the permittee or county would be expected.

No Grazing Alternative

This alternative disproportionately impacts ranches with greater forage needs, higher public forage dependency, and no cost effective forage substitutes. Public forage losses could be replaced with other private leases or hay. Leasing private land can be the least-cost alternative but in many areas is unrealistic due to lack of available agricultural land to lease. Buying hay to compensate for lost forage is a far more expensive option than reducing livestock numbers. (Rowe, 2001) This alternative may also require fencing along the private-BLM boundary to prevent unauthorized use on public lands. These additional costs may result in the conversion of traditional agricultural property to some other use.

The desired social outcomes of the Community Assessment Report identified the importance of rural or western lifestyles and livelihoods in this area. This alternative would hinder the ability of local ranches to maintain economies, but even more importantly, to maintain the rural/western character integral to the larger community identity. (BLM, 2007)

Soils

Affected Environment

A review of the soil survey by the NRCS for the *Rifle Area, Colorado, Parts of Garfield and Mesa Counties* indicate four soil map units occur within the Whitman allotment (NRCS 1985). According to the NRCS soil map unit descriptions (NRCS 2011), a brief soil description is provided below:

Olney loam (51) - This deep, well-drained soil is found on alluvial fans and sides of valleys at elevations ranging from 5,000 to 6,500 feet and on slopes of 6 to 12 percent. Parent material for this soil is sandstone and shale. Erosion hazard is moderate and surface runoff is medium. Primary uses for this soil include grazing, irrigated hay, and fruits.

Potts-Ildefonso complex (58) - This complex is found on mesas, alluvial fans, and the sides of valleys at elevations ranging from 5,000 to 6,500 feet and on slopes of 12 to 25 percent. Parent material for this soil complex consists of sandstone, shale, and basalt. This soil complex is deep, well drained, and has medium surface runoff and moderate erosion hazard. Uses for this soil complex include limited grazing and wildlife habitat.

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

Torriorthents-Rock outcrop complex, steep (67) - This complex consists of stony soils and exposed outcrops of Mesa Verde sandstone and Wasatch shale that occur on slopes of 15 to 70 percent. Approximately 60 percent of this complex is Torriorthents and 25 percent is Rock outcrop. The Torriorthents are clayey to loamy and contain gravel, cobbles, and stones; many of which are basaltic in origin. They are found on mountainsides below the Rock outcrop. Erosion hazard for this complex varies from moderate to severe. Primary uses for this complex include limited grazing, wildlife habitat, and recreation.

During the 2009 land health assessment, BLM staff found soil conditions within the Whitman allotment were meeting land health standards, with no more than slight to moderate departures from expected conditions (BLM 2009).

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Grazing activities could result in direct 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. Indirect impacts include soil erosion and gullyng. Improper livestock grazing may cause substantial ground disturbance. Based on existing soil conditions and generally good vegetative cover; the likelihood of livestock grazing contributing to excessive soil degradation and transport to nearby drainages is not expected. Allowing for adaptive management may also provide for better protection of soil and upland vegetation conditions. Implementation of the proposed action is not anticipated to degrade soil health from current conditions.

No Grazing Alternative

Under this alternative, no livestock grazing would occur on these allotments and there would be no direct or indirect impacts to soils from livestock use. Trampling or removal of plant material may still occur from wildlife grazing and elk wallowing. In addition, soil disturbance and erosion may persist due to other surface disturbing activities (i.e. roads, trails, oil and gas development) occurring within the allotment.

Land Health Standard 1 for Upland Soils

Based on the Divide Creek Land Health Assessment, BLM staff concluded that soils are meeting Standard 1 on a site by site basis (BLM 2009). Implementation of the proposed action is not anticipated to degrade soils from current conditions.

Water Quality Surface and Ground

Affected Environment

The Whitman Allotment is contained within two 6th field watersheds that include the ‘Colorado River above Rifle’ and the ‘Lower Divide Creek’. The Colorado River above Rifle watershed contains several unnamed ephemeral tributaries to the Colorado River to the north while the Lower Divide Creek watershed contains an unnamed ephemeral tributary to the perennial Divide Creek to the west. No water quality data was collected as part of the 2009 land health assessment, due to the lack of perennial water throughout the allotment.

The State of Colorado has developed *Stream Classifications and Water Quality Standards* (CDPHE 2010a) that identify beneficial uses of water and numeric standards used to determine allowable concentrations of water quality parameters. The drainages throughout the allotments are tributaries to the Lower Colorado River Basin and have water use classifications described below:

Table 3-4

LOWER COLORADO RIVER BASIN		
Stream Segment Description	Classifications	Water Quality
4a. All tributaries, including wetlands, to the Colorado River from the confluence with the Roaring Fork River to a point immediately below the confluence with Parachute Creek.	Aquatic Life Cold 2 Recreation N Water Supply Agriculture	D.O.=6.0 mg/l pH=6.5-9.0 E.Coli=630/100ml

Aquatic life cold 2 are waters that are not capable of sustaining a wide variety of cold water biota, including sensitive species, due to physical habitat, water flows, or levels, or uncorrectable water quality conditions that result in substantial impairment of the abundance and diversity of species. Recreation class N refers to waters that are not suitable or intended to become suitable for primary contact recreation. Water supply and agriculture refer to stream segments that are suitable or intended to become suitable for potable water supplies and suitable for irrigation or livestock use.

The State of Colorado has developed a *303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments Requiring TMDLS and Monitoring and Evaluation List* (CDPHE 2010b) that identifies stream segments

that are not currently meeting water quality standards with technology based controls alone. The unnamed intermittent/ephemeral drainages mentioned above are within the Lower Colorado River Basin segment COLCLC04a that is 303(d) listed as impaired due to Selenium. This segment has been given a medium priority by the State of Colorado to develop a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), a value of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards. Selenium is mobilized in the ecosystem primarily by irrigation and naturally by rainfall and snowmelt, in selenium rich soils, such as Mancos Shale. Consequently, the proposed action has minimal effects on selenium transport to the Colorado River.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

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. Due to the lack of perennial drainages within the allotments, there is little potential that additional sediment associated with grazing practices as well as fecal coliform bacteria from livestock feces would reach the Colorado River or Divide Creek. Based on existing area conditions and the lack of perennial drainages in the allotments, no mitigation is being proposed at this time. No irrigation or additional stock ponds are proposed in which selenium could be mobilized into nearby waterways; as such the proposed grazing activity would have little impact on selenium transport.

No Grazing Alternative

Under this alternative, no livestock grazing would occur on these allotments and there would be no direct or indirect impacts to water quality from livestock use. Trampling or removal of plant material may still occur from wildlife grazing, and soil disturbance and erosion may persist due to other surface disturbing activities (i.e. roads, trails, oil and gas development) occurring within the allotment and could potentially affect water quality.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 5 for Water Quality

During the Land Health Assessment, BLM staff determined that livestock grazing did not appear to be negatively impacting water quality (BLM 2009). However, the intermittent tributaries in this allotment are listed on the State's 303(d) list of impaired water quality for selenium contribution to the Colorado River, and therefore are not meeting Land Health Standard 5.

Wetlands and Riparian Zones

Affected Environment

Riparian areas exist in conjunction with two springs/seeps and three stock ponds throughout the allotment. One mature cottonwood marks the location of the Whitman Spring #1, and other riparian vegetation throughout the allotment was noted as herbaceous and facultative riparian species. Riparian vegetation is limited to short distances directly below the spring sources, and within and around the mostly silted in stock ponds. Tamarisk is also present around the stock ponds. The Whitman Spring No1 was impounded during some recent natural gas road and pipeline construction. The small impoundment is supporting very limited riparian vegetation such as cattails. No Properly Functioning Condition (PFC) assessments for the spring sources

were evaluated in the Whitman Allotment during the 2009 land health assessment, primarily due to the lack of perennial water.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Direct impacts of livestock grazing on riparian vegetation include defoliation of riparian plant species, trampling of riparian vegetation and soil compaction. Indirect impacts such as stream bank instability and sedimentation to surface water may also occur. The proposed action allows for a period of grazing rest throughout most of the growing season. This would allow for grazing rest and recovery time for riparian plant species, which could minimize potential adverse impacts.

No Grazing Alternative

Under this alternative, no livestock grazing would occur on the allotment and there would be no direct or indirect impacts to riparian areas from livestock use. Trampling or removal of riparian vegetation may still occur from wildlife grazing and elk wallowing. In addition, soil disturbance and erosion may persist due to other surface disturbing activities (i.e. roads, trails, oil and gas development) occurring within the allotment and continue to impact riparian functionality.

Land Health Standard 2 for Riparian Systems

During the Divide Creek Land Health Assessment, BLM staff did not rate riparian health in the Whitman allotment due to the lack of perennial water. Based on past and present conditions within the allotment, the proposed action would not likely prevent Standard 2 for riparian conditions from being met. Implementation of the proposed action is not anticipated to degrade riparian conditions from current conditions.

Wildlife: Terrestrial – including Migratory Birds; Sensitive Threatened and Endangered Species)

Affected Environment

The small allotment does not support aquatic species but it supports terrestrial wildlife species that summer, winter, or migrate through the region. 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.

Mammals. Numerous small mammals may reside within allotment or the surrounding 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 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.

Reptiles and Amphibians. Reptile species possible in the area 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/riparian areas. 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*). The allotment does not contain any fish-bearing streams however springs and stock ponds could provide habitat for species such as the Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*), Great Basin Spadefoot Toad (*Spea intermontana*) or the Western Toad (*Bufo boreas*).

Resident Raptors and Other Birds: 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 CRVFO 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*).

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 throughout the CRVFO.

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.

Migratory Birds. BLM lands within the CRVFO provide both foraging and nesting habitat for a variety of migratory birds that summer, winter, or migrate through the area. 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 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 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandates the 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*” (USFWS 2008) is the most recent effort to carry out this mandate. The CRVFO is within the Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau Bird Conservation Region (BCR). The 2008 list of Birds of Conservation Concern potentially present, and not discussed above, are described in Table 3-5.

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 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.

Table 3-5: 2008 List of Birds of Conservation Concern within the CRVFO.

Species	Habitat Description Summaries	Potential Occurrences in Project Area	Potentially Impacted
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Bald eagles were removed from the federal threatened and endangered species list in 2007 but are still protected under the MBTA. Bald eagles occasionally summer in this region but usually winter (mid-Nov. to mid-April) along portions of the Colorado, Eagle and Roaring Fork Rivers and their major tributaries. 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.	Irregular	No
Ferruginous Hawk (<i>Buteo regalis</i>)	Open, rolling and/or rugged terrain in grasslands and shrubsteppe communities; also grasslands and cultivated fields; nests on cliffs and rocky outcrops. Fall/winter resident, non-breeding.	Unlikely	No
Golden Eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)	Open country, grasslands, woodlands, and barren areas in hilly or mountainous terrain; nests on rocky outcrops or large trees. Year-round resident, breeding.	Present	No
Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrines</i>)	Open country near cliff habitat, often near water such as rivers, lakes, and marshes; nests on ledges or holes on cliff faces and crags. Spring/summer resident, breeding.	Unlikely	No
Pinyon Jay (<i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i>)	Common to abundant resident of pinyon-juniper woodlands. Year-round resident that travels broadly in flocks.	Present	No

Species	Habitat Description Summaries	Potential Occurrences in Project Area	Potentially Impacted
Juniper Titmouse (<i>Baeolophus ridgwayi</i>)	Pinyon-juniper woodlands, especially juniper; nests in tree cavities. Year-round resident, breeding.	Present	No

Special Status Terrestrial Wildlife Species. Table 3-6 summarizes the latest: 1) species list (USFWS 2010) from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Federally listed, proposed, or candidate terrestrial wildlife species and 2) Colorado BLM State Director's Sensitive Species List (BLM 2009a) for terrestrial species; that may occur within the CRVFO and be impacted by the proposed action.

Table 3-6: Special Status Terrestrial Wildlife Species.

Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Terrestrial Wildlife Species		
No Federally listed species potentially impacted.		
Colorado BLM Sensitive Terrestrial Wildlife Species		
Species	Habitat/Range Summaries	Occurrence/ Potentially Impacted
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 of Colorado. Habitat associations are not well defined. Both bats will forage over water and along the edge of vegetation for aerial insects. These bats commonly roost in caves, rock crevices, mines, buildings or tree cavities. Both species are widely distributed and usually occur in small groups. Townsend's big-eared bat is not very abundant anywhere in its range. This is attributed to patchy distribution and limited availability of suitable roosting habitat (Gruver, J.C. and D.A. Keinath 2006).	Possible /No
Brewer's sparrow (<i>Spizella berweri</i>)	Neotropical migrant that summers in western Colorado mountain parks and spring/fall migrant at lower elevations. A sagebrush shrubland obligate with an apparently secure conservation status in Colorado.	Possible /Yes
American Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrines anatum</i>)	Rare spring and fall migrant in western valleys. Peregrine falcons inhabit open spaces associated with high cliffs and bluffs overlooking rivers. The falcon nests on high cliffs and forages over nearby woodlands.	Possible /No

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Livestock grazing can alter vegetation structure, composition, and function. On the other hand, livestock grazing can have a beneficial effect on forage quality by removing the rough or dried seedheads and stems, while leaving or creating the more palatable leaves for deer or elk to graze later in the season. Effects on terrestrial wildlife are dependent on the species of interest and may be adverse or beneficial depending on grazing numbers, timing, frequency, and intensity.

Since the livestock AUMs authorized are estimated to remove 50% or less of the annual vegetative component - thereby leaving no less than 50% of the vegetative resource for use by wildlife - the proposed action would provide for adequate amounts of herbaceous vegetation necessary to continue to meet the needs of the various terrestrial wildlife species. Grazing at up to 50% of current year's growth would be expected to maintain vertical and horizontal vegetative structure and complexity where it presently exists. The proposed periods of use (5/1 – 5/31)

would allow for herbaceous and woody plant recovery and regrowth following defoliation in the spring. No current issues between terrestrial wildlife and grazing are known. It is unlikely that the proposed action would influence terrestrial wildlife populations locally or on a landscape level. Also see the vegetation and riparian sections.

Routine maintenance of fences, waters and other livestock operations should not negatively impact terrestrial wildlife or their habitats over the ten-year term of the permits. Such activities would be short term in duration and localized and would not result in new surface disturbances or loss of habitat.

No Grazing Alternative

In the absence of livestock grazing, any competition for forage between livestock and terrestrial wildlife would be eliminated, and the public land within the allotment would be available for exclusive use by wildlife, without disturbance by the presence of livestock. However other land uses or authorizations affecting wildlife would continue to occur. Since the proposed action only affects public lands, fenced private lands could see an increase in livestock use to make up for the loss cattle forage.

Land Health Standard 3 and 4 for Terrestrial Wildlife Communities

The Whitman allotment was included in a formal land health assessment of the Divide Creek Landscape in 2009. The assessment determined that this allotment was meeting Standard 3 for terrestrial wildlife. Current livestock grazing was not considered to be a significant causal factor in the failure to achieve the standard.

Renewal of the same number/kind of livestock, period of use, percent public land and AUMs as the current livestock grazing permit would likely result in maintaining the current ecological condition of the allotments. The current habitat trends lead to a conclusion that the proposed action (continuation of current management) should have little bearing on the area's ability to continue to meet LHSs for terrestrial wildlife species.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS:

Soil and Water. Cumulative impacts to soil and water resources can occur from existing roads and trails throughout the allotment. Roads and trails can contribute to increased surface runoff and accelerated erosion, especially where proper drainage is lacking. Other impacts such as vegetation treatments or weed treatments may also change water infiltration or runoff rates and affect soil and water resources. Natural gas development, which includes road construction/maintenance, pads and pipelines have both direct and indirect effects to soil and water resources, by altering infiltration rates and causing increased erosion. However, based on limited land management activities occurring across the allotment, it is assumed that cumulative effects to soil and water are minor, if proper best management practices are implemented.

Wildlife (including Special Status Species). The area covered by the proposed action only comprises a small portion of the watershed. Many other land use activities (e.g., recreation, gas development, road construction/maintenance) occur within the allotment boundaries and the watershed. All of these activities have altered the amount of suitable and potentially suitable habitats for terrestrial wildlife species. 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 would create negligible landscape-level cumulative impacts to wildlife when viewed in comparison with those activities currently occurring and reasonably certain to occur on adjacent private/other lands.

RESIDUAL EFFECTS AFTER MITIGATION MEASURES HAVE BEEN APPLIED:

None

4. Tribes, Individuals, Organizations or Agencies Consulted

Erin Leifeld consulted with the Southern Ute Tribe, Ute Tribe of the Uinta and Ouray Bands, and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe regarding this proposal.

Grazing permittee

5. List of Preparers

Members of the CRVFO Interdisciplinary Team who participated in the impact analysis of the Proposed Action, development of appropriate mitigation measures, and preparation of this EA are listed in Table 5-1, along with their areas of responsibility.

Table 5-1 BLM Interdisciplinary Team Authors and Reviewers		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Areas of Participation</i>
Isaac Pittman	Rangeland Management Specialist	NEPA Lead, Range Management
Pauline Adams	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Water Quality, Soils, Wetlands & Riparian Zones
Carla DeYoung	Ecologist	ACEC, Vegetation, T/E/S Plants, Land Health Standards
Greg Wolfgang	Outdoor Recreation Planner	VRM, Recreation, Travel Management
Kimberly Miller	Outdoor Recreation Planner	WSR, Wilderness, Recreation
Erin Leifeld	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns
Brian Hopkins	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, Terrestrial Wildlife and T/E/S Terrestrial Wildlife, Aquatic Wildlife and T/E/S Aquatic Wildlife
Monte Senor	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-native Species

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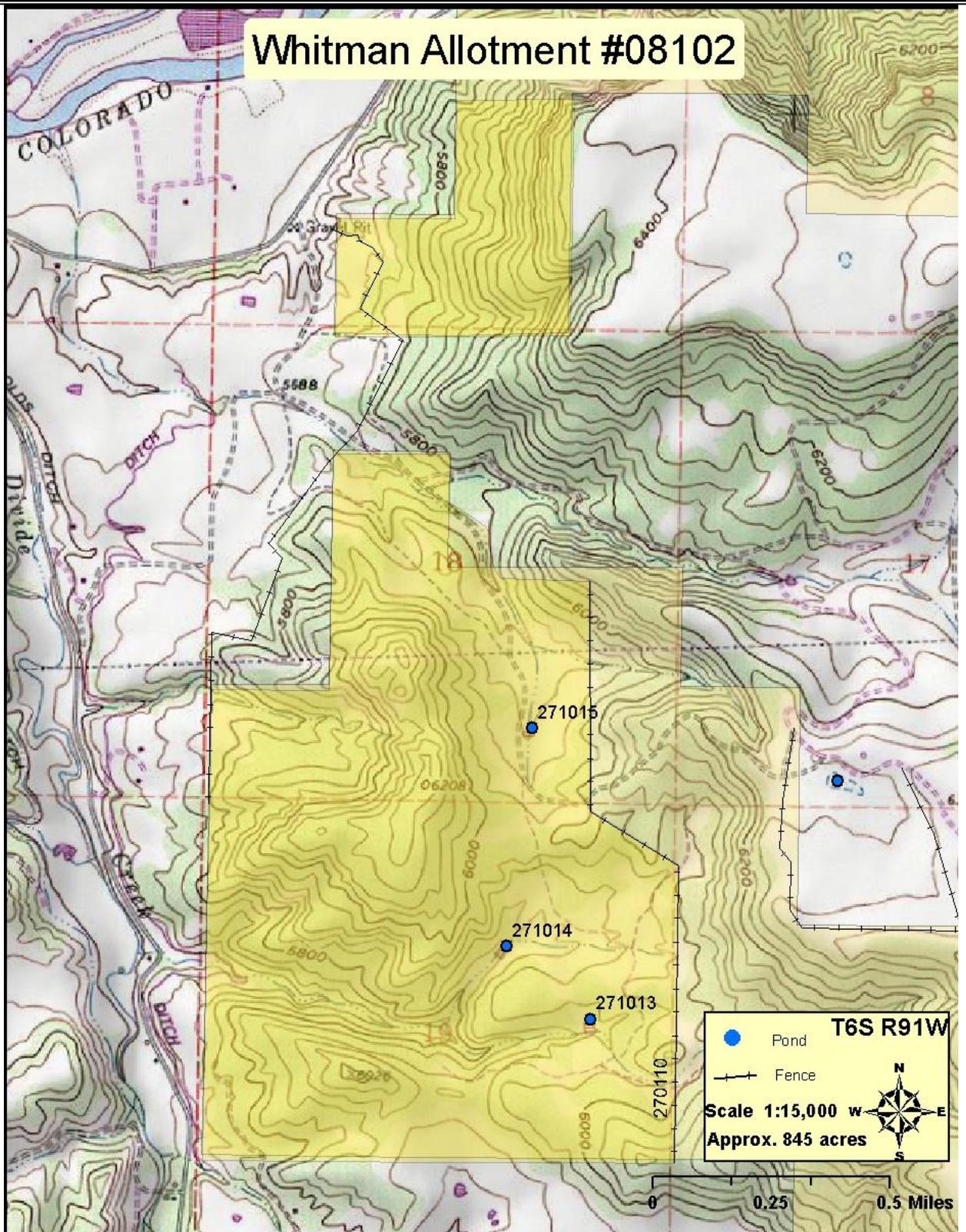
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Appendix 1 – Grazing Allotment Map



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
COLORADO RIVER VALLEY FIELD OFFICE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Grazing Permit Renewal on the Whitman Allotment

DOI-BLM-N040-2012-0012-EA

Finding of No Significant Impact

I have reviewed the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed action documented in the EA for the grazing permit renewal on the Whitman Allotment. 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 this livestock grazing permit renewal are identified and discussed in the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences section of the EA. The proposed action will not have any significant beneficial or adverse impacts on the resources identified and described in the EA.

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

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

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as prime and unique farmlands, caves, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness study areas, or ACECs.

No unique characteristics occur in the allotment.

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

The possible effects of continued livestock grazing are not likely to be 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 Whitman Allotment. 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 area covered by the proposed action only comprises a small portion of the watershed. 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 would create negligible landscape-level cumulative impacts to wildlife when viewed in conjunction with those activities currently occurring and reasonably certain to occur on adjacent private/other lands.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Of the 36 cultural resources identified, 5 have been determined eligible or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Subsequent site field visits, inventory, and periodic monitoring may have to be done to identify if other historic properties are present as well as determine if there are impacts to these properties within the term of the permit and as funds are made available. If the BLM determines that grazing activities adversely impact the properties, mitigation will be identified and implemented in consultation with the Colorado SHPO. The EA discloses the adverse impacts that could occur to cultural resources from livestock grazing.

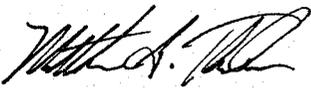
9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

There is no endangered or threatened species or its habitat included within the assessment area.

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 Officer
Colorado River Valley Field Office

2-10-2012

Date