



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-040-2013-0022 EA**

CASEFILE NUMBER:

PROJECT NAME: Authorizing trailing use with terms and conditions

LOCATION: Throughout the Colorado River Field Office

LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS: See attached map

APPLICANT: Grazing Permittees

BACKGROUND:

On April 12, 2012, the Washington Office issued Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. 2012-096. This policy/action resulted in the need to “review planning and implementation decisions regarding the trailing of livestock across public lands, including but not limited to, issuance of crossing permits or trailing authorizations or permits, under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.” The Washington Office guidance was followed up with more specific Colorado State Office guidance issued on July, 19 2012 in IM No. CO-2012-031.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION:

To follow the guidance in the grazing regulations (43 CFR 1400); WO IM 2012-096; the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1); Colorado IM No. CO-2012-002 Processing Livestock Grazing Permit Applications; 36 CFR 800; BLM Manual 8100; and the Colorado Protocol (1998) as clarified in the memorandum.

Decision to be made: Whether or not to authorize trailing use associated with grazing permits.

SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES:

This action was scoped internally with the NEPA Interdisciplinary Team on (May 2, 2012). Issues raised during the internal scoping are itemized in table 3-1 and analyzed in Section 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects.

The Colorado River Valley Field Office Internet NEPA Register lists grazing NEPA documents that have been initiated. They are generally posted approximately one month prior to the estimated completion date. No public comments specific to this proposed action have been received.

2. Proposed Action and Alternatives

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to authorize trailing use with the following term and condition:

“This trailing use authorization is effective upon payment of the amount due and has no priority for renewal and cannot be transferred or assigned. Trailing use must be applied for and approved annually prior to the trailing use occurring.”

Livestock trailing use would be occurring for 1 day immediately prior to and/or following the grazing begin and end dates on existing grazing permits.

Trailing routes specific to this EA are the Northwater/Long Ridge Trail, Harvey Gap Trail, Jackson Gulch Trail, Red Hill Trail, Trail Gulch Trail, and Bocco Mtn. Trail and are identified in the attached map. Trailing dates will be coordinated with BLM staff internally to avoid overlapping permitted activities. Numbers of livestock authorized for trailing use under this EA will vary but will not exceed 200 cattle or 2,000 sheep at one time. In most cases the number of livestock would be much lower.

In all but one case the same trail would be used for ingress and egress. On the Northwater/Long Ridge Trail, the Long Ridge Trail would be used in the spring and the Northwater Trail would be used in the fall.

Future grazing permit renewals will continue to address any trailing use occurring outside of the authorized grazing allotment or outside of the authorized dates on the allotment. This action does not include trailing use on State or County roadways. Livestock trails would be monitored to determine if resource concerns arise.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL

The “No Action” alternative has been eliminated from further consideration. This alternative would involve continuing the current management which would not conform to the guidance described above.

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; amended in March 2009 - Record of Decision for the Designation of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern for the Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan; and amended in October 2012 - Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/ Record of Decision (ROD) for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States.

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 trailing routes identified in this EA are located in several different Land Health Assessment units. 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 Effects

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 effects 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.

<i>Table 3-1. Programs, Resources, and Uses (Including Supplemental Authorities)</i>	<i>Potentially Affected?</i>	
	Yes	No
Access and Transportation		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
Forests		X
Geology and Minerals		X
Law Enforcement		X
Livestock Grazing Management	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

Social and/or 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 / Fisheries	X	
Wildlife: Migratory Birds	X	
Wildlife: Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered Species	X	
Wildlife: Terrestrial	X	

Cultural Resources

Affected Environment

A records search of the general project area, and a Class III inventory of the Area of Potential Effect (APE), as defined in the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), was completed by the CRVFO BLM archaeologist and crew (CRVFO CRIR# 1012-32). During these inventories, four sites (5GF.4869, 5GF.4872, 5EA.2988, 5EA.2994) and nine, not eligible isolated finds (5GF.4870-4873 and 5EA.2989-2993) were documented. Out of the four sites, 5EA.2988, a prehistoric lithic scatter, is the only eligible site. Additionally site 5EA.478 was revisited as a part of this project because the proposed trailing route goes through this site following the existing single-track trail. Based on assessment, the site is currently being impacted by this trail but will be mitigated by rerouting the trail. The areas inventoried had patches of thick vegetation (mainly oak brush) where cultural resource inventory was not possible. Areas of thick vegetation are located off the direct trailing route and naturally confine livestock to the trail, verses spreading out along the trail, which would reduce impacts to unknown cultural resources in these areas. The project inventory and evaluation is in compliance with the NHPA, the Colorado State Protocol Agreement, and other federal law, regulation, policy, and guidelines regarding cultural resources.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Eligible site 5EA.2988 is located outside of the trailing route and will not be impacted during project use. Site 5EA.478 will be mitigated for impact by rerouting the current single-track trail to avoid further impacts. All other cultural resources will not be impacted by this action. The project has a determination of *no historic properties affected* based on consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) if mitigation measures are followed (see mitigation).

Mitigation

Site 5EA478 is currently being impacted by a single-track trail that goes through a portion of the site. The route will be rerouted to avoid further impacts to the site. Until the single-track trail is

re-routed, nearby existing roads will be used for livestock trailing. Additional areas or changes in the project implementation may require additional archaeological inspection by a qualified archaeologist.

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). In summary, 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 and ensure, 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 some 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.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Native American tribal consultation was conducted for the proposed undertaking with the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe on April 15, 2013. No concerns or comments were received regarding this project. No areas of concern to Native American tribes were identified during project inventory or during tribal consultation.

Mitigation

Additional areas or changes in the project implementation may require additional tribal consultation.

Livestock Grazing

Affected Environment

This analysis is specific to the trailing routes identified in the proposed action and further outlined on the attached map. Trailing would be authorized in the following grazing allotments: JQS Common #18908, Elk Park Common #18032, Jackson Gulch #18046, Red Hill Common #08507, Trail Gulch #08642, and Bocco Mtn. #08730.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Permitting existing trailing use would not give a permittee grazing preference in the allotment that they are trailing through; it would only authorize the trailing use. The authorization for trailing use must be applied for annually and approved annually prior to the trailing use occurring and previously authorized trailing use does not constitute grazing preference that can be transferred to another permittee. Forage amounts are not expected to be impacted since trailing would usually occur within a few hours. Specific dates are not proposed as part of this action which allows maximum flexibility for trailing use applications. It is anticipated, though, that trailing would occur immediately prior to and/or after the beginning and ending dates on grazing permits to allow for movement onto and off of a grazing allotment where adjacent public lands must be crossed. Coordination with grazing permittees whose allotments are being crossed would be necessary to prevent causing harm to their operations. Consistent trailing use will likely establish a “livestock trail” which may have additional impacts mentioned in other portions of this document. Livestock trails would be monitored to determine if resource concerns arise.

Plants: Invasive Non-Native Species (Noxious Weeds)

Affected Environment

The proposed action identifies six authorized trails: Northwater Trail, Long Ridge Trail, Harvey Gap Trail, Jackson Gulch Trail, Red Hill Trail, Trail Gulch Trail, and Bocco Mtn Trail. The respective allotments associated with these trails are: JQS Common #18908, Elk Park Common #18032, Jackson Gulch #18046, Red Hill Common #08507, Trail Gulch #08642, and Bocco Mtn. #08730. Noxious weeds and invasive plants are known to have occurred in the past in or near the allotments in the proposed action. Table 3-2 lists GIS-documented noxious weed infestations that exist within the vicinity of the proposed action area.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Statewide List Type
<i>Acroptilon repens</i>	Russian knapweed	B List
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Canada thistle	B List
<i>Verbascum thapsus L.</i>	Common mullein	C List
<i>Cirsium vulgare (Savi) Ten.</i>	Bull thistle	B List
<i>Cynoglossum officinale L.</i>	Houndstongue	B List
<i>Carduus acanthoides L.</i>	Plumeless thistle	B List
<i>Onopordum acanthium L.</i>	Scotch thistle	B List
<i>Tamarix spp.</i>	Salt cedar	B List
<i>Arctium minus Bernh.</i>	Common burdock	C List

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

The proposed action is in line with past actions, which could be one factor of many that possibly contributes to the level of noxious weeds present. The likelihood of livestock trailing increasing the spread of noxious weeds is low. Livestock can contribute to the spread of noxious weeds through both feed and seeds or propogules that cling to coats or hooves. The livestock handler or horses used to move livestock could also serve as vectors that contribute to the spread of invasive species. Short duration livestock trailing events, typically, results in negligible forage utilization by grazing. Biological control of invasive species through grazing would be expected to be

minimal. Most plant defoliation occurs with trampling, which could provide a niche for the establishment of noxious weeds or other invasive species.

Many abiotic and biotic factors contribute to the presence and spread of noxious weeds. The proposed action does not alter these other factors. It would not be expected that noxious weeds or invasive plant species will radically increase or decrease as a result of the proposed action.

Mitigation

Continue to inventory and map current infestations. If noxious weeds and invasive plant species populations degrade land health develop and implement an integrated pest management strategy to control infestations.

Plants: Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered

Affected Environment

The six proposed livestock trails in the proposed action occur in Garfield and Eagle Counties, Colorado. According to the latest species list from the USFWS, four Federally listed plant species may occur within or be impacted by actions occurring in Garfield or Eagle County. In addition, there are six BLM sensitive plant species with occupied or potential habitat in Garfield or Eagle Counties. Table 3-3 lists these species and summarizes information on their habitat descriptions and potential for occurrence in the project vicinity based on known geographic range and habitats present.

Table 3-3. Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Plants

Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Plant Species		
<i>Species and Status</i>	<i>Habitat Description</i>	<i>Potential For Occurrence</i>
Colorado hookless cactus (<i>Sclerocactus glaucus</i>) – Threatened	Rocky hills, mesa slopes, and alluvial benches in salt desert shrub communities; often with well-formed microbiotic crusts; can occur in dense cheatgrass. 4,500 to 6,600 feet	No: The project area is above the elevational range of this species and no rocky, salt desert shrub habitat is present.
DeBeque phacelia (<i>Phacelia submutica</i>) – Threatened	Sparsely vegetated, expansive clay soils derived from the Atwell Gulch and Shire Members of the Wasatch Formation; 4,700 to 6,200 feet. In salt desert shrubland or scattered juniper woodland	No: The project area is above the elevational range of this species and no exposures of the Wasatch formation are present.
Parachute penstemon (<i>Penstemon debilis</i>) -- Threatened	Steep, sparsely vegetated, white shale talus of the Parachute Creek Member of the Green River Formation; 8,000 to 9,200 feet	No: The Green River Formation is present within Northwater Creek, but not the specific Parachute Creek Member.
Ute ladies'-tresses orchid (<i>Spiranthes diluvialis</i>) – Threatened	Subirrigated alluvial soils along streams, lakes or wetland areas; 4,500 to 7,000 feet	No: The proposed trailing areas are above the upper elevational range of this species
BLM Sensitive Plant Species		
Cathedral Bluffs meadowrue (<i>Thalictrum heliophilum</i>)	Endemic on sparsely vegetated, dry shale slopes of the Green River Formation between 6,200 and 8,800 feet in elevation.	Unlikley: Dry shale barrens present only along Northwater Creek. No occurrences of this species documented here.

DeBeque milkvetch (<i>Astragalus debequaeus</i>)	Found on varicolored, fine-textured soils of the Wasatch Formation in the vicinity of DeBeque and Rulison, Colorado. Elevations of known populations are between 5,100 and 6,400 feet.	No: The project area is above the elevational range of this species and has no exposures of the Wasatch Formation.
Harrington's penstemon (<i>Penstemon harringtonii</i>)	Wyoming or mountain sagebrush or mixed mountain shrub communities on rocky loam or rocky clay loam soils between 6,200 to 10,000 feet.	Yes: Known populations exist along the Red Hill trail. Potential habitat near Trail Gulch and Bocco Mountain.
Naturita milkvetch (<i>Astragalus naturitensis</i>)	Sandstone mesas, ledges, crevices, and slopes in pinyon-juniper woodlands between 5,000 and 7,000 feet. In shallow soils over exposed bedrock.	No: No sandstone rimrock or ledges present in project area
Piceance bladderpod (<i>Lesquerella parviflora</i>)	A western Colorado endemic on shale outcrops of the Green River Formation, on ledges and slopes of canyons in open areas; 6,200 to 8,600 feet.	Unlikely: Some exposed Green River Formation along Northwater Creek. No known occurrences in CRVFO
Roan Cliffs blazing star (<i>Mentzelia rhizomata</i>)	On steep talus slopes of the Green River Formation from 5,800 to 9,000 feet.	Unlikely: This species has been documented along lower Northwater Creek, but few exposed talus slopes in upper Northwater Creek.

Cathedral Bluffs meadowrue, Piceance bladderpod and Roan Cliffs blazing star all occur on exposed shales of the Green River Formation, usually on steep talus slopes, but occasionally in washes draining from these slopes where shales have eroded down into the wash bottoms. Although there are small patches of exposed Green River shales along upper Northwater Creek, near the Northwater Creek trail, none of these species have been documented in the area.

Harrington's penstemon is known to occur within the sagebrush parks along the Red Hill trail and potential habitat occurs along portions of the Bocco Mountain and Trail Gulch trails.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Due to the absence of any occupied or suitable habitat for any listed plants within the project vicinity, the project would have "No Effect" on any ESA- listed plant species.

A few small patches of suitable habitat for Cathedral Bluffs meadowrue, Piceance bladderpod, and Roan Cliffs blazingstar are located along upper Northwater Creek. However, since no occurrences of these plants are known within the proposed action area, the proposed action would have no impact on these BLM sensitive plant species.

Concentrated livestock trailing may cause trampling damage to Harrington's penstemon plants. Trailing through a population may result in crushing or uprooting of plants or herbivory of flowering stalks which are palatable to livestock and wildlife when in bloom. This may result in the loss of individual plants; however, overall impacts on the population are likely to be minor since livestock move through the population only for one day in the spring and fall.

Land Health Standards for Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered Plants

The proposed trailing routes occur within multiple land health assessment units. BLM staff concluded that Standard 4 for special status plants was being met on all allotments within the project area, with the exception of the JQS allotment ((BLM 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009). This allotment was not meeting the standard due to a declining population of Parachute penstemon on the south rim of the Roan Plateau. This population is not within the vicinity of any proposed trailing activities and implementation of the proposed action would not affect this population. The proposed action is not anticipated to result in a failure to meet the standard for Harrington's penstemon or any other special status species.

Plants: Vegetation

Affected Environment

The six proposed trailing routes occur in a variety of elevations and vegetation types. The dominant vegetation for each proposed trailing route is described below.

Northwater/Long Ridge

Vegetation along Northwater Creek drainage includes mountain big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. vaseyana*), green rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*) and riparian grasses and forbs. Vegetation along Long Ridge is dominated by mountain big sagebrush, Utah serviceberry (*Amelanchier utahensis*), common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos rotundifolia*), and aspen (*Populus tremuloides*).

Harvey Gap

The Harvey Gap trail is a low-elevation route dominated by Wyoming sagebrush shrublands and pinyon-juniper (*Pinus edulis-Juniperus osteosperma*) woodlands. The trail also crosses Dry Rifle Creek which supports an herbaceous riparian community.

Jackson Gulch

Vegetation along the Jackson Gulch trail is predominantly P-J woodlands with small parks of Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. Wyomingensis*) at the lower elevations with Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelii*) and riparian woodlands at the upper elevations.

Red Hill

The lower elevations of the Red Hill trail cross through Wyoming and Basin big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. tridentata*) transitioning into P-J woodlands and then mountain big sagebrush/serviceberry/snowberry shrublands at the upper elevations.

Trail Gulch

The lower Trail Gulch trail begins in a grassland community of needle-and-thread (*Hesperostipa comata*) with scattered winterfat (*Krashenninekovia lanata*) and then transitions to a Pinyon-juniper woodland community with numerous sagebrush parks.

Bocco Mountain

The Bocco Mountain trail begins in the narrow canyon of Rube Creek lined with narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus lanceolata*) riparian woodlands, ascends into Pinyon-juniper woodlands,

and finally into mountain big sagebrush shrublands with scattered mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*) and snowberry.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

All trailing use will occur within one day resulting in negligible consumption of vegetation. Portions of the trailing routes will utilize existing roads and trails, which will have minor impacts to vegetation, unless livestock drift away from the roads. Where trailing use will occur cross-country, livestock directly impact vegetation through trampling of herbaceous plants and mechanical breakage of woody stems. Trampling may cause damage or uprooting of plants which may result in a minor loss of vegetative cover along the trailing route. Surface disturbance associated with the trailing use may provide a niche for the invasion of noxious weeds or other invasive species.

Land Health Standards for Plant Communities

The proposed trailing routes occur within multiple land health assessment units. BLM staff concluded that Standard 3 for healthy plant communities was being met on all allotments within the proposed action area at the time of the assessments ((BLM 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009). The proposed action is not anticipated to result in a failure to meet the standard for vegetation.

Socio-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 3-4

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.

Soils

Affected Environment

A review of the soil surveys by the NRCS for the *Rifle Area, Colorado, Parts of Garfield and Mesa Counties* and *Aspen-Gypsum Area, Colorado, Parts of Eagle, Garfield and Pitkin Counties* indicate over 30 soil map units occur across the proposed livestock trailing routes (NRCS 1985, 1992). The NRCS soil map unit descriptions (NRCS 2011) are provided below for the dominant soils for each proposed trailing area:

JQS :

Northwater loam (48) – This deep, well-drained soil is found on mountainsides at elevations ranging from 7,600 to 8,400 feet and on slopes of 15 to 65 percent. The Northwater loam is derived from sedimentary rocks. Surface runoff for this soil is slow and the erosion hazard is slight.

Parachute-Rhone loams (53) –The Parachute soil is derived from sandstone and or marlstone while the Rhone soil is derived from fine-grained sandstone. The Parachute soil is moderately deep, well drained, and has a moderate erosion hazard with medium surface runoff. The Rhone soil is deep, well drained, and has a slight erosion hazard with slow surface runoff.

Harvey Gap trail:

Cushman-Lazear stony loam (21) – This soil map unit is found on mountainsides and mesa breaks at elevations ranging from 5,000 to 7,000 feet and on slopes of 15 to 65 percent. They are derived from sandstone and shale rocks. The Cushman soil is moderately deep, well drained and has medium surface runoff with severe erosion hazard. The Lazear soil is shallow, well drained and has moderately rapid surface runoff with severe erosion hazard.

Jackson Gulch:

Morval-Tridell complex (45) – This soil map unit is found on alluvial fans and the sides of mesas at elevations ranging from 6,500 to 8,000 feet and on slopes of 6 to 25 percent. The Morval soil makes up about 55 percent of the unit and is found on lower slopes while the Tridell soil makes up about 30 percent of the unit and is found on the sides of mesas. Both soils are deep, well drained and have medium surface runoff and moderate erosion hazard.

Cochetopa-Jerry complex (19) – These moderately steep soils are found on mountainsides at elevations ranging from 7,000 to 9,500 feet and on slopes of 25 to 50 percent. They are derived from sandstone, shale, and basalt. Both of these soils are deep, well drained and have slow surface runoff with moderate erosion hazard.

Red Hill:

Earsman-Rock outcrop complex (33) – This soil map unit is found on mountainsides and ridges at elevations ranging from 6,000 to 8,500 feet and on slopes of 12 to 65 percent. Approximately 45 percent of this unit is Earsman very stony sandy loam and 35 percent Rock outcrop. The Earsman soil is shallow, excessively drained, and derived from calcareous redbed sandstone. Surface runoff for this soil map unit is rapid and the water erosion hazard is classified as slight to severe depending on slope.

Goslin fine sandy loam (50) – This deep, well-drained soil is found on toe slopes, fans, and terraces at elevations ranging from 6,200 to 7,500 feet and on slopes of 6 to 25 percent. Parent

material for this soil includes redbed sandstone and shale alluvium and colluvium. Surface runoff for this soil is medium and the water erosion hazard is classified as moderate.

Trail Gulch:

Earsman-Rock outcrop complex (33) – see description above

Gypsum land-Gypsiorthids complex (55) – This soil map unit is found on mountainsides, hills, and in drainageways on slopes of 12 to 65 percent. Approximately 65 percent of the unit is Gypsum land and 20 percent Gypsiorthids. The remaining 15 percent of the unit is composed of a mix of map units. The Gypsum land is primarily exposed gypsum material while the Gypsiorthids are moderately deep, well drained and derived from colluvium with high gypsum content. Surface runoff for this unit is very rapid and the water erosion hazard is slight to severe.

Bocco Mountain:

Tanna-Pinelli complex (103) – This soil map unit occurs on fans and valley sides at elevations ranging from 6,500 to 8,300 feet and on slopes of 12 to 25 percent. Approximately 50 percent of this unit is Tanna soil, 40 percent Pinelli soil, and 10 percent other soil types. The Tanna soil is moderately deep, well drained and is derived from alluvium and residuum. Runoff for this soil is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate. The Pinelli soil is deep, well drained and is derived from sedimentary alluvium. Runoff for this soil is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate.

Torriorthents-Camborthids-Rock outcrop complex (104) – This soil map unit occurs on south-facing mountainsides, hills, and ridges with slopes ranging from 6 to 65 percent. The Torriorthents are shallow to moderately deep, well drained, and are derived from sedimentary rock. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is severe. The Camborthids are shallow to deep, well drained, and are derived from sandstone, shale, and basalt. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is severe. The Rock outcrop component of this unit consists of exposed sandstone, shale, and basalt.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

For the majority of the trailing routes, existing roads and trails will be utilized, which will have minor impacts to soil conditions, unless trailing occurs during wet conditions. For cross-country trailing, livestock directly impact soils via surface compaction and soil 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. Along some of the proposed trailing routes, livestock would follow intermittent or ephemeral stream channels, which would be subject to concentrated hoof trampling and possible stream bank instability, surface compaction and soil loss.

Land Health Standards for Soil Resources

Based on the Land Health Assessments, BLM staff concluded that soils are meeting Standard 1, with slight to moderate departures from expected conditions ((BLM 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009). Implementation of the proposed action is not anticipated to degrade soil health from current conditions.

Water Quality, Surface and Ground

Affected Environment

The proposed trailing routes lie within several 6th level watersheds across the field office including: East Rifle Creek, Colorado River above Dotsero, Milk Creek, Trail Gulch, Eagle River above Eagle, Colorado River above Rifle, Spring Gulch, and Trapper Creek. All trailing would be along existing roads or intermittent/ephemeral channels, except for short sections along the perennial drainages of Milk Creek and Northwater Creek.

The State of Colorado has developed a *303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments Requiring TMDLS and Monitoring and Evaluation List* (CDPHE 2010) that identifies stream segments that are not currently meeting water quality standards with technology based controls alone. A portion of Harvey Gap trail crosses Dry Rifle Creek (stream segment COLCLC10), which is 303(d) listed for selenium impairment, and for potential *E. coli* impairment on the Monitoring and Evaluation list (CDPHE 2010). All other streams identified in the proposed action are considered to be meeting State water quality standards.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Much of the trailing would be along existing roads and trails. However, where livestock trail along stream channels, trampling of stream banks and sediment loss can occur. Hoof action can cause surface compaction, stream bank shearing, elevated erosion rates and subsequent deterioration of water quality. Other direct impacts to water quality resulting from livestock trailing could be elevated nutrient levels (i.e. fecal coliform) if cattle congregate near water sources for extended periods of time.

Mitigation

Harvey Gap trail - minimize time and intensity of livestock use along Dry Rifle Creek, as this segment is listed for impaired water quality, including elevated levels of *E.coli*, which livestock are casual factors.

Land Health Standards for Water Resources

Based on the Land Health Assessments, BLM staff concluded that water quality is meeting Standard 5 for all locations, except Dry Rifle Creek along a portion of the Harvey Gap trail (BLM 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009). Implementation of the proposed action is not anticipated to degrade water quality from current conditions, if mitigations and best management practices are successfully carried out.

Wetlands and Riparian Zones

Affected Environment: The table below shows each livestock trail and any riparian area(s) that may be impacted. Lotic Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessments have been done for the riparian areas through which these livestock trails pass.

	Trail	Allotment	Riparian Area	Potential interface	Condition Rating
1	Northwater/Long Ridge Trail	JQS Common	Northwater Creek upper reach	1.0 miles	Functioning at Risk, trending upward
2	Bocco Mountain	Bocco Mountain	Rube Creek	0.75 miles	PFC
			Milk Creek	0.6 miles	
3	Harvey Gap	Elk Park Common	Dry Rifle Creek	< 200 feet	
4	Jackson Gulch	Jackson Gulch	N/A		
5	Red Hill	Red Hill Common	N/A		

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

The proposed action of trailing livestock is a high intensity activity confined to trails, roads, ravines or ways by which livestock are moved from one point to another. Trails inevitably intersect with riparian areas because they tend to provide a way for animals to pass through rugged or steep terrain. When trailing, herders keep their livestock tightly grouped to avoid losing animals while pushing them to their final destination. Typically livestock trailing involves direct contact between the livestock operator and their livestock. Unescorted livestock tend to drift and choose their own route and when in the presence of riparian bottoms tend to linger as they drink the available water and eat the lush vegetation. This is heightened during drought conditions when the most damage can occur to riparian vegetation. Quantifiable data to measure riparian impacts are obtained through direct measurement of streambank alteration.

This potential to directly impact riparian areas is associated with Northwater/Long Ridge Trail and Bocco Mountain because these trails follow creek bottoms. This is less of a potential on the Harvey Gap trail because the trail crosses Dry Rifle Creek at roughly a 90-degree angle. This is not a concern for the Jackson Gulch and Red Hill trails because they do not follow nor cross riparian areas.

Land Health Standards for Riparian Areas:

Standard #2 for healthy riparian was met for Dry Rifle, Milk and Rube creeks within Elk Park Common and the Bocco Mountain Allotment. Northwater Creek within JQS Common was functioning-at-risk with an upward trend and this determination was done before the conversion from cattle to sheep on Clough/Alber and it's expected that Northwater Creek will continue to improve.

Mitigation:

1. Should a second day for trailing be needed, coordinate with BLM on the overnight location. Do not over-night on riparian areas.
2. Where needed, develop either permanent or temporary livestock water to eliminate dependence on riparian water when trailing.
3. Monitor streambank alteration if it is suspected that trailing impacts riparian areas. Limit streambank alteration levels to <10%. Browse on woody plant species should be trace to none. If these limits are exceeded, develop new mitigation to control livestock riparian impacts.

Wilderness/WSAs/Wilderness Characteristics

Affected Environment

The Trail Gulch trailing route is within the Bull Gulch Wilderness Study Area (WSA). In 1991, the Colorado BLM issued a Record of Decision that included wilderness recommendations for 54 WSAs throughout Colorado, which included the Bull Gulch WSA. Until Congress acts on the recommendations and either designates them as wilderness or releases them for other uses, these areas are managed under BLM Manual 6330 – Management of Wilderness Study Areas. The Bull Gulch WSA is approximately 15,000 acres in size, and is characterized by its steep, rugged topography with deeply incised gulches and canyons and dense topography which provide for effective screening against man made impressions. The varied topography provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and the diverse terrain, vegetation and wildlife provide opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The Bull Gulch WSA also contains supplemental values of geological, educational and scenic interest provided by the unusual pinnacle and geological formations along the Colorado River. The diversity of ecosystems offers ecological and educational significance. The presence of prairie falcon and bald eagle nests, the possible presence of Mountain lion, and existing deer and elk winter range add supplemental values. The Colorado River enhances the scenic qualities of the unit as well as providing additional access to the unit.

The Long Ridge trailing route follows the road that creates the East Fork Wilderness Character Inventory Unit boundary for .3 miles. The East Fork unit contains 12,400 acres that contain wilderness characteristics of naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and/or primitive/unconfined recreation. Any man-made developments are typically visually screened by the topography and vegetation. Outstanding opportunities for solitude exist because of the nature of the drainage's steep walls and dense riparian vegetation. Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation exist for fishing, hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, camping and sightseeing.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action of livestock trailing is recognized as an acceptable activity within a WSA even though it will cause surface disturbance in the literal sense, according to BLM Manual 6330. Grazing is a grandfathered use that was allowed on the date of approval of FLPMA (1976) and may continue in the same manner and degree as on that date, even if it impairs wilderness suitability. The Trail Gulch and Bull Gulch Common allotments were allotted for livestock grazing in 1976, however the BLM did not track trailing routes until recently. The aerial photographs from September 30, 1976 show that the main route on the western side was very

pronounced, and the smaller two track on the southwest to the southern portion of the route was just barely visible, but existed. Therefore, this would not change what existed in 1976.

The Proposed Action will have negligible impacts to the East Fork Wilderness Character Inventory Unit, as the action is on the boundary road for only .3 miles. Livestock that stray off of the road will not stray far from it, and so trampling off of the road into the unit will be minimal.

Mitigation

Trailing may not show new surface disturbance on the existing Trail Gulch route within the Bull Gulch WSA. If BLM monitoring shows that the route is widening, changing, or becoming more unnatural, then the BLM may modify or terminate the trailing authorization at any time.

Wildlife: Aquatic / Fisheries

Affected Environment

Aquatic wildlife includes animals, either vertebrate or invertebrate, which live in water for most or all of their life. Aquatic habitats include: lakes, ponds, springs, seeps, rivers and streams. Aquatic wildlife species are vulnerable to land use activities due to the fragility of their aquatic environments.

Amphibians possibly present in wetlands would include various species of frogs (e.g., western chorus frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*)), and toads (e.g., Great Basin spadefoot (*Spea intermontana*)), which are adapted to seasonal flow regimes in arid environments. Aquatic macroinvertebrates most likely to occur in the area include water striders, water boatmen, predaceous diving beetles, and the aquatic larvae of caddis flies and true flies.

The Northwater Creek sheep trailing route is on the Roan plateau which parallels Northwater Creek containing Colorado River Cutthroat trout. The Harvey Gap cattle trailing is a proposal running perpendicular (and crossing) East Dry Rifle Creek which contains speckled dace and brown trout.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Given the limited overlap with aquatic habitats it is unlikely that livestock grazing would have negative impacts on invertebrate or amphibious species or habitat.

The longest possible direct overlap with a fish bearing stream is Northwater creek. This sheep trailing route and stream overlap is approximately 1 mile. Sheep naturally tend to avoid wet or even damp terrain and should not directly impact Colorado River Cutthroat. Sheep on this route would largely be limited to road travel one day per year minimizing any kind of indirect impact to this species as well. Harvey Gap trail crosses over Dry Rifle Creek where trucking or trailing operations would continue onto County Road 226 (AKA: Grassy Valley Road). Speckled dace and brown trout could indirectly be impacted by loss of habitat and localized sediment loading if cattle are left outside of the permitted timing associated with the proposed action. No other direct or indirect impacts are expected with other proposed trailing routes.

Mitigation

See above wetlands and riparian zone mitigations

Land Health Standards for Aquatic Wildlife:

Standard 2 for healthy riparian areas is closely tied to aquatic wildlife. Standard 2 is being met and will continue to be met with implementation of the proposed action.

Wildlife: Migratory Birds

Affected Environment

The CRVFO planning area provides both foraging and nesting habitat for a variety of migratory birds that summer, winter, or migrate through the area. The affected environment as it relates to migratory bird habitat is largely roadside vegetation and herbaceous cover reduction associated with incidental grazing that takes place during trailing operations. Given the vegetation at the trailing sites, these areas provide cover, forage, and nesting habitat for a variety of migratory bird species.

Raptors and neotropical migrants (both game and nongame) are afforded protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Neotropical migrants include birds that breed in the United States and Canada and winter in Latin America (Nicholoff 2003). 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 2009) 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 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 Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) is within the Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau Bird Conservation Region (BCR). The 2008 list of Birds of Conservation Concern include the following:

Table 3-6. 2008 List of Birds of Conservation Concern within the CRVFO.		
Species	Habitat Description	Potential Occurrence
Gunnison Sage-Grouse (<i>Centrocercus minimus</i>)	Sagebrush communities for hiding and thermal cover, food, and nesting; open areas with sagebrush stands for leks; sagebrush-grass-forb mix for nesting; wet meadows for rearing chicks. No found within the CRVFO.	Not Present
American Bittern (<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>)	Marshes and wetlands; ground nester. Summer resident.	Unlikely
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Nests in forested rivers and lakes; winters in upland areas, often with rivers or lakes nearby. Generally winter resident, occasional breeding.	Possible
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.	Not Present
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.	Possible
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.	Not Present
Prairie Falcon (<i>Falco mexicanus</i>)	Open country in mountains, steppe, or prairie; winters in cultivated fields; nests in holes or on ledges on rocky cliffs or embankments. Spring/summer resident, breeding.	Not Present
Snowy Plover (<i>Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus/tenuirostris</i>)	Sparsely vegetated sand flats associated with pickleweed, greasewood, and saltgrass. Spring migrant, non-breeding. Spring migrant, non-breeding.	Not Present
Mountain Plover (<i>Charadrius montanus</i>)	High plain, cultivated fields, desert scrublands, and sagebrush habitats, often in association with heavy grazing, sometimes in association with prairie dog colonies; short vegetation.	Not Present
Long-billed Curlew (<i>Numenius americanus</i>)	Lakes and wetlands and adjacent grassland and shrub communities. Spring/ fall migrant, non-breeding.	Unlikely
Yellow-billed Cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>)	Riparian, deciduous woodlands with dense undergrowth; nests in tall cottonwood, mature willow riparian, moist thickets, orchards, abandoned pastures. Summer resident, breeding.	Unlikely
Burrowing Owl (<i>Athene cunicularia</i>)	Open grasslands and low shrublands often in association with prairie dog colonies; nests in abandoned burrows created by mammals; short vegetation.	Not Present
Lewis's Woodpecker	Open woodland, often logged or burned, including oak,	Possible

<i>(Melanerpes lewis)</i>	coniferous forest (often ponderosa), riparian woodland, and orchards, less often in pinyon-juniper.	
Willow Flycatcher <i>(Empidonax traillii)</i>	Riparian and moist, shrubby areas; winters in shrubby openings with short vegetation. Summer resident, breeding.	Possible
Gray Vireo (<i>Vireo vicinior</i>)	Uncommon summer resident (primarily Mesa County). In habitats open pinyon-juniper woodlands.	Not Present
Pinyon Jay <i>(Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus)</i>	Common to abundant resident of pinyon-juniper woodlands. Year-round resident that travels broadly in flocks.	Possible
Juniper Titmouse <i>(Baeolophus ridgwayi)</i>	Pinyon-juniper woodlands, especially juniper; nests in tree cavities. Year-round resident, breeding.	Possible
Veery (<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>)	Dense riparian thickets and hillside brush near streams. Uncommon spring/fall migrant in Eastern Colorado.	Not Present
Bendire's Thrasher <i>(Toxostoma bendirei)</i>	Desert, especially areas of tall vegetation, cholla cactus, creosote bush and yucca, and in juniper woodland Possible summer resident.	Not Present
Grace's Warbler <i>(Dendroica graciae)</i>	Breeds in ponderosa pine forests. Uncommon summer resident in southwest Colorado.	Not Present
Grasshopper Sparrow <i>(Ammodramus savannarum)</i>	Open grasslands and cultivated fields. Spring migrant, non-breeding.	Not Present
Chestnut-collared Longspur <i>(Calcarius ornatus)</i>	Open grasslands and cultivated fields. Spring migrant, non-breeding.	Not Present
Black Rosy-Finch <i>(Leucosticte atrata)</i>	Open country including mountain meadows, high deserts, valleys, and plains; breeds/ nests in alpine areas near rock piles and cliffs. Winter resident, non-breeding.	Not Present
Brown-capped Rosy-Finch <i>(Leucosticte australis)</i>	Alpine meadows, cliffs, and talus and high-elevation parks and valleys. Summer resident, breeding.	Not Present
Cassin's Finch <i>(Carpodacus cassinii)</i> .	Open montane coniferous forests; breeds/ nests in coniferous forests. Year-round resident, breeding.	Possible

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 in addition to listed species would irregularly pass through the area or forage within the area if prey was sighted.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Livestock trailing will not directly affect cavity, cliff, and tree nesting species including flammulated owls, golden and bald eagles, Lewis woodpeckers, juniper titmouse, gray vireo, piñon jay, broad-tailed hummingbirds, Grace's warbler, Cassin's finch, band-tailed pigeon, prairie falcon, and Swainson's hawks. Therefore, no take of these species or their nests is expected to occur as a result of trailing under the Proposed Action or alternatives. The ground nesting of the Virginia's warbler, grasshopper sparrow, and green-tailed towhee will not be inadvertently affected due to the nest being located in dense vegetation usually beneath shrubs or dense undergrowth. Although the Brewer's sparrow's and sage sparrow's nesting period overlaps the spring livestock trailing periods, placement of their nests off the ground and well within a sagebrush plant would protect them from being trampled by livestock. Ground nesting

neotropical migrants are generally small in size and do not require large amounts of herbaceous cover that may be perceived as an indirect effect for competition for nesting material.

Wildlife: Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered

Affected Environment

Canada Lynx:

Lynx are currently listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The Bocco Mountain trail occurs within a lynx landscape linkage. Vegetation is diverse and consists of sagebrush, pinyon-juniper woodlands, mixed mountain shrub/oakbrush, riparian, and aspen. These habitats provide cover for movement and dispersal, and habitat for alternative prey species, including jackrabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, mice, and sage grouse, among others. The Bocco Mountain cattle trail overlaps with this linkage. The 2004 Land health assessment indicates that the Bocco Mountain allotment is not meeting Land Health standard 4 due to increased recreational OHV activity and pinyon-juniper encroachment.

Greater sage-grouse:

The greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), a species restricted to sagebrush rangelands in western North America, is declining across much of its range (NESRGSGWG 2004). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced in 2010 that the greater sage-grouse would be added to the Endangered Species Act “Candidate” list. The reason for the listing is tied to reduced habitat quality and quantity throughout its range. Trailing is proposed within Preliminary General sage-grouse Habitat (PGH) which is defined by habitat known to be occupied by sage-grouse. The Roan plateau habitat has experienced infrequent known sage-grouse activity yet habitat conditions do exist here for many life stages for this species.

Trailing within PGH occurs on the Roan plateau. Sheep would typically trail onto their allotment in the spring via the Long Ridge road and trail off in early summer on the Northwater road. In the fall sheep would mostly use the Northwater road for trailing on and off the allotment. Most sheep trailing would be constricted to the road prism but herbaceous reduction is expected from incidental trampling and grazing within the time period those animals pass through.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Canada Lynx:

Approximately 2 miles of cattle trailing is proposed within the landscape linkage area in the Bocco Mountain allotment. Trailing will occur once in the spring and once in the fall respectively to and from a permitted grazing allotment. It is unlikely that incidental cattle grazing associated with this action would directly impact the structural vegetation complexity to the extent that lynx need to cross this landscape linkage. Indirect effects associated with incidental reduction of herbaceous cover from cattle trailing may impact alternate prey species of lynx but should be minimal due to the relatively short duration (spatially and temporally) of the proposed trailing action. Future private developments and increased recreational OHV use are main threats to this landscape linkage for lynx but are not yet to the point that cattle trailing would cumulatively compromise the ability for lynx to move across the landscape.

Greater sage-grouse:

Livestock trailing would result in some sheep use of native forbs preferred by sage-grouse on the Long Ridge and Northwater trails of the Roan plateau. The decrease in herbaceous cover values in the allotments affected by trailing would increase the possibility of nest site predation and reduce concealment and security cover for young sage-grouse chicks on the trail corridors. Reduction in height and diversity of vegetation would also reduce the number and occurrence of insects, a key component in the diet of young sage-grouse chicks. However, the anticipated reduction in habitat quality for Greater sage-grouse from the Proposed Action would likely be minimal. Utilization of vegetation during livestock trailing events is typically slight use (0-5% utilization) and occurs mostly due to livestock trampling versus consumption of individual plants. Light to moderate utilization (20-60% utilization) of vegetation has the potential to occur during livestock trailing only where multiple trailing events occur within the same season or when a trailing event is repeated over many years.

Direct Affects:

No loss of Greater sage-grouse PGH is anticipated under the proposed action. Direct impacts to sage grouse associated with livestock trailing are likely minimal and primarily associated with accidental trampling of nests. Trailing outside of designated corridors or durations in areas already sensitive to grazing conditions could result in a reduction of hiding cover which could directly affect sage grouse ability to move across the landscape.

Indirect Effects:

Indirect effects of livestock trailing are mainly associated with the temporary reduction of herbaceous cover which can affect hiding cover, habitat connectivity, and food availability including insect numbers. Reduced hiding cover would also increase the likelihood of predation. These effects could indirectly impact grouse and their habitat where birds are transitioning to or residing in winter habitats along Long Ridge trail. Sheep trailing is not expected to impact brood rearing habitat on Northwater trail as sheep generally avoid wet areas important for chick production.

Land Health Standards for T&E Wildlife

Rifle Creek, Elk Creek, Eagle River North/South, and Sweetwater to Burns Land Health Assessments all had varying levels and allotments for meeting this standard. In general, standards for Greater sage-grouse were limiting or not being met. Land Health standards for T&E wildlife were being met. However, Bocco Mountain allotment specifically was not meeting Land Health Standard 4 for reasons of habitat fragmentation due to OHV routes and poor vegetation conditions due to pinyon-juniper encroachment. Since the proposed action is interrelated to grazing permits and is a pre-existing use, it is reasonable to conclude that proposed livestock trailing would not prevent land health standard for threatened and endangered species to be met now or in the future.

Wildlife: Terrestrial

Affected Environment

Large Mammals/Big Game

The two big game ungulates (hoofed mammals) generating the most public interest are the Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer. Mule deer and elk occupy higher elevations, usually forested

habitat, during the summer and then migrate to sagebrush-dominant ridges and south-facing slopes at lower elevation in the winter. BLM lands and private lands provide most of the winter range available to deer and elk. Winter ranges for elk, mule deer, and pronghorn antelope are essential to the survival of these species. The fragmentation and quality of big game winter ranges are of concern to the CPW. As private lands become developed and native habitat is converted to unsuitable habitat or is lost altogether, more emphasis is placed on the remaining BLM lands that contain winter range habitats. In addition, concentrations of high populations of big game species are degrading winter habitats. Browse species in particular show poor vigor and moderate to severe hedging. The concentration of mule deer and elk on winter range can reduce plant vigor and productivity over time. Mule deer typically concentrate in the winter in sagebrush habitats along the Colorado, Eagle, and Roaring Fork Rivers. Elk typically concentrate along the Colorado and Roaring Fork Rivers, and most of the severe winter habitat for elk is located west of Glenwood Springs.

The management of mule deer and elk are the responsibility of the CPW. However, the BLM is responsible for the management of wildlife habitats under its jurisdiction and works cooperatively with the CPW in managing these habitats on public lands within the watershed. As DAU objectives for both mule deer and elk are revised and updated, BLM participates in meetings. When populations for both species exceed objectives, the CDOW will work to reduce numbers to objective levels. These efforts should help to improve habitat conditions in the area. In addition to population management, opportunities exist within this landscape to proactively treat and improve winter range habitat, particularly sagebrush and pinyon-juniper plant communities.

Game Management Units (GMU) are used to manage hunter distribution by setting the number of licenses based on big game numbers derived from DAUs, and type, that will be made available for sale. Each GMU has a set number of licenses available per season. Proposed trailing routes occur in GMUs 32,33,35,42 and 44. The current trend of deer and elk populations is that mule deer are meeting set herd population objectives with the exception of GMU 44 where they fall short and elk are either meeting or exceeding herd objectives in these GMUs.

Bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) typically occur in steep, high mountain terrain. In Colorado, they prefer habitat dominated by grass, low shrubs, rock cover, and areas near open escape terrain. Throughout the west bighorn populations have struggled with disease outbreaks caused by contact with the more immune domestic sheep. The Glenwood Canyon population is small and has been historically reintroduced to the area from healthier herds around the state.

The Glenwood Canyon herd randomly or seasonally uses adjacent BLM lands. The Glenwood Canyon herd has the possibility to come in contact with domestic sheep trailing on the Red Hill Common allotment. However, barriers of terrain (Glenwood canyon, Interstate-70, Colorado River, and Cottonwood Creek canyon exist between the proposed trail and summer habitat), vegetation, and topography, as well as season of use differences and human presence during trailing operations help to minimize the likelihood of physical contact (nose to nose) between wild sheep and domestic sheep while trailing occurs on the Red Hill Common allotment.

Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Due to the short durations of proposed trailing, overall impacts to deer and elk would be minimal. Trampling and incidental grazing of vegetation would remove a very small amount of vegetation within the allotted timeframe.

As discussed in the livestock grazing environmental affects section: “Forage amounts are not expected to be impacted since trailing would usually occur within a few hours.” This included prescription adequately addresses competition concerns within big game on winter range. It is not expected that livestock trailing would impact deer and elk populations or their habitat.

Bighorn Sheep: The proposed Red Hill domestic sheep trailing route comes within approximately 4 miles of the Glenwood Canyon bighorn herd in their typical summer habitat range. Due to the gregarious nature of bighorns, it is reasonable to conclude that a wild sheep foray could lead to contact with trailing domestic sheep and potential disease transmission. Instruction Memorandum 98-140, (BLM, 1998) identified “Revised Guidelines for Sheep and Goat Management in Native Wild Sheep Habitats”. Of these guidelines, the following has been included as mitigation for the Red Hill trailing authorization.

Mitigation:

Bighorn:

Domestic sheep should be closely managed and herded where necessary to prevent them from straying into native wild sheep areas. It is the permittee’s responsibility to ensure all of their livestock are accounted for.

The permittee will notify the BLM of any interaction observed between their domestic sheep and bighorns. It is also recommended that wild sheep observations be reported in areas where interaction may have been possible due to lack of topographic barriers.

Land Health Standards

Red Hill, Trail Gulch, Northwater, Long Ridge, and Bocco Mountain trailing routes are within allotments that do not meet Land Health Standard 3. Of these failing standards, none are due to grazing. Common limiting factors for standard 3 are pinyon-juniper encroachment, lack of forb production, and invasive plant components.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

None

RESIDUAL EFFECTS

None

5. 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.

Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) was conducted for this project. SHPO reviewed and agree to the management recommendations for the cultural resources and concur that the proposed undertaking will result in *no historic properties affected* pursuant to 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1) for this project if cultural resource mitigation is followed.

Grazing permittees

6. List of Preparers

Members of the CRVFO Interdisciplinary Team who participated in the impact analysis of the Proposed Action and alternatives, development of appropriate mitigation measures, and preparation of this EA are listed in Table 6-1, along with their areas of responsibility.

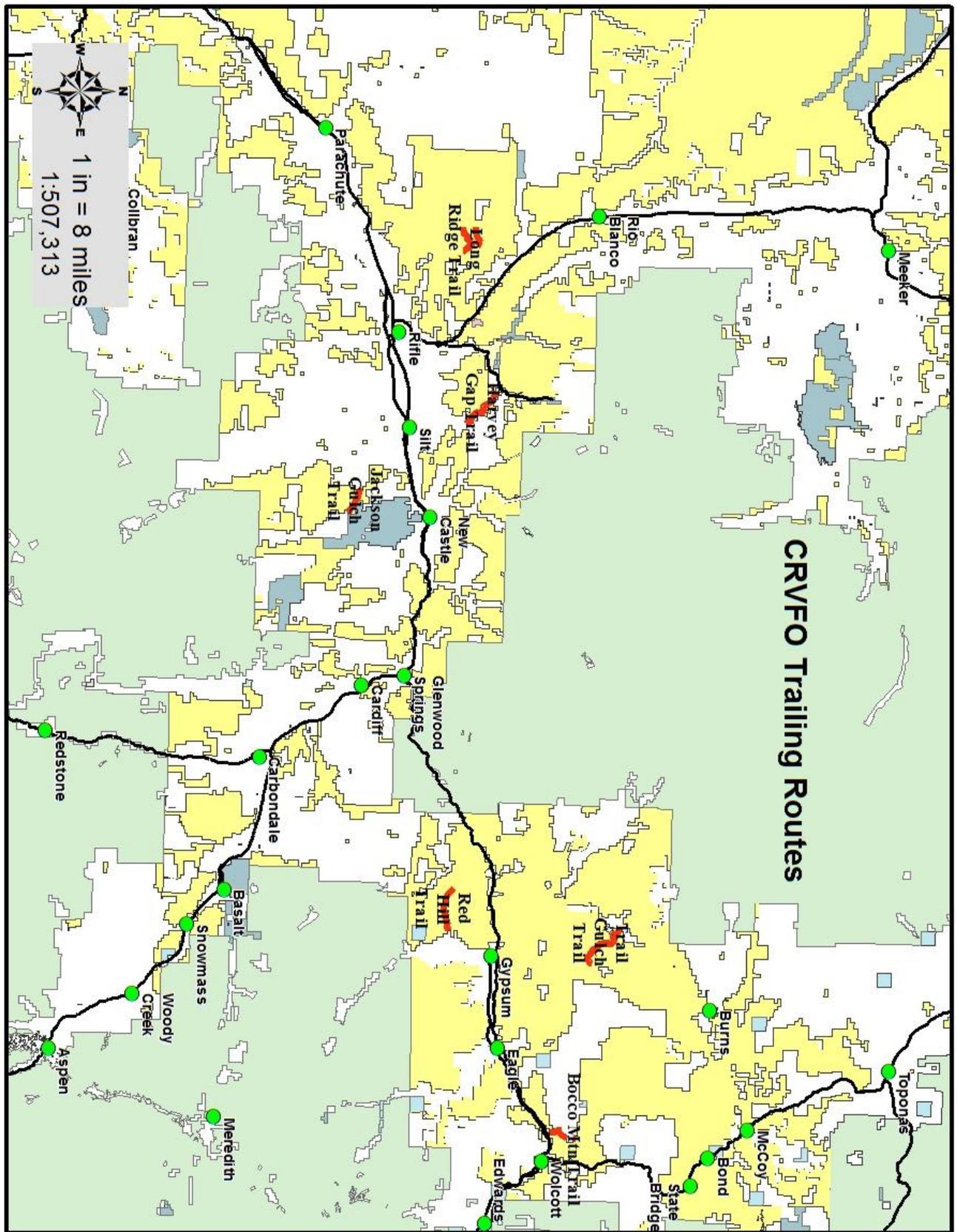
Table 6-1. BLM Interdisciplinary Team Authors and Reviewers		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Areas of Participation</i>
Isaac Pittman	Rangeland Management Specialist	NEPA lead, Range
Carla DeYoung	Ecologist	ACEC, Vegetation, T/E/S Plants, Land Heath Standards
Greg Wolfgang	Outdoor Recreation Planner	VRM, Recreation, Travel Management
Kimberly Miller	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Recreation
Erin Leifeld	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns
Darren Long	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, Terrestrial Wildlife and T/E/S Terrestrial Wildlife, Aquatic Wildlife and T/E/S Aquatic Wildlife
Everett Bartz	Rangeland Management Specialist	Wetlands & Riparian Zones
Pauline Adams	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Water Quality, Soils
Kristy Wallner	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species (Noxious Weeds)

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CRVFO Trailing Routes

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

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Authorize Trailing Use

DOI-BLM-N040-2013-0022-EA

Finding of No Significant Impact

I have reviewed the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed action documented in the EA. 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 authorizing livestock trailing use are identified and discussed in the Affected Environment and Environmental Effects 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.

One trailing route crosses through a wilderness study area. The route was shown to exist in a 1976 aerial photograph and grazing is a grandfathered use within the Bull Gulch WSA.

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

The possible effects of authorizing livestock trailing 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 allotments involved with the proposed action. 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 these allotments.

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 watersheds. 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.

There would be no adverse effects to scientific, cultural, or historical resources with the implementation of the mitigations described within the environmental assessment.

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

7-24-2013

Date



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Colorado River Valley Field Office
2300 River Frontage Road
Silt, CO 81652



IN REPLY REFER TO:
CON040

NOTICE OF FINAL DECISION

Dear Interested Party:

Introduction & Background:

On April 12, 2012, the BLM issued Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. 2012-096. This policy/action resulted in the need to “review planning and implementation decisions regarding the trailing of livestock across public lands, including but not limited to, issuance of crossing permits or trailing authorizations or permits, under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.” This instruction affects several permittees who trail livestock across public lands. The review and NEPA compliance has been completed as documented in Environmental Assessment (EA) No. DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2013-0022-EA. A copy of the EA is available online at the following address <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/crvfo.html>.

Proposed Decision:

As a result of this process, it is my proposed decision to authorize livestock crossing/trailing as follows:

Trail Name	Trail Location	Allotment	Approximate Dates	Annual Trailing Events
Northwater/Long Ridge Trail	T5S R94W Sec14	JQS	5/16, 7/5, 9/25, 11/15	4
Harvey Gap Trail	T5S R92W Sec11	Elk Park	6/15, 10/15	2
Jackson Gulch Trail	T6S R91W Sec28	Jackson Gulch	Random	0 to 1
Red Hill Trail	T5S R86W Sec13	Red Hill	5/9	1
Trail Gulch Trail	T3S R86W Sec36	Trail Gulch	5/8, 6/25	2
Bocco Mtn. Trail	T4S R83W Sec8	Bocco Mtn.	Random	0 to 1

The following terms and conditions will be included on trailing authorizations:

This trailing use authorization is effective upon payment of the amount due and has no priority for renewal and cannot be transferred or assigned. Trailing use must be applied for and approved annually prior to the trailing use occurring.

All livestock trailing events will be limited to one day.

Livestock trailing may not exceed 200 cattle or 2,000 sheep at one time.

Trailing may not show new surface disturbance on the existing Trail Gulch route within the Bull Gulch Wilderness Study Area. If BLM monitoring shows that the route is widening, changing, or becoming more unnatural, then the BLM may modify or terminate the trailing authorization at any time.

Domestic sheep trailing on the Red Hill Trail should be closely managed and herded where necessary to prevent them from straying into native wild sheep areas. It is the permittee's responsibility to ensure all of their livestock are accounted for. The permittee will notify the BLM of any interaction observed between their domestic sheep and bighorns. It is also recommended that wild sheep observations be reported in areas where interaction may have been possible due to lack of topographic barriers.

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.

Rationale for the Proposed Decision

Issuance of trailing authorizations is in conformance with the Glenwood Springs Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved January, 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.

The proposed action is in conformance with Administrative Actions (pg. 5) and Livestock Grazing Management (pg. 20) of the Glenwood Springs RMP. 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.”

My proposed decision is based on the findings of the analyses contained in Environmental Assessment No. DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2013-0022-EA. The analysis indicated the current conditions and land health standards in the allotments where authorized trailing use will occur are expected to be maintained or improved.

Other terms and conditions have been included to mitigate potential impacts from trailing use.

Authority

43 CFR 4100.0-8 states: “The authorized officer shall manage livestock grazing on public lands under the principle of multiple use and sustained yield, and in accordance with applicable land use plans. Land use plans shall establish allowable resource uses (either singly or in combination), related levels of production or use to be maintained, areas of use, and resource condition goals and objectives to be obtained. The plans also set forth program constraints and general management practices needed to achieve management objectives. Livestock grazing activities and management actions approved by the authorized officer shall be in conformance with the land use plan as defined at 43 CFR 1601.0- 5(b).”

43 CFR 4130.3 states: “Livestock grazing permits and leases shall contain terms and conditions determined by the authorized officer to be appropriate to achieve the management and resource condition objectives for the public lands and other lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, and to ensure conformance with the provisions of subpart 4180 of this part.”

43 CFR 4130.3-1(a) states: “The authorized officer shall specify the kind and number of livestock, the period(s) of use, the allotment(s) to be used, and the amount of use, in animal unit months, for every grazing permit or lease. The authorized livestock grazing use shall not exceed the livestock carrying capacity of the allotment.”

43 CFR 4130.3-2 states: “The authorized officer may specify in grazing permits or leases other terms and conditions which will assist in achieving management objectives, provide for proper range management or assist in the orderly administration of the public rangelands.”

43 CFR 4130.6-3 states: “A crossing permit may be issued by the authorized officer to any applicant showing a need to cross the public land or other land under the Bureau of Land Management control, or both, with livestock for proper and lawful purposes. A temporary use authorization for trailing livestock shall contain terms and conditions for the temporary grazing use that will occur as deemed necessary by the authorized officer to achieve the objectives of this part.”

43 CFR 4130.8-1(e) states: "Fees are due on the due date specified on the grazing fee bill. Payment will be made prior to grazing use. Grazing use that occurs prior to payment of a bill, except where specified in an allotment management plan, is unauthorized and may be dealt with under subparts 4150 and 4170 of this part. If allotment management plans provide for billing after the grazing season, fees will be based on actual use and will be due upon issuance. Repeated delays in payment of actual use billings or noncompliance with the terms and conditions of the allotment management plan and permit or lease shall be cause to revoke provisions for after-the-grazing-season billing."

Protest and/or Appeal

Pursuant to Section 123 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (Pub. L. 112-74), this BLM final decision is not subject to protest and/or administrative appeal under subpart E of Part 4 of Title 43, Code of Federal Regulations and subpart 4160 of part 4100 of such title.

If you have any questions, contact Isaac Pittman of my range staff at (970)876-9069.

Sincerely,



Matthew Thorburn
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist

7-24-2013