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**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Kremmling Field Office
P.O. Box 68
Kremmling, CO 80459**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-120-2009-0030-EA

PROJECT NAME: Renewal of Livestock Grazing Lease #051910 for Diamondtail Ranch on Allotments 07254 (Shell Creek), 07255 (Crazy Mountain), and 07260 (Forrester Creek).

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Kremmling Field Office (KFO) administered land includes all or part of the following:

Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek)

T. 11 N., R. 76 W., Sec. 1-4, 9-15, 22-27, 34, 35

Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain)

T. 11 N., R. 76 W., Sec. 4-9

Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek)

T. 11 N., R. 76 W., Sec. 17, 19

T. 11 N., R. 77 W., Sec. 13, 23, 24

APPLICANT: Diamondtail Ranch

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION:

Diamondtail Ranch's livestock grazing lease # 051910 that authorizes livestock grazing on allotments 07254 (Shell Creek), 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and 07260 (Forrester Creek) expires on February 28, 2009. Diamondtail Ranch has applied for renewal of their lease. The livestock grazing lease is renewable at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior for a period of up to ten years. Renewal of this lease would allow the Diamondtail Ranch to continue grazing on their designated allotments for a period of ten years beginning on March 1, 2009.

Background/Introduction/Issues and Concerns:

During the 1999 permit renewal process, Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) and Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) were assessed for compliance with the Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado (Standards). Both allotments were determined to be in compliance with all of the Standards. Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) was granted an increase in authorized livestock

grazing preference from 365 AUMs* to 455 AUMs. The authorized livestock grazing preference on Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) was increased from 133 AUMs to 256 AUMs. There was no change to the authorized grazing preference on Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek).

* AUM = animal unit month = the amount of forage needed to support one cow and her calf for one month.

All three allotments were reassessed for compliance with the Standards on July 26, 2006. Allotments 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and 07260 (Forrester Creek) were determined to be in compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife) by an interdisciplinary (ID) team from the Kremmling Field Office. The ID team determined Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) was functioning at risk for Standard # 3.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action would renew livestock grazing lease # 051910 for a period of ten years beginning on March 1, 2009 with the following change.

The authorized livestock grazing preference on Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) would be reduced from 455 AUMs to 365 AUMs. The 365 AUMs was the authorized preference prior to 1999 when the allotment was determined to be in compliance with the Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife). In 1999, everyone recognized that the allotments had not been used much, so the permitted increases were not necessarily going to work long term. With the drought, Allotment 7254 (Shell Creek) could not sustain the increase. The reduction would be the appropriate action required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Kremmling Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) to bring the allotment back into compliance with the Standards.

Since Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) was determined to be in compliance with the Standards no reduction in the authorized preference would be required.

No change in authorized grazing preference was granted to Allotment # 07260 (Forrester Creek) during the 1999 lease renewal process, so no changes would be implemented during this lease renewal.

During the 1999 lease renewal process, a deferred rotation grazing plan was implemented that included all three allotments. This grazing system would continue to be in effect for the renewed lease.

Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) would be permitted 30 days of use each year
Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) would be authorized for 14 days of use each year
Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek) would be authorized for 10 days of use each year.

Grazing on each allotment would be deferred to August 1 one out of three years. Standard terms and conditions would apply.

Renewed livestock grazing lease # 051910 would authorize livestock grazing to the following extent:

Allotment	Livestock Number	Kind	Season of Use	Percent Public Land	AUMs
07254 (Shell Creek)	112	Cattle	6/1 – 9/30	81	364
07255 (Crazy Mountain)	48	Cattle	6/1 – 9/30	100	193
07260 (Forrester Creek)	57	Cattle	6/1 – 9/30	100	229

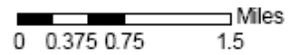
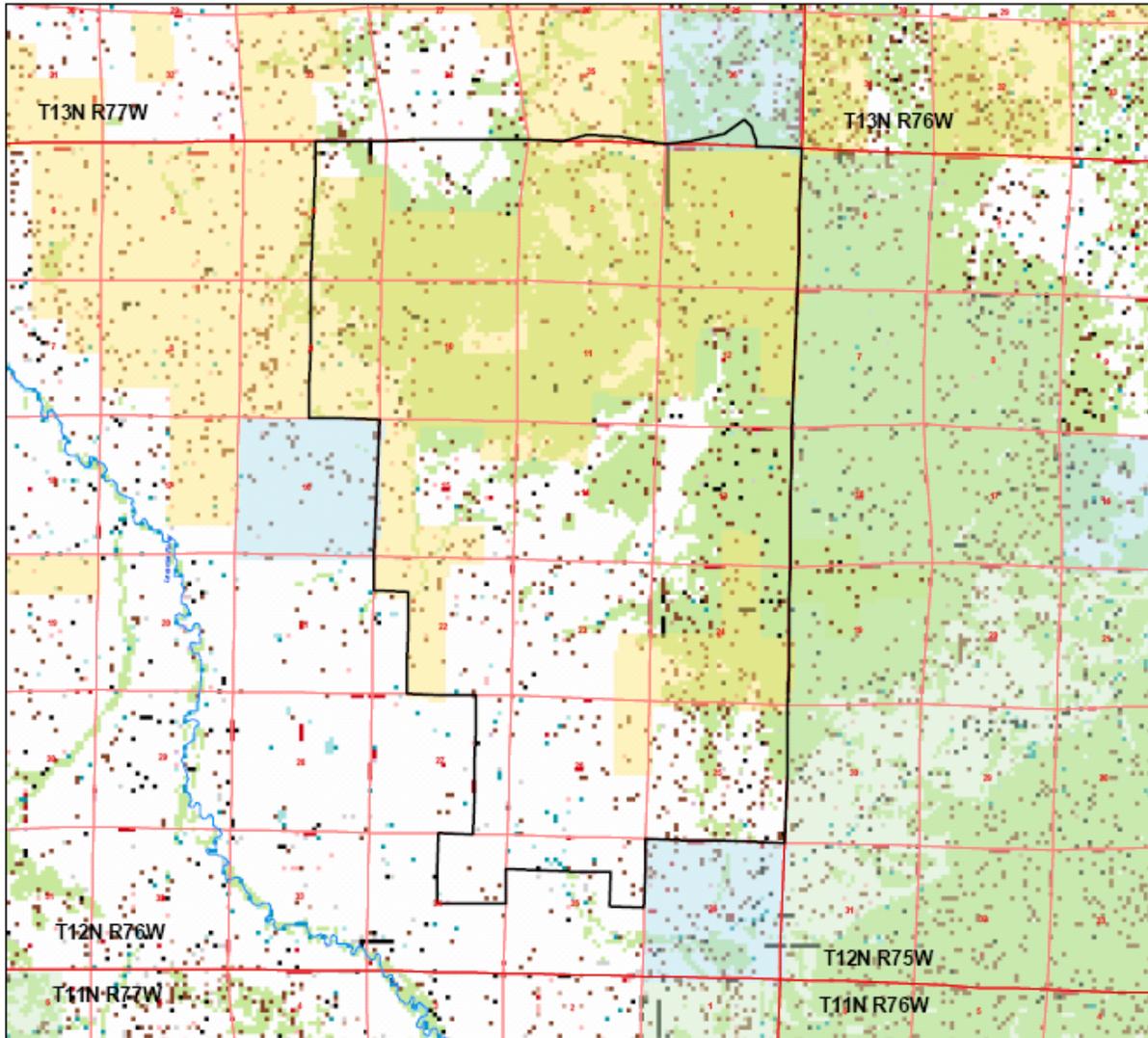
A copy of the proposed lease with standard terms and conditions is enclosed as Attachment 1.

Design Features of the Proposed Action:

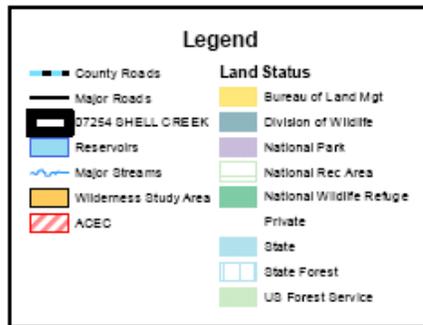
- The permittee would be responsible for notifying the BLM of all county listed noxious weeds which result from their livestock grazing operations.
- The BLM would be responsible for implementing control measures, which would include partnership with the Grand County Weed Abatement Program.



07254 SHELL CREEK



1:66,653

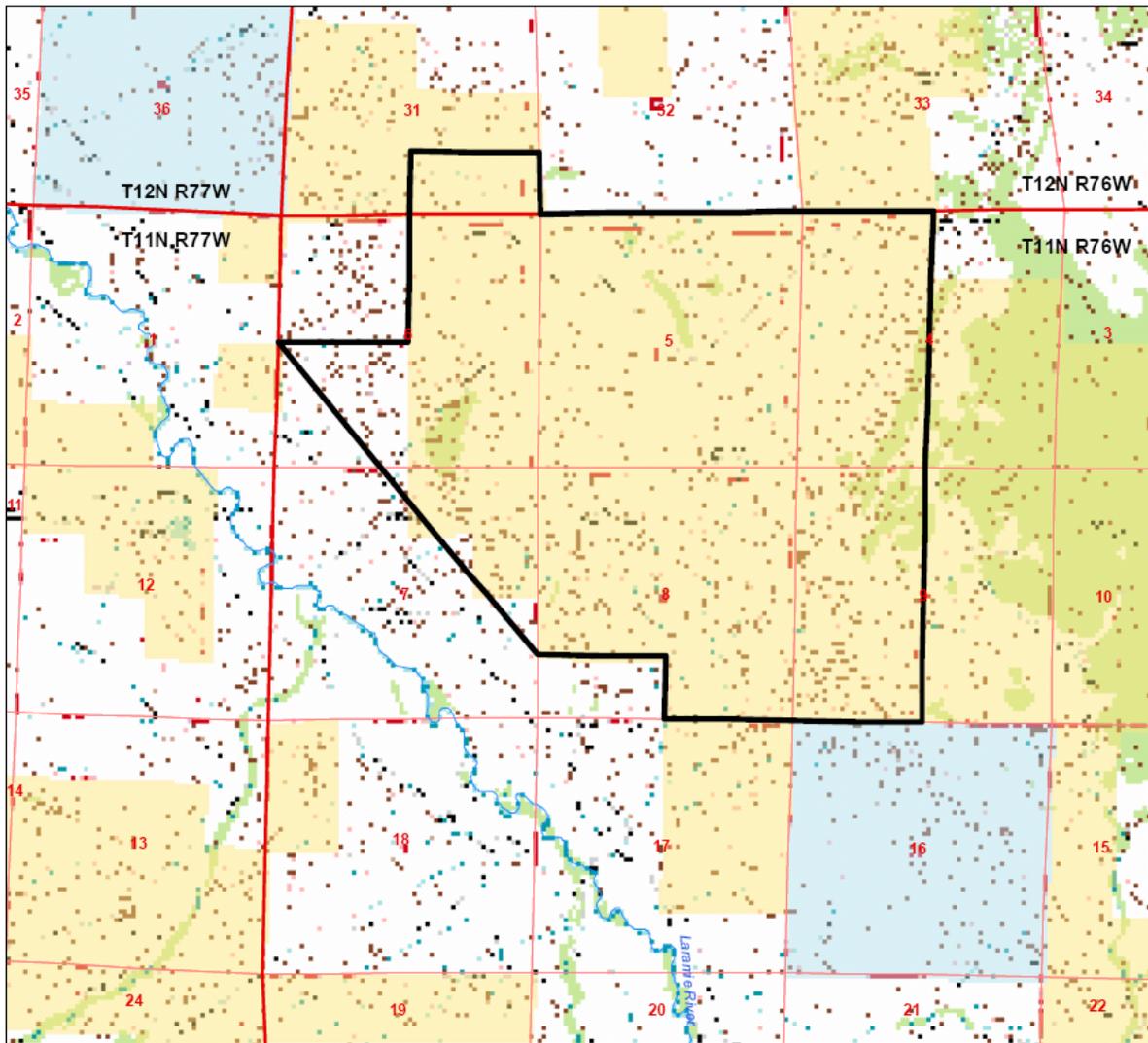


No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the Accuracy, Reliability, or Completeness of this Data for Individual Use or Aggregate Use with Other Data.

Maps: Crazy Mountain, Deadman, Old Roach, Glendevy
BLM, Kremmling FO 10/31/2008



07255 CRAZY MOUNTAIN



Legend	
	County Roads
	Major Roads
	07255 CRAZY MOUNTAIN
	Reservoirs
	Major Streams
	Wilderness Study Area
	ACEC
Land Status	
	Bureau of Land Mgt
	Division of Wildlife
	National Park
	National Rec Area
	National Wildlife Refuge
	Private
	State
	State Forest
	US Forest Service



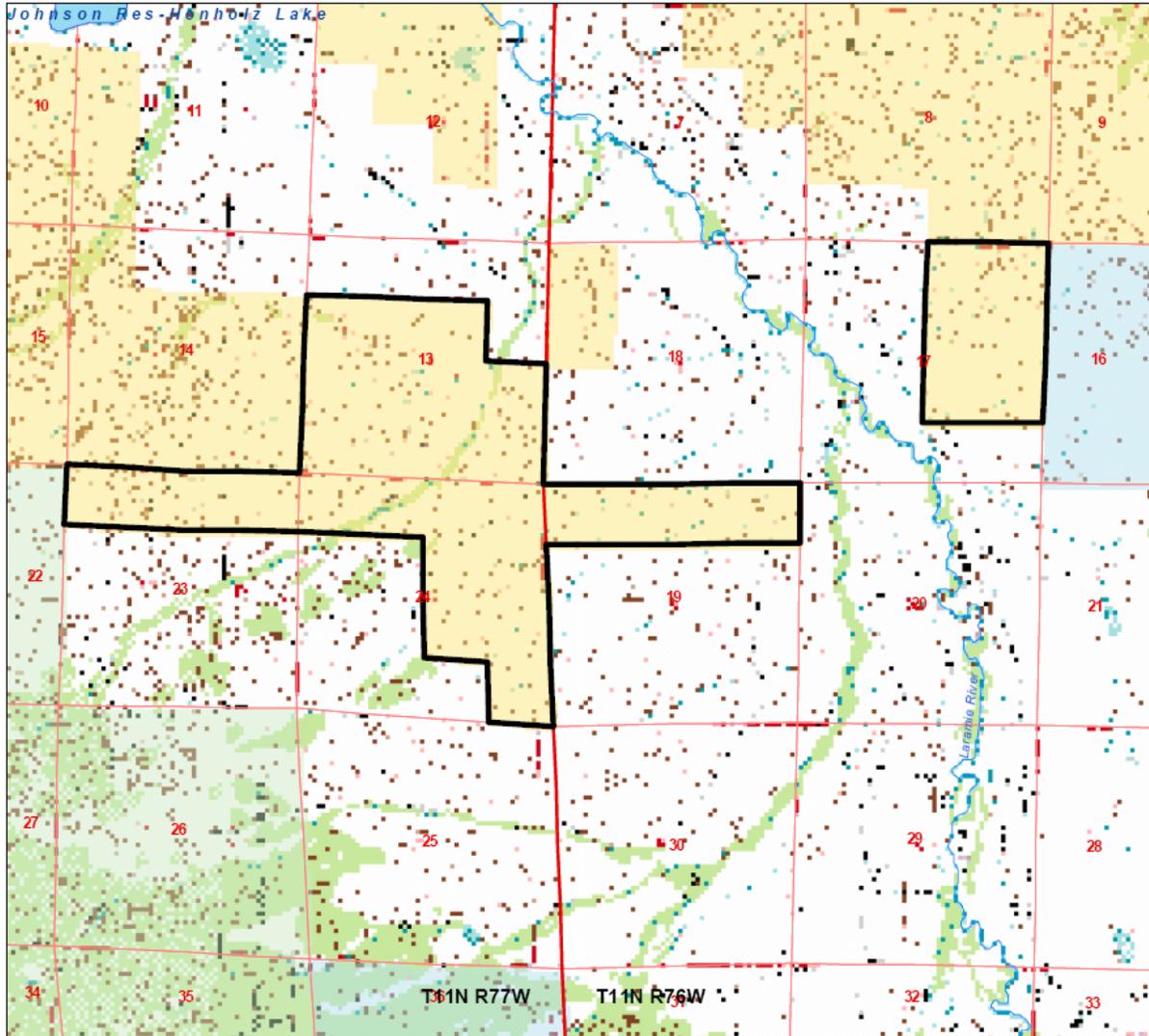
1:36,303

No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the Accuracy, Reliability, or Completeness of this Data for Individual Use or Aggregate Use with Other Data.

Maps: Crazy Mountain
BLM, Kremmling FO 10/31/2008



07260 FORRESTER CREEK



Legend			
	County Roads		Bureau of Land Mgt
	Major Roads		Division of Wildlife
	07260 FORRESTER CREEK		National Park
	Reservoirs		National Rec Area
	Major Streams		National Wildlife Refuge
	Wilderness Study Area		Private
	ACEC		State
			State Forest
			US Forest Service

0 0.2 0.4 0.8 Miles

1:37,878

No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the Accuracy, Reliability, or Completeness of this Data for Individual Use or Aggregate Use with Other Data.

Maps: Crazy Mountain, Old Roach BLM, Kremmling FO 10/31/2008

No Action Alternative: If the No Action Alternative is implemented, the authorized grazing preference would not be reduced from 455 AUMs to 365 AUMs. The improvements to the allotment that would be expected to coincide with the reduction in AUMs would not be realized. The BLM would not implement an appropriate action to bring the allotment into compliance with the Standards, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Alternatives Considered But Eliminated From Further Analysis:

No livestock grazing was considered but eliminated from further analysis for the following reasons:

- Livestock grazing with the Kremmling Field Office was fully analyzed and authorized in the RMP/EIS as recorded in the 1984 Approved Plan and Record of Decision. At that time a “No Grazing Alternative” was considered but not selected.
- This alternative is not consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) that stated: “the public lands be managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation’s need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from public lands.....”
- During public scoping and staff review there were no issues or concerns identified that would support a “No Grazing Alternative.”
- It has been determined that significant progress toward achieving compliance with the Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado would occur with the appropriate livestock grazing guidelines set forth in the Proposed Action.

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: Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP), Record of Decision (ROD)

Date Approved: December 19, 1984; Updated February 1999

Decision Number/Page: Livestock Grazing: pages 6 and 8, as revised

Decision Language: Objectives of the RMP/ROD include allocation of a base level of livestock forage and maintaining or improving forage production and condition in areas where livestock grazing is a priority or compatible. The RMP designated the project area with livestock grazing and wildlife priority. Livestock grazing is compatible with these designations.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Past actions such as livestock grazing, motorized travel, recreation, etc. that have caused disturbance of vegetation and soil have contributed to the invasion and spread of invasive, non-native species (noxious weeds). These are known invasive, non-native species growing within the project area. The invasive, non-native species include houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), and Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and are generally located along roadways, in high use areas such as where livestock congregate, and other areas of disturbance. Soil or vegetation disturbing activities provide an avenue for establishment and expansion of invasive, non-native species. The BLM monitors these known areas for use in controlling the spread of these species.

Environmental Consequences: Any type of soil and vegetation disturbance in an area where invasive, non-native species are established promotes their expansion. Although the renewed grazing permit would not change the livestock grazing management, there is the chance for invasion or spread of invasive, non-native species.

If the No Action Alternative is implemented, improvements to the vegetation would not be realized. Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) would continue to be classified as functioning at risk. The chances of establishment or expansion of invasive, non-native species would continue to be high. For allotments 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and 07260 (Forrester Creek), the No Action Alternative is the same as the Proposed Action so the environmental consequences would be the same as the No Action Alternative for these two allotments.

Mitigation: None

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: A variety of migratory bird species, primarily birds of prey and songbirds, have been observed in the allotments proposed for renewal. Surveys conducted in 1994 by the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas Partnership recorded many species including Swainson's hawks, red-tailed hawks, common snipe, green-tailed towhee, mountain bluebird, sage thrasher, Wilson's warbler, Swainson's thrush, common nighthawk, yellow warbler, and several others. These species inhabit the riparian zones and sagebrush steppe uplands within the allotments.

Environmental Consequences: Under the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative, allotments #7255 and #7260 would be renewed without any changes. Since there would be no changes to these allotments, the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative are expected to maintain current conditions for migratory birds. The Proposed Action would reduce allotment #7254 by 90 AUMs to improve this allotment since it was determined to be functioning at risk. This would be more beneficial to migratory birds since grass and forb production would likely increase. The reduction in AUMs would provide for better plant vigor and thereby would produce more plant material available for bird use, especially by those species that nest on the ground.

If the No Action Alternative is implemented, the authorized grazing preference would not be reduced from 455 AUMs to 365 AUMs. The improvements to Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) that would be expected to coincide with the reduction in AUMs would not be realized. The BLM would not implement an appropriate action to bring the allotment into compliance with the Standards, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

WETLANDS & RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: The 1999 Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment (CO-018-99-16EA) describes the public segments of riparian areas that occur on allotments 7254 and 7260. The creeks are small with beaver dams on Forrester and Shell Creeks. Allotment 7255's public lands have only ephemeral and intermittent drainages. In the 1999 Environmental Assessment, it was acknowledged that the allotments had not been grazed in recent years at the permitted number. The riparian and wetland areas were all in proper functioning condition, with only some historic trailing noted in the uplands adjacent to Forrester Creek.

Since the 1999 permit renewal, the allotments have been grazed yearly. During the interdisciplinary team's 2006 field visit, Down Timber Spring (allotment 7254) was in disrepair and the area around the spring had heavy trampling. The permittee has since repaired the spring. In general, late summer visits to Allotment 7254 have shown moderate to heavy use along Shell Creek and cattle concentrating near the Down Timber Spring.

The Laramie River Basin from 2001-2008 has had fairly dry Aprils and Mays. Only one May during those years had normal precipitation. Although June moisture in 2003-2005 exceeded the average, the area is generally considered to still be in a drought. The 2006 June assessment was during a very dry month, and Shell Creek was flowing only due to a breached beaver dam. Once the dam was drained, the creek was dry. The recent weather may be increasing the amount of livestock utilization around the spring and creeks.

Environmental Consequences: The Proposed Action would drop allotment 7254's AUMs down to the pre-1999 levels. When assessed in 1999, the Wetlands and Riparian's portion of the E.A. stated allotment 7254 may not be able to sustain the increased AUMs. It was difficult to assess the permitted livestock's impact, due to years of light use. Although allotment 7254 is large, livestock use tends to focus along the drainages and open areas. Livestock do not tend to utilize the timbered areas. Monitoring Shell Creek in 2007 and 2008 showed fairly high utilization and some trailing along Shell Creek, and indicates the cut in AUMs would benefit the area with less trampling along the creek. Allotment 7260 appeared to have better distribution and no riparian concerns. The Proposed Action will reduce livestock use and continue the grazing plan. This will maintain conditions in Allotment 7260's riparian areas, and improve conditions in allotment 7254's riparian and wetland areas with trampling.

Under the No Action Alternative, use would continue at present levels causing the riparian areas to deteriorate due to increasing bare ground and establishment of less desirable (weedy, upland, or increaser species) vegetation. Bank sloughing and stream widening would then occur due to the sparse vegetative cover.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: The allotments are considered to be meeting the Standard because they are still in proper functioning condition. By reducing livestock numbers, vegetative conditions in allotment 7254 will improve, helping the area continue to meet the Standard in the future.

RANGE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek), Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek) were assessed for compliance with the Standards on July 26, 2006. Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) was determined to be functioning at risk for Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife). Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek) were determined to be in compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife).

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: During the 1999 lease renewal process the authorized livestock grazing preference was increased from 365 AUMs to 455 AUMs. Since Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) was determined to be functioning at risk during the reassessment of the allotment in 2006, appropriate action must be implemented to bring the allotment back into compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife). The appropriate action would be to reduce the authorized grazing preference back to 365 AUMs. This reduction should allow the vegetation to improve and return the allotment into compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife). The allotment would be monitored to ensure the appropriate action is improving the vegetation.

Since Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek) were determined to be in compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife), no changes would be made to the number or kind of livestock, season of use, or amount of authorized grazing preference on these allotments.

If the No Action Alternative is implemented, the authorized grazing preference would not be reduced from 455 AUMs to 365 AUMs. The improvements to Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) that would be expected to coincide with the reduction in AUMs would not be realized. The BLM would not implement an appropriate action to bring the allotment into compliance with the Standards, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For allotments 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and 07260 (Forrester Creek), the No Action Alternative is the same as the Proposed Action so the environmental consequences would be the same as the No Action Alternative for these two allotments.

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The 1999 Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment describes the soils as mapped by the Larimer County Soil Survey. Allotment 7260 was noted as having old gullies, which could have resulted from historic grazing practices. The allotments do not have current areas of accelerated erosion.

Environmental Consequences: In assessing the allotments, the allotments were all currently meeting the Standard for upland soil health. In some areas of Allotment 7254,

however, the current vegetative conditions put the longterm soil health at risk. If vegetation continues to decline, soils would be exposed to wind and water erosion. Nutrient and water cycling also are reduced, affecting the soils' fertility. By reducing the AUMs, the Proposed Action helps improve the vegetation and protects the soil health. The other allotments tend to have better livestock distribution and the grazing plan appears to be maintaining soil conditions.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The allotments are meeting Standard # 1 (upland soils) currently. Portions of 7254 could become concerns without improved vegetative conditions. The Proposed Action's cut of AUMs should help maintain soil health.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The vegetation in Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) is a mixture of lodgepole pine and spruce/fir forest with sagebrush steppe, and native grasslands in the open areas. The lodgepole pine and spruce/fir are closed canopy forests with sparse understory vegetation. Common understory plants include creeping juniper (*Juniperus communis*), kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), and grouse whortleberry (*Vaccinium scoparium*). A few annual forbs will grow when climatic conditions are favorable. The sagebrush steppe vegetation communities are generally found at the lower elevations within the allotment and are dominated by big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). The understory consists of native cool season grasses and annual and perennial forbs. The grasses and grasslike plants include bluegrasses (*Poa* spp), needlegrasses (*Stipa* spp), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), Junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*), and sedges (*Carex* spp). Common forbs include wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum* spp), yarrow (*Achillea lanulosa*), paintbrush (*Castilleja* spp), pussytoes (*Antennaria* spp), broom snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), and phlox (*Phlox* spp). The native grasslands are found on dry sites with shallow soils. The vegetation is dominated by grasses and forbs with only a few invading shrubs. Grasses include bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), needle and thread grass (*Hesperostipa comata*), Junegrass, Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), western wheatgrass, bottlebrush squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides*) and blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*). Common forbs include fringed sage (*Artemisia frigida*), phlox, wild buckwheat, broom snakeweed, pussytoes, toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), aster (*Machaeranthera* spp), daisies (*Erigeron* spp), Indian paintbrush, and stonecrop (*Sedum acre*).

Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) consists of sagebrush steppe and dry, exposed, and windy range sites. The sagebrush steppe is found on more mesic sites and consists of big sagebrush, and snowberry with an understory of bluebunch wheatgrass, needle and thread grass, Junegrass, Indian ricegrass, western wheatgrass, bottlebrush squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides*) and blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*). Common forbs include fringed sage, phlox, wild buckwheat, broom snakeweed, pussytoes, toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), aster, daisies, Indian paintbrush, and stonecrop.

Xerix sites on dry exposed windy areas are vegetated by low growing big sagebrush with an understory of bluegrasses, needle grasses, and western wheatgrass, and bluebunch wheatgrass with forbs common including fringed sage, wild buckwheat, phlox, stonecrop, broom snakeweed, pussytoes, asters, and daisies.

Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek) is almost entirely a sagebrush steppe vegetation community that is dominated by big sagebrush with some snowberry and a little rabbitbrush in the shrub component. Common grasses include bluegrasses, needlegrasses, bluebunch wheatgrass, June grass, fescues (*Festuca* spp), western wheatgrass, and bottlebrush squirreltail. Forbs include fringed sage, pussytoes, Indian paintbrush, stonecrop, phlox, wild buckwheat, toadflax, asters and daisies.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Implementation of the Proposed Action should help improve the vegetation in Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek). The proposed reduction in authorized livestock grazing preference should improve the vegetation through increased vigor or existing plants plus an increase in frequency of young plants in the interspaces between the sagebrush plants. No changes were proposed in the livestock grazing for Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek). Therefore, no changes to the vegetation should result from implementation of the Proposed Action.

If the No Action Alternative is implemented, the authorized grazing preference would not be reduced from 455 AUMs to 365 AUMs. The improvements to Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) that would be expected to coincide with the reduction in AUMs would not be realized. The BLM would not implement an appropriate action to bring the allotment into compliance with the Standards, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For allotments 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and 07260 (Forrester Creek), the No Action Alternative is the same as the Proposed Action so the environmental consequences would be the same as the No Action Alternative for these two allotments.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) was determined to be functioning at risk when it was assessed for compliance with the Standards by an ID team from the Kremmling Field Office on July 26, 2006. A reduction from 455 AUMs to 365 AUMs of authorized grazing preference is the appropriate action to bring the allotment into compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife).

Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek) were assessed for compliance with the Standards on July 26, 2006 by the Kremmling Field Office ID team. Both allotments were determined to be in compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife).

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Both intermittent and perennial drainages exist on public land in the allotments. Forrester Creek, Bluebell Creek, and Frenchwoman Creek support coldwater fish such as brook trout and several other coldwater minnows and suckers. These creeks all drain into the Laramie River. Although Forrester Creek, Bluebell Creek, and Frenchwoman Creek are relatively small, beaver dams have created pools which are used by fish for escape and thermal cover. River otters, beavers, muskrats, and mink utilize the area surrounding the creeks and Laramie River on a yearlong basis. Geese, White Pelicans, and other waterfowl also utilize the riparian areas and open water for foraging, brood-rearing, and winter habitat.

Environmental Consequences: Under the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative, allotments #7255 and #7260 would be renewed without any changes. Since there would be no changes to these allotments, the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative are expected to maintain current conditions for aquatic wildlife. The Proposed Action would reduce allotment #7254 by 90 AUMs to improve this allotment since it was determined to be functioning at risk. This would be more beneficial to aquatic wildlife habitat since the riparian areas would likely improve in allotment #7254.

If the No Action Alternative is implemented, the authorized grazing preference would not be reduced from 455 AUMs to 365 AUMs. The improvements to Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) that would be expected to coincide with the reduction in AUMs would not be realized. The BLM would not implement an appropriate action to bring the allotment into compliance with the Standards, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) was determined to be functioning at risk when it was assessed for compliance with the Standards by an ID team from the Kremmling Field Office on July 26, 2006. A reduction from 455 AUMs to 365 AUMs of authorized grazing preference is the appropriate action to bring the allotment into compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife).

Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek) were assessed for compliance with the Standards on July 26, 2006 by the Kremmling Field Office ID team. Both allotments were determined to be in compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife).

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed allotments provides habitat for a variety of wildlife including moose, mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, pronghorn antelope, black bears, mountain lions, white-tail prairie dogs, and a variety of other small mammals and rodents. Elk use the allotments during the summer and winter primarily in allotments #7254 and #7255. Deer, moose, and pronghorn are yearlong residents unless heavy snow accumulation forces them to lower elevation winter ranges in Wyoming. Black bears concentrate in allotment #7254 in the fall and summer, moose concentrate along the Laramie River and in allotments #7255 and #7260 in the winter, mule deer use all the allotments during winter, and pronghorn tend to concentrate in allotment #7255 in winter and various parts of other allotments in the summer. A variety of shrubs, scattered aspen and Limber pine stands provide food and cover for wildlife species inhabiting the allotments.

Environmental Consequences: Under the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative, allotments #7255 and #7260 would be renewed without any changes. Since there would be no changes to these allotments, the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative are expected to maintain current conditions for terrestrial wildlife. The Proposed Action would reduce allotment #7254 by 90 AUMs to improve this allotment since it was determined to be functioning at risk. This would be more beneficial to terrestrial wildlife since grass and forb production would likely increase. This additional vegetation would be especially important to elk, mule deer, and moose that use the allotment during winter.

If the No Action Alternative is implemented, the authorized grazing preference would not be reduced from 455 AUMs to 365 AUMs. The improvements to Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) that would be expected to coincide with the reduction in AUMs would not be realized. The BLM would not implement an appropriate action to bring the allotment into compliance with the Standards, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): Allotment 07254 (Shell Creek) was determined to be functioning at risk when it was assessed for compliance with the Standards by an ID team from the Kremmling Field Office on July 26, 2006. A reduction from 455 AUMs to 365 AUMs of authorized grazing preference is the appropriate action to bring the allotment into compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife).

Allotment 07255 (Crazy Mountain) and Allotment 07260 (Forrester Creek) were assessed for compliance with the Standards on July 26, 2006 by the Kremmling Field Office ID team. Both allotments were determined to be in compliance with Standard # 3 (upland vegetation and wildlife).

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:

Livestock grazing has been an important use of the public lands in the Kremmling Field Office since the introduction of domestic livestock in the 1870s. Presently, the Field Office supports a grazing program on approximately 378,000 acres of BLM-administered public lands. Currently, these public ranges are licensed at a level of approximately 39,726 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) for livestock.

For the purpose of this EA, the general geographic boundary for cumulative impact analysis is the Laramie River area. The KFO administers approximately 24,363 acres of public land in Larimer County Colorado near Jelm, Wyoming that are currently being grazed with an authorized grazing preference of 2636 AUMs.

In looking at past actions within the geographic area over the past ten years, there have not been any major changes to the Laramie River allotments. A majority of the allotments have been assessed for standards and the permits modified where needed due to non-compliance with specific standards or new information that has arrived (i.e. new sage grouse lek). There are not any reasonably foreseeable actions outside of minor range improvement projects that are projected to occur in the Laramie River allotments.

Since no major changes have occurred in the grazing in the Laramie River area, there would be minimal cumulative impacts to Greater sage-grouse. In terms of cumulative impacts to cultural resources, grazing may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties throughout the Kremmling Field Office. However, as part of the BLM permit renewal process, allotments are being assessed and inventoried for cultural resources. If resources are found, and eligible for NRHP, mitigation is implemented. This process is attempting to mitigate any major cumulative impacts to cultural resources in the Kremmling Field Office.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: Scott Butcher of Diamondtail Ranch

Starting in January 2007, a scoping process was begun to request information concerning the renewal of grazing permits/leases and to prioritize areas or allotments with issues and concerns. The Kremmling Field Office sent scoping letters, along with land status maps showing the affected allotments to the following groups and agencies: Colorado Division of Wildlife (Steamboat Springs, Walden, Hot Sulphur Springs, Fort Collins); District Board of Grazing Advisors; County Commissioners of Grand and Jackson counties; Stock Growers Association (Middle Park, North Park, Upper Big Laramie River Ranch Assoc.); Northwest Resource Advisory Council, United States Forest Service (Silverthorne, Granby, Walden); US Fish and Wildlife Service (Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge); Tribal Councils (Arapaho, Shoshone, Southern Ute); Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs; Ute Indian Tribe Uintah and Ouray Agency Business Committee; Colorado Environmental Coalition; and Colorado State Land Board (Lane Osborn).

The BLM Colorado State Office also mailed outreach letters concerning the renewal of grazing permits/leases to all Congressional offices, State and Federal agencies, and major environmental, conservation, and user group organizations.

In addition, individual letters were sent to the affected permittees/lessees informing them that their permit/lease was up for renewal and requested any information they wanted included in, or taken into consideration during the permit renewal process. A Notice of Public Scoping was posted on the internet at the Colorado BLM homepage, and in Grand and Jackson county newspapers asking for public input on permit/lease renewals and the assessment for compliance with the Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado within the Kremmling Field Office. This notice was followed up with an internet posting of the Kremmling Field Office prioritization of allotments and a determination as to which allotments would be assessed according to the Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado. The proposed permit renewal was also posted on the Kremmling Field Office Internet NEPA register.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW: See IDT-RRC in Appendix 1.

FONSI

DOI-BLM-CO-120-2009-0030-EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

DECISION RECORD

DECISION: It is my decision to authorize the Proposed Action as described in the attached EA. “This decision is contingent on meeting all mitigation measures and monitoring requirements listed below.”

RATIONALE: When a livestock grazing permit expires, it is subject to renewal at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior for a period of up to ten years. Livestock grazing when properly managed in accordance with good rangeland ecology practices, has been proven to result in improved land health. The public benefits from public lands which are maintained in a healthy condition and are able to produce sustainable resources for a variety of uses.

The livestock producer benefits from a renewed livestock grazing permit/lease to graze forage on BLM managed land. Livestock grazing on BLM managed land is an integral part of the livestock producer’s operation, and an important part of local rural economies

MITIGATION MEASURES: None

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance with the renewed livestock grazing permit and its associated terms and conditions would be accomplished through the Kremmling Field Office Range Management Program. Livestock grazing would be monitored by the range staff and other area personnel, as appropriate, to ensure compliance. The Kremmling Field Office Range Monitoring Plan would be used to schedule periodic utilization checks, collect trend data, and evaluate allotment condition. When activity plans have been developed covering an allotment, monitoring methods and schedules included in them would be applied to the allotment. Changes would be made to the permit, based on monitoring, when changes are determined necessary to protect land health. Allotment monitoring especially along the riparian zones would continue. If the drought conditions or livestock use result in undesirable riparian impacts, then management options will be reviewed.

NAME OF PREPARER: Richard Johnson

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Susan Cassel

DATE: 4/14/09

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ Peter McFadden

DATE SIGNED: 4/14/09

ATTACHMENTS:

1) Livestock grazing lease # 051910 with standard terms and conditions

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Review Record and Checklist

Appendix 1

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM ANALYSIS REVIEW RECORD AND CHECKLIST:

Project Title: Lease # 051910 renewal for Diamondtail Ranch

Project Leader: Richard Johnson

Date Proposal Received: (Only for external proposals)

Date Submitted for Comment: 1/9/09

Due Date for Comments: 1/31/09

Consultation/Permit Requirements:

Consultation	Date Initiated	Date Completed	Responsible Specialist/ Contractor	Comments
Cultural/Archeological Clearance/SHPO	1/20/2009	1/20/2009	BBW	Past actions have resulted in a cultural resource inventory to determine if those actions would cause potential adverse affects to known and unknown cultural resources sites from livestock grazing, motorized travel, and recreational use. When project undertakings are identified a cultural resource inventory would be conducted to determine if sites are present and their eligibility, project effects, and mitigation requirements if necessary.
Native American	1/20/2009	1/20/2009	BBW	Consultation was completed for the original allotment renewal. Future undertakings would require tribal consultation to identify traditional cultural properties.
T&E Species/FWS	N/A	N/A	MM	
Permits Needed (i.e. Air or Water)	N/A	N/A	PB	

(NP) = Not Present

(NI) = Resource/Use Present but Not Impacted

(PI) = Potentially Impacted and Brought Forward for Analysis.

NP NI PI	Discipline/Name	Date Review Comp.	Initials	Review Comments (required for Critical Element NIs, and for elements that require a finding but are not carried forward for analysis.)
CRITICAL ELEMENTS				
NI	Air Quality Belcher	2/27/09	PB	There are no air quality impacts.
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Cassel	4/1/0/09	SC	There are no Areas of Critical Environmental Concern in the proximity of the proposed project area.
NI	Cultural Resources Wyatt	1/20/2009	BBW	Past actions have resulted in a cultural resource inventory to determine if those actions would cause potential adverse affects to known and unknown cultural resources sites from livestock grazing, motorized travel, and recreational use. When project undertakings are identified a cultural resource inventory would be conducted

					to determine if sites are present and their eligibility, project effects, and mitigation requirements if necessary.
NP	Environmental Justice Cassel	4/10/09	SC		According to the most recent Census Bureau statistics (2000), there are no minority or low income communities within the Kremmling Planning Area.
NP	Farmlands, Prime and Unique Belcher	2/27/09	PB		There are no farmlands, prime or unique, in the proximity of the proposed project area.
NP	Floodplains Belcher	2/27/09	PB		The permit is for upland allotments that do not affect the floodplain.
NP	Invasive, Non-native Species Johnson Torma Scott	2/11/09	MS		See Analysis
PI	Migratory Birds McGuire	1/22/2009	MM		See analysis in EA.
NI	Native American Religious Concerns Wyatt	1/20/2009	BBW		Consultation was completed for the original allotment renewal. Future undertakings would require tribal consultation to identify traditional cultural properties.
NI	T/E, and Sensitive Species (Finding on Standard 4) McGuire	1/22/2009	MM		<i>P. formosula</i> , an endangered plant, occurs in allotment #7260. <i>P. laricifolius</i> , a state rare plant, occurs in allotment #7255. These allotments are currently in good condition. Since there are no changes proposed to these allotments, impacts would not occur. No T/E or Sensitive Species occur in allotment #7255.
NP	Wastes, Hazardous and Solid Hodgson	1/23/09	KH		There are no quantities of wastes, hazardous or solid, located on BLM-administered lands in the proposed project area, and there would be no wastes generated as a result of the Proposed Action or No Action alternative.
NI	Water Quality, Surface and Ground (Finding on Standard 5) Belcher	1/27/09	PB		The 1999 Environmental Assessment for the grazing permit (CO-018-99-16EA) summarized water quality in the allotments as good and meeting state water quality standards. The 2008 "Status of Water Quality in Colorado" (305(b) Report) lists the Laramie River and tributaries as fully supporting the designated uses of agriculture, water supply, primary contact recreation, and coldwater aquatic life-class 1. The BLM has primarily used riparian and upland surveys to monitor watershed conditions in these allotments.
PI	Wetlands & Riparian Zones (Finding on Standard 2) Belcher	2/27/09	PB		See Wetlands & Riparian Zones Sections.
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers Cassel				There are no eligible Wild and Scenic River segments in the proposed project area.
NP	Wilderness Monkouski	4/13/09	JJM		There is no designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas in the proximity of the proposed project area.
NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS (A finding must be made for these elements)					
PI	Soils (Finding on Standard 1) Belcher	2/27/09	PB		See Soils Section.
PI	Vegetation (Finding on Standard 3) Johnson Torma Scott	1/24/09	RJ		See analysis in EA.
PI	Wildlife, Aquatic (Finding on Standard 3) McGuire	1/22/2009	MM		See analysis in EA.

PI	Wildlife, Terrestrial (Finding on Standard 3)	McGuire	1/22/2009	MM	See analysis in EA.
OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS					
NI	Access/Transportation	Monkouski	3/2/09	JJM	No change in access. No Impacts.
NI	Forest Management	K. Belcher	2/4/2009	KB	No impact to forest resources.
NI	Geology and Minerals	Hodgson	1/23/09	KH	No impacts.
NP	Fire	Wyatt	1/20/2009	BBW	Grazing would reduce light flashy fuels.
NI	Hydrology/Water Rights	Belcher	2/27/09	PB	Hydrologic concerns are addressed in the Wetlands and Soils sections of this document. There would be no impact to water rights.
NI	Paleontology	Rupp	1/16/2009	FGR	No impacts to fossil resources from renewing permit, or the no action alternative. Proposed ground disturbing projects will be reviewed on a project by project basis to determine the need for paleontological inventory.
NI	Noise	Monkouski	3/2/09	JJM	No impacts.
PI	Range Management	Johnson Torma Scott	1/24/09	RJ	See analysis in EA
NI	Lands/ Realty Authorizations	Cassel	1/14/09	SC	There are no leases or permits in the location of the proposed action. There are several ROW's: COC-8482 & COC-53877 to Mountain Parks Electric; COC-60651 to Nielson for an oil well; Bull Mountain Access road – COC-30371, COC-8661, COC-020948, COC-11926; and Bull Mountain Commsite – COC-53312 & COC-68722. These ROW's will not be affected by the proposed action or the no action alternative.
PI	Recreation	Monkouski Windsor	3/2/09	JJM	Under the proposed action no impacts would occur to recreational opportunities that include Off Highway Vehicle opportunities, camping, hunting, hiking, and watching wildlife.
NI	Socio-Economics	Cassel	4/10/09	SC	There would be a decrease to AUMs for #07254 to the pre-1999 rate which the permittee should be accustomed to. No changes would be made to the other allotments and therefore, there should be no impact to Socio-economics in the proposed action or no action alternatives.
NI	Visual Resources	Windsor	1/30/09	AW	Visual resources would not be impacted by the proposed action or the no action alternative.
	Cumulative Impact Summary	Cassel			
FINAL REVIEW					
	P&E Coordinator	Cassel			