

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, CO 81625-1129

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2009-0087-EA

CASEFILE/ALLOTMENT NUMBER: 0500253/04329, 04336

PROJECT NAME: Renewal of the grazing permit on the Beaver Basin #04329 and Green Canyon #04336 Allotments

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: see Allotment Maps, Attachments 1a and 1b

Beaver Basin #04329 T12N R103W, por. Secs. 16, 17, 20, 21, and 28

92 acres BLM
842 acres State Land Board
276 acres private
1,210 acres total

Green Canyon #04336 T10N R101W, por. Secs. 30-32
T10N R102W, por. Secs. 23-26, 35, 36
T9N R101W, por. Secs. 5-7

2,974 acres BLM
186 acres private
3,160 acres total

APPLICANT: The Simpson Family Trust

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action and Alternatives are subject to the following plan:

Name of Plan: Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Date Approved: April 26, 1989

Results: The Proposed Action is consistent with the Little Snake Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision, Livestock Grazing Management objective to improve range conditions

for both wildlife and livestock through proper utilization of key forage plants and adjusting livestock stocking rates as a result of vegetation studies.

A portion of the Proposed Action is located within Management Unit 2, Northern Central. The Proposed Action is compatible with the management objective for this unit, which is to provide for the development of oil and gas resources. The Proposed Action would not conflict with the development of these resources.

A portion of the Proposed Action is located within Management Unit 9, Cold Springs. The Proposed Action is compatible with the management objectives for this unit, which are to maintain and improve the quality of 1) the habitat for elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, 2) the fisheries in Beaver Creek, and 3) the recreational opportunities which exist here, primarily for hunting use.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: BLM permit #0500253, which authorizes livestock grazing on the Beaver Basin #04329 and Green Canyon #04336 Allotments expires on February 28, 2010. This permit is subject to renewal at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior, who delegated the authority to BLM, for a period of up to ten years. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management has the authority to renew the livestock grazing permit/lease consistent with the provisions of the *Taylor Grazing Act*, *Public Rangelands Improvement Act*, *Federal Land Policy and Management Act*, and Little Snake Field Office's *Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*. This Plan/EIS has been amended by *Standards for Public Land Health in the State of Colorado*.

The following Environmental Assessment will analyze the impacts of livestock grazing on public land managed by the BLM. The analysis will recommend terms and conditions to the permit/lease which improve or maintain public land health. The Proposed Action will be assessed for meeting land health standards.

In order to graze livestock on public land, the livestock producer (permittee) must hold a grazing permit. The grazing permittee has a preference right to receive the permit if grazing is to continue. The land use plan allows grazing to continue. This EA will be a site specific look to determine if grazing should continue as provided for in the land use plan and to identify the conditions under which it can be renewed.

Beaver Basin Allotment #04329

This allotment is located approximately 80 miles northwest of Craig, Colorado. It is bisected by Moffat County Road 72. It is adjacent to the Wyoming state line on the north and one mile east of the Utah border. The public lands within the allotment consist of one small parcel in the southeasterly portion of the allotment. This parcel is along the westerly slope of Middle Mountain with elevations ranging from 8,400 feet to 8,800 feet.

Vermillion Ranch also has a permit on this allotment and grazes “in common” with the Simpson Family Trust. Vermillion Ranch’s permit is for 17 cattle from June 1st through October 31st for 26 AUMs at 30% public land.

Green Canyon Allotment #04336

This allotment is located approximately 70 miles northwest of Craig, Colorado. It encompasses rugged and steep canyons on the southeasterly slope of Cold Spring Mountain. It consists of two narrow canyons, Bull Canyon to the south and Green Canyon to the north. The largest areas that are accessible to livestock are Little Joe Basin, a perched alluvial basin on the slopes of Cold Spring Mountain, and the area below Peekaboo Ridge which burned in 1993 and 1998.

Elevations range from approximately 7,600 feet in the northern portion of the allotment near Peekaboo Ridge to approximately 6,000 feet in Bull Canyon.

PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS: The BLM Little Snake Field Office sent out a Notice of Public Scoping on December 22, 2006 to determine the level of public interest, concern, and resource conditions on the grazing authorizations that were up for renewal in FY 2008. A Notice of Public Scoping was posted on the Internet, at the Colorado BLM Home Page, asking for public input on grazing permit and lease renewals. Individual letters were sent to the affected permittees and lessees informing them that their permit and/or lease was up for renewal and requesting any information they wanted included or taken into consideration during the renewal process. There were no comments received specific to the renewal of this grazing permit.

BACKGROUND: The Simpson Family Trust applied for the reinstatement of the 23 suspended AUMs due to the Peekaboo Fire and subsequent recovery increasing the amount of available forage. They also requested a change in the spring and fall/winter grazing windows. They requested that the fall/winter window end on December 31 as they are never able to graze the allotment beyond December due to deep snow. The earlier spring turn out is requested as the use in Green Canyon is limited to when the Green Canyon Reservoir has water, or when there is still enough snow to provide water, which often is a two to three week period. In many years, there has been no useable water available much past early May.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action

Renew the grazing permit on the Beaver Basin #04329 and Green Canyon #04336 Allotments for a period of ten years, expiring February 28, 2019. The permit would be renewed with no changes to the Beaver Basin Allotment, but the following changes to the Green Canyon Allotment would be implemented: the reinstatement of the 23 suspended AUMs and changing the seasons of use as shown below.

From:						
Allotment	Livestock	Dates		%PL	AUMs	
Name & Number	Number & Kind	Begin	End			
Beaver Basin #04329	17 Cattle	06/28	09/15	100		45
Green Canyon #04336	25 Cattle	05/10	06/05	100		22
	25 Cattle	10/29	01/31	100		<u>78</u>
					Suspended	23
					Total	123

The above permit is subject to the following Special Terms and Conditions:

- 1) The permittee is allowed five days flexibility in pasture movements including into and out of the allotment(s) as long as the specified amount of grazing use (AUMs) is not exceeded.
- 2) Spring grazing will be rotated between the area of the Peekaboo Fire seeding and Little Joe Basin.

To:						
Allotment	Livestock	Dates		%PL	AUMs	
Name & Number	Number & Kind	Begin	End			
Beaver Basin #04329	17 Cattle	06/28	09/15	100		45
Green Canyon #04336	24 Cattle	04/10	06/05	100		45
	37 Cattle	10/29	12/31	100		<u>78</u>
					Total	123

The permit would continue to the following Special Terms and Conditions:

- 1) The permittee is allowed five days flexibility in pasture movements including into and out of the allotment(s) as long as the specified amount of grazing use (AUMs) is not exceeded.
- 2) Spring grazing on the Green Canyon Allotment will be rotated between Little Joe Basin and the Peekaboo Fire (above Green Canyon) annually.

The permit would be subject to the Standard and Common Terms and Conditions, see Attachment 2.

No Action Alternative

This alternative would maintain the existing permit.

Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed:

NEPA requires federal agencies to rigorously explore and evaluate all reasonable alternatives and

to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). As also required by NEPA, the range of alternatives considered in detail includes only those alternative that would fulfill the purpose and need for the Proposed Action.

No Grazing Alternative

No livestock grazing would take place under this alternative.

This alternative is eliminated from detailed study because it is not a realistic, implementable alternative, nor does it meet the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. When the RMP was approved, it was determined that livestock grazing was an appropriate use of this land. Eliminating grazing is not analyzed because no new issues or concerns have been identified that would require this action.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES

CRITICAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The allotments do not lie within any special designation airsheds or non-attainment areas.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Authorizing cattle grazing would not cause regional air quality impairment under either of the alternatives. The existing plant cover gives sufficient cover to the soil surface and the continued use of rotational grazing would provide would maintain sufficient plant cover to protect soils from wind erosion. Vehicular access on existing roads for livestock management activities would result in minimal releases of particulate matter (dust) emissions, but this would be minor and not affect the overall air quality of the area.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 8/6/09

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Kimberly Miller 7/22/09

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Grazing authorization renewals are undertakings under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. During Section 106 review, a cultural resource assessment was completed for each allotment on August 4, 2009 by Robyn Watkins Morris, Little Snake Field Office Archaeologist. The assessment followed the procedures and guidance outlined in the 1980 National Programmatic Agreement Regarding the Livestock Grazing and Range Improvement Program, IM-WO-99-039, IM-CO-99-007, IM-CO-99-019, and IM-CO-01-026. The results of the assessment are summarized in the table below. Copies of the cultural resource assessments are in the field office archaeology files.

Data developed here was taken from the cultural program project report files, site report files, and base maps kept at the Little Snake Field Office as well as from General Land Office (GLO) plats, BLM land patent records, An Overview of Prehistoric Cultural Resources Little Snake Resource Area, Northwestern Colorado, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resources Series, Number 20, and An Isolated Empire, A History of Northwestern Colorado, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resource Series, Number 2 and Appendix 21 of the Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, Draft February 1986, Bureau of Land Management, Craig, Colorado District, Little Snake Resource Area.

The table below is based on the allotment specific analysis. The table shows known cultural resources, eligible and need data, and those that are anticipated to be in each allotment.

Allotment Number	Acres Surveyed at a Class III Level	Acres NOT Surveyed at a Class III Level	Percent of Allotment Inventoried at a Class III Level	Eligible or Need Data Sites- Known in Allotment	Estimated Sites for the Allotment *(total number)	Estimated Eligible or Need Data Sites in the Allotment (number)
04329	9	1201	.7%	0	32	10
04336	175	2985	5.8%	6	83	25

*Estimates of site densities are based on known inventory data. Estimates should be accepted as minimum figures which may be revised upwards based on future inventory findings.

Two cultural resource inventories were completed in the Beaver Basin Allotment #04329 resulting in the complete inventory of nine acres and the recording of no cultural resources. The historic GLO plats were reviewed. There was nothing found on the 1882 GLO plat for T12N R103W, but there was a historic road on the 1909 map.

Two cultural resource inventories were completed on the Green Canyon Allotment #04336 resulting in the complete coverage inventory of 175 acres and the recording of twelve cultural resources. The cultural resources consist of two rock art sites, one homestead, one historic isolated find, one prehistoric isolated find, three open camps, one open lithic, two sheltered camps, and one historic farming site. The historic GLO plats were checked for this allotment. Nothing was found on either the 1881 or the 1910 GLO plats for T10N R102W or T10N R101W. The 1909 GLO plat for T9N R101W shows there is a historic road through Bull

Canyon.

Based on available data, a high potential for historic properties occurs in the Green Canyon Allotment #04336 and a low potential exists for historic properties in the Beaver Basin Allotment #04329. Subsequent cultural resource inventory will be conducted in areas where livestock concentrate. Subsequent field inventory is to be completed within ten year period of the permit.

- In the Green Canyon Allotment #04336, survey along the Bull Canyon trail and through Green Canyon is needed. This trail is where livestock are concentrating.

If historic properties are located during the subsequent field inventory, and BLM determines that grazing activities are adversely impacting the properties, mitigation will be identified and implemented in consultation with the Colorado SHPO.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: The direct impacts that occur where livestock concentrate, during normal livestock grazing activity, include trampling, chiseling, and churning of site soils, cultural features, and cultural artifacts, artifact breakage, and impacts from standing, leaning, and rubbing against historic structures, above-ground cultural features, and rock art. Indirect impacts include soil erosion, gullying, and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. Continued livestock use in these concentration areas may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause irreversible adverse effects to historic properties.

Standard Stipulations for cultural resources are included in Standard and Common Terms and Conditions (Attachment 2).

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: In the Green Canyon Allotment #04336, livestock numbers would increase and livestock could be on the allotment earlier in the spring. This change may raise the potential for impacts due to grazing at a time of higher moisture and lower shear strength in the soils would lead to increased potential of damage to buried cultural resources. Salt block placement, which creates a concentration area, along roads or anywhere in the allotment would potentially impact historic properties if they are in proximity of the placement.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Impacts to cultural resources are documented in the Little Joe Basin at current usage.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris 8/5/09

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: The allotments are located in areas of isolated dwellings. Ranching, farming, and oil and gas exploration/development are the primary economic activities.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: The allotment is relatively isolated from population centers, so no populations would be affected by physical or socioeconomic impacts of either alternative. Neither alternative would directly affect the social, cultural or economic well-being and health of Native American, minority, or low-income populations.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Louise McMinn 8/3/09

FLOOD PLAINS

Affected Environment:

Beaver Basin Allotment #04329

There are no floodplains on public lands within this allotment.

Green Canyon Allotment #04336

Little Joe Basin is an ephemeral floodplain. It is a depositional area resulting from a change in gradient to gentler slopes. There is no well-defined channel until the gradient increases on the west side of the basin.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Livestock grazing as permitted under either alternative would not result in the ability of the floodplain in Little Joe Basin to play its natural role in preventing catastrophic flooding to areas downstream. This floodplain is of sufficient size and stability and located within an area confined by steeper slopes to allow flood waters to spread out, dissipate energy, and minimize the impact of potential flooding to areas downstream.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 8/6/09

INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Invasive and noxious weeds are present on the allotments. Invasive annuals such as cheatgrass, blue mustard, and yellow alyssum occur within and in the vicinity of the allotments and are occupying disturbed areas. Invasive annual weeds are typically established on disturbed and high traffic areas, whereas, biennial and perennial noxious weeds are less common in occurrence, but will invade intact native plant communities. Cheatgrass is on the Colorado List C of noxious weeds. Other Colorado List B noxious weeds that are present in the vicinity and could potentially become established within the allotment includes Russian knapweed, spotted knapweed, and biennial thistles.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: The potential of increased invasive and/or noxious weed establishment is very similar under either of the alternatives. Vehicular access to public lands for grazing operations, livestock and wildlife movement, as well as wind and water,

can cause weeds to spread into new areas. Surface disturbance due to livestock concentration and human activities associated with grazing operations can also increase weed presence. Rotational grazing practices that limit growing season use, ensure good distribution, and limit utilization of desirable species would maintain a resilient native plant community that can occupy bare soils and resist invasive and noxious weed establishment. The largest concern in the project area would be for biennial and perennial noxious weed species to become established and not be detected. Once they are detected, they can be controlled with various integrated pest management techniques. Land use practices by the livestock operator and their weed control efforts would largely determine the identification and potential occurrence of weeds within the allotment. BLM promotes the principles of Integrated Pest Management to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 8/10/09

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: Brewer's sparrow and sage sparrow are likely to nest within these allotments. Both of these species are listed on the USFWS 2008 Birds of Conservation Concern List.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Neither alternative would have a negative impact on either species. There is low potential that nest trampling could occur. Should this occur, it would not have any long term impacts to either species populations. Chance of take occurring is low.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 8/3/09

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

A letter was sent to the Eastern Shoshone, Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council on May 26, 2009. The letter listed the FY2010 projects that the BLM would notify them on and projects that would not require notification. A follow up phone call was performed on July 26, 2009. No comments were received (Letter on file at the Little Snake Field Office). This project requires no additional notification.

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris 8/5/09

PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS

Affected Environment: There are no Prime and Unique Farmlands present on either allotment.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 8/7/09

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED ANIMALS

Affected Environment: There are no threatened, endangered or special status species or habitats for such species.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 8/3/09

T&E AND SENSITIVE PLANTS

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive species present on the Beaver Basin Allotment.

On the Green Canyon Allotment, there are two occurrences of Woodside wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum tumulosum*) and one occurrence of tufted cryptanth (*Cryptantha caespitosa*), both BLM sensitive species.

Woodside wild buckwheat is a low growing, nearly prostrate, perennial forb of pinyon-juniper woodlands. It grows on gravelly, rocky outcrops and flowers from late April through early July. Its distribution is limited to Utah and northwest Colorado.

Tufted cryptanth is also a low growing, nearly prostrate, perennial forb. It grows on sparsely vegetated shale knolls and is associated with other cushion plants, pinyon-juniper woodlands, or sagebrush. It blooms from late April/early May through early July. It is distributed from Idaho to northwest Colorado.

There are no federally listed threatened or endangered plants on the Green Canyon Allotment.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Allowing grazing use earlier in the spring would result in no additional impact from the current spring grazing window. Both species inhabit habitats that are on steeper, sparsely vegetated sites that are not preferred by cattle. Neither species is associated with forage species and none of the occurrences of either sensitive plant lie near any livestock concentration or trailing areas. Neither alternative would threaten the continued existence of these populations.

No sensitive plant species impacts would occur on the Beaver Basin Allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 7/16/09

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no hazardous wastes present on either allotment.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Potential releases of hazardous materials could occur due to vehicular access for livestock management operations. Coolant, oil, and fuel are materials that could potentially be released. Due to the limited amount of vehicular activity that would be required, the potential for releases of any of these materials is low and if a release were to occur, it would be minimal and highly localized and not result in an adverse impact to either allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 7/21/09

WATER QUALITY - GROUND

Affected Environment: The allotments are in an area where the geology has the potential for ground water aquifers. The ground water quality in the areas range from useable to poor.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Due to the dispersal of livestock over a large area, there would be no adverse impacts to ground water quality.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Jennifer Maiolo 7/27/09

WATER QUALITY - SURFACE

Affected Environment:

Beaver Basin Allotment #04329

Surface flows from this allotment flow into Sketcher Creek, a tributary of Beaver Creek. Downstream from this allotment is a significant wetland along Skeltcher Creek. This wetland is trapping sediment prior to runoff entering Beaver Creek. The water quality in Beaver Creek needs to be of a quality sufficient to support Aquatic Life Cold 1, Recreation 2, Water Supply, and Agriculture under Colorado's use designations as of February 20, 2002

Green Canyon Allotment #04336

This allotment is drained by ephemeral drainages running through Green Canyon and Bull Canyon. Runoff from the upper allotment passes over and through Little Joe Basin and into an unnamed drainage which is a tributary to Vermillion Creek. Runoff that flows through Bull Canyon flows into and commingles with irrigation water. Irrigation return waters are then able to flow into the same unnamed tributary below Little Joe Basin and subsequently into Vermillion Creek. The water quality in Vermillion Creek needs to be of a quality sufficient to support Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture under Colorado's use designations as of February 20, 2002. Vermillion Creek is designated Use Protected.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Allowing use earlier in the spring, continuing the rotation of areas used by livestock in the spring, and grazing at appropriate stocking rates would not diminish the ability of the upland plant communities continue to provide the plant abundance, species diversity, and soil cover necessary to protect the local watershed. The increases in herbaceous forage on the recovered areas of the Peekaboo Fire and their ability to provide for additional livestock numbers in this alternative would not lead to any increased runoff or decreased water quality, particularly due to the ability of herbaceous vegetation to provide increased soil holding and water retention over areas dominated by pinyon and juniper. Nutrient levels would remain the same under this alternative and the water quality of Vermillion Creek would not change.

There would be no change in impacts to surface water quality from the No Action Alternative on the Beaver Basin Allotment.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Both allotments are upstream of waterways that are currently supporting classified uses. Continuation of current management would not result in changes to this circumstance.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 8/7/09

WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

Affected Environment:

Beaver Basin Allotment #04329

A small riparian area is located below a spring that is just outside of the southeasterly corner of this allotment. The area is primarily made up of sedges.

Green Canyon Allotment #04336

There are no riparian areas present.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: In the Beaver Basin Allotment, livestock management has been essentially the same since 1975. The limited riparian vegetation supported

by the spring has remained healthy and vigorous and the continuation of current management would not change this. There would be no impacts from either alternative on the Green Canyon Allotment as there are no riparian resources present.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 8/7/09

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Kimberly Miller 7/22/09

WSAs, WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Kimberly Miller 7/22/09

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

SOILS

Affected Environment:

Beaver Basin Allotment

Two soils are present on public lands within this allotment. They are the Forsey-Libeg complex, 3-25% slopes, very stony and the Losee-Thornburgh dry, complex, 25-65% slopes.

The Forsey-Libeg complex is a cobbly sandy loam that is relatively deep (60 inches) and is well drained, has medium runoff, low water holding capacity, and moderate permeability. It is nonsaline and supports sagebrush/perennial grass plant communities.

The Losee-Thornburgh dry, complex, is a very cobbly sandy loam that is relatively deep (60 inches) and is well drained, has medium to high runoff, low water holding capacity, and moderate to moderately rapid permeability. It is nonsaline and supports sagebrush/perennial

grass plant communities.

Green Canyon Allotment

Most of the allotment that is available to livestock consists of the Joebas-Rock Outcrop complex, 5-40% slopes and the Rock River sandy loam, 3-12% slopes.

The Joebas-Rock Outcrop complex exists mostly in Green Canyon and other areas outside of Little Joe Basin, especially in the area of the Peekaboo Fire. This soil is mostly a gravelly sandy loam interspersed with exposed rock outcrops. This relatively shallow (10-20 inch) soil is well drained, has very high runoff, very low water holding capacity, and moderate permeability. It is nonsaline and supports pinyon-juniper dominated plant communities.

The Rock River sandy loam comprises most of Little Joe Basin and the valley bottom to the north. This soil is a sandy/sandy clay loam that is relatively deep (60 inches) and is well drained, has medium runoff, moderate water holding capacity, and moderate permeability. It is nonsaline and supports Wyoming big sagebrush/perennial grass plant communities.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: No significant loss or gain of biological soil crusts would occur as a result of implementing any of the alternatives. Slight responses of biological soil crusts to improved grazing practices would result in improved cover, distribution, diversity, and vigor of these crusts on upland soils. Lighter or occasional use by livestock and wildlife allow biological soil crusts to persist.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Returning the suspended AUMs to active status on the Green Canyon Allotment would not result in increased impacts to soil resources. The recovery of the Peekaboo Fire has opened up new areas for livestock, resulting in no net increase in livestock concentration that could lead to increased erosion or compaction. Implementing livestock use earlier in the spring could allow for increased compaction and soil shearing on soils that would likely be wetter earlier in the spring. However, rotation of use during this period and the maintenance of a proper stocking rate would ensure that wetter soils are not excessively trampled.

There would be no change in impacts to soil resources from the No Action Alternative on the Beaver Basin Allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 8/7/09

UPLAND VEGETATION

Affected Environment:

Beaver Basin Allotment

Public lands in this allotment are dominated by a sagebrush/perennial grass plant community.

Dominant plants include Wyoming big sagebrush, black sagebrush, mountain sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, western wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, prairie junegrass, needle-and-thread, Indian ricegrass, and bottlebrush squirreltail.

This allotment is also permitted for 26 AUMs of livestock use by Vermillion Ranch. Per their permit, they may graze this allotment for no more than 30 days anytime between June 1 and October 31 and spring use may not be made in two consecutive years.

Green Canyon Allotment

Areas used by livestock consist of two primary plant communities: pinyon-juniper and Wyoming big sagebrush-perennial grass. The pinyon-juniper community is dominated by pinyon pine, Utah juniper, bluebunch wheatgrass, needle-and-thread, Indian ricegrass, Wyoming big sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, bottlebrush squirreltail, and western wheatgrass.

The Wyoming big sagebrush-perennial grass community is dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush, green rabbitbrush, rubber rabbitbrush, scarlet globemallow, western wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, needle-and-thread, bottlebrush squirreltail, Indian ricegrass, and prairie junegrass. Much of this community is highly susceptible to cheatgrass invasion following disturbance. Approximated 0.5 miles above Little Joe Basin is an area of approximately three acres that was burned as a spot fire during the 2007 Goodman Fire. This area is now almost completely dominated by cheatgrass. Other areas above Little Joe Basin (primarily on the Rock River sandy loam) have patchy cheatgrass invasions due to disturbances of unknown origin.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action:

Beaver Basin Allotment

The plant community on this allotment continues to provide a sustainable forage base under the currently permitted use. Continuing livestock grazing at current levels would continue to result in utilization well below the 50% threshold, allowing for maintenance of good community composition and overall health.

Green Canyon Allotment

Turnout one month earlier in the spring would increase grazing pressure during critical growth periods for forage plants. However, by rotating use between the upper (Peekaboo) and lower (Little Joe Basin) portions of the allotment, forage plants can grow throughout the spring unimpeded by livestock grazing every other year. Allowing the return to active status of the suspended 23 AUMs reflects the greater carrying capacity afforded by the Peekaboo Fire and subsequent successful recovery. Prior to the Peekaboo Fire, there was approximately 605 acres suitable for grazing within the allotment. The burning of low-producing pinyon-juniper woodlands coupled with the successful establishment of perennial grasses following the fire has occurred since 1998 has resulted in the addition of approximately 450 acres of suitable grazing land for a total of 1,055 acres. This return of the 23 AUMs to the permit would actually result in a lower overall stocking rate (8.5 acres/AUM) than prior to the fire with the 23 AUMs suspended (6 acres/AUM).

Since the acreage available is roughly equal between the Peekaboo and Little Joe Basin use areas, the spring stocking rate in each area would be approximately 11 acres/AUM. With cattle having access to the entire allotment in the winter, the winter use stocking rate would be 13 acres/AUM. These stocking rates are appropriate for the rolling loam and sandy juniper ecological sites that are accessible for and produce livestock forage.

Environmental Consequences, No Action:

Beaver Basin Allotment

Impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action.

Green Canyon Allotment

Maintenance of the current grazing permit would continue to maintain a healthy plant community throughout the allotment. The grass-dominated plant community within the Peekaboo burn would continue to be lightly utilized by livestock.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 7/21/09

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC

Affected Environment: There is no aquatic wildlife habitat present in either allotment.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 8/3/09

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL

Affected Environment: The Beaver Basin and Green Canyon Allotments provide year round habitat for mule deer, elk, and pronghorn antelope. Winter habitat for these species may be limited in severe winters as snow depths may be excessive for these species. A variety of small reptiles, small mammals and song birds may also be found within this allotment.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Either alternative would ensure that wildlife habitats remain capable of supporting healthy productive wildlife populations. Big game animals would not be directly impacted by livestock grazing. Either alternative would not impact small mammals, reptiles, or song birds.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 8/3/09

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, those brought forward for analysis will be formatted as shown above.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Fluid Minerals		JAM 7/27/09	
Forest Management	JHS 7/29/09		
Hydrology/Ground			see Water Quality, ground
Hydrology/Surface		JHS 8/10/09	
Paleontology		JAM 7/27/09	
Range Management		JHS 8/4/09	
Realty Authorizations		LM 8/3/09	
Recreation/Travel Mgmt		KMM 7/22/09	
Socio-Economics		LM 8/3/09	
Solid Minerals		JAM 7/27/09	
Visual Resources		KMM 7/22/09	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	JHS 8/4/09		

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: These allotments and areas surrounding have historically been grazed by both sheep and cattle. Numerous maintained and unmaintained roads exist throughout the area, including on the allotments. These roads are used regularly by local residents and ranchers as well by as the primary recreation users in the area, hunters. Wildlife populations in the area are high, especially for deer and elk that compete with livestock for available forage throughout the area. The primary impacts from all of these activities are most immediately seen in the presence of roads, cultivation on private lands, and weed presence. The Proposed Action to continue grazing on these allotments is compatible with other uses, both historic and present, and would not add any new or detrimental impacts to those that are already present.

STANDARDS

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD: The Green Canyon and Beaver Basin Allotments currently provide habitat that is capable of supporting healthy, diverse populations of wildlife. Both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative would ensure that this standard continues to be met in the future.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 8/3/09

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal)

STANDARD: There are no threatened, endangered, or special status species present within these allotments. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 8/3/09

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD: Currently, both allotments are meeting this standard. Continued summer-season grazing at light stocking rates would not preclude the Beaver Basin Allotment from continuing to meet this standard.

Allowing grazing one month earlier in the spring on the Green Canyon Allotment would meet this standard only if areas used this time receive periodic deferment. Under the Proposed Action, the rotation of areas used in the spring would continue to be required, allowing areas used in the spring to receive no use from livestock every other year. Allowing the suspended AUMs to become active would reflect the availability of additional forage in the Peekaboo Ridge area and would not result in the allotment being used beyond its ability to provide livestock forage.

Both allotments are meeting this standard under current management and the Proposed Action would continue to allow both allotments to provide a vigorous and diverse plant community to protect watershed and wildlife resources. Both alternatives would meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 7/29/09

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant)

STANDARD: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered plant species present on either allotment. There are no BLM sensitive species present on the Beaver Basin Allotment. On the Green Canyon Allotment, there are two occurrences of BLM sensitive plants, Woodside wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum tumulosum*) and tufted cryptanth (*Cryptantha caespitosa*). Both of these species inhabit habitats that are not conducive to livestock grazing and the present populations are not in areas that are impacted by livestock. Neither alternative would threaten the continued existence of these species nor would they degrade current habitats. Both alternatives would meet this standard on both allotments.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 7/16/09

RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD: There are no riparian areas present on the Green Canyon Allotment. For this allotment, this standard does not apply.

The Beaver Basin Allotment contains a minimal riparian area consisting mainly of sedges supported by a spring that is just outside of the allotments southeasterly boundary. This small area of riparian development has remained healthy under current livestock management and, as such, both alternatives would meet this standard on this allotment.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 8/7/09

WATER QUALITY STANDARD: On the Beaver Basin Allotment, runoff waters from snowmelt and rainfall flow into Skeltzer Draw, a tributary to Beaver Creek. On the Green Canyon Allotment, runoff waters flow into ephemeral drainages that are tributary to Vermillion Creek. Both Vermillion and Beaver Creeks have water quality that is currently supporting classified uses. Both alternatives would meet this standard on both allotments.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 8/7/09

UPLAND SOILS STANDARD: Upland soils have very slight erosion with no indications of accelerated erosion. The slight movement of soil particles and surface litter is appropriate on the moderate slopes. The native plant community is providing good cover with a diverse mix of shrubs, grasses, and forbs. Grazing under either alternative would maintain sufficient residual forage for upland soil health to be maintained. The upland soil standard for healthy rangelands would be met with the implementation of either alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 8/7/09

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, Ellen Simpson.

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment 1a, Beaver Basin Allotment #04329
Attachment 1b, Green Canyon Allotment #04336
Attachment 2, Standard and Common Terms and Conditions

SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:

DATE SIGNED:

SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:

DATE SIGNED:

Finding of No Significant Impact

The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. With the implementation of the attached mitigation measures there is a finding of no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Little Snake Resource Area and adjacent land.
2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.
3. There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplain, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.
4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.
5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.
6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other actions that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State or local natural resource related plans, policies or programs.
7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.
8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural surveys, and through mitigation by avoidance, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and adversely affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice Policy.
9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act were identified. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, treatments would be modified or mitigated not to have an adverse effect or new analysis would be conducted.
10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

DATE SIGNED

ATTACHMENT #2
DOI-BLM-N010-2009-0087-EA
TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Standard Terms and Conditions

- 1) Grazing permit or lease terms and conditions and the fees charged for grazing use are established in accordance with the provisions of the grazing regulations now or hereafter approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
- 2) They are subject to cancellation, in whole or in part, at any time because of:
 - a. Noncompliance by the permittee/lessee with rules and regulations;
 - b. Loss of control by the permittee/lessee of all or a part of the property upon which it is based;
 - c. A transfer of grazing preference by the permittee/lessee to another party;
 - d. A decrease in the lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management within the allotment(s) described;
 - e. Repeated willful unauthorized grazing use;
 - f. Loss of qualifications to hold a permit or lease.
- 3) They are subject to the terms and conditions of allotment management plans if such plans have been prepared. Allotment management plans **MUST** be incorporated in permits and leases when completed.
- 4) Those holding permits or leases **MUST** own or control and be responsible for the management of livestock authorized to graze.
- 5) The authorized officer may require counting and/or additional or special marking or tagging of the livestock authorized to graze.
- 6) The permittee's/lessee's grazing case file is available for public inspection as required by the Freedom of Information Act.
- 7) Grazing permits or leases are subject to the nondiscrimination clauses set forth in Executive Order 11246 of September 24, 1964, as amended. A copy of this order may be obtained from the authorized officer.
- 8) Livestock grazing use that is different from that authorized by a permit or lease **MUST** be applied for prior to the grazing period and **MUST** be filed with and approved by the authorized officer before grazing use can be made.
- 9) Billing notices are issued which specify fees due. Billing notices, when paid, become a part of the grazing permit or lease. Grazing use cannot be authorized during any period of delinquency in the payment of amounts due, including settlement for unauthorized use.

- 10) Grazing fee payments are due on the date specified on the billing notice and MUST be paid in full within 15 days of the due date, except as otherwise provided in the grazing permit or lease. If payment is not made within that time frame, a late fee (the greater of \$25 or 10 percent of the amount owed but not more than \$250) will be assessed.
- 11) No member of, or Delegate to, Congress or Resident Commissioner, after his/her election of appointment, or either before or after he/she has qualified, and during his/her continuance in office, and no officer, agent, or employee of the Department of Interior, other than members of Advisory committees appointed in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. 1) and Sections 309 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) shall be admitted to any share or part in a permit or lease, or derive any benefit to arise therefrom; and the provision of Section 3741 Revised Statute (41 U.S.C. 22), 18 U.S.C. Sections 431-433, and 43 CFR Part 7, enter into and form a part of a grazing permit or lease, so far as the same may be applicable.

Common Terms and Conditions

- A) Grazing use will not be authorized in excess of the amount of specified grazing use (AUM number) for each allotment. Numbers of livestock annually authorized in the allotment(s) may be more or less than the number listed on the permit/lease within the grazing use periods as long as the amount of specified grazing use is not exceeded.
- B) Unless there is a specific term and condition addressing utilization, the intensity of grazing use will insure that no more than 50% of the key grass species and 40% of the key browse species current years growth, by weight, is utilized at the end of the grazing season for winter allotments and the end of the growing season for allotments used during the growing season. Application of this term needs to recognize recurring livestock management that includes opportunity for regrowth, opportunity for spring growth prior to grazing, or growing season deferment.
- C) Failure to maintain range improvements to BLM standards in accordance with signed cooperative agreements and/or range improvement permits may result in the suspension of the annual grazing authorization, cancellation of the cooperative agreement or range improvement permit, and/or the eventual cancellation of this permit/lease.
- D) Storing or feeding supplemental forage on public lands other than salt or minerals must have prior approval. Forage to be fed or stored on public lands must be certified noxious weed-free. Salt and/or other mineral supplements shall be placed at least one-quarter mile from water sources or in such a manner as to promote even livestock distribution in the allotment or pasture.

- E) Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder of this authorization must notify the authorized officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the allotment operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are encountered or uncovered during any allotment activities or grazing activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate vicinity and immediately contact the authorized officer. Within five working days the authorized officer will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the identified area can be used for grazing activities again.

If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during allotment activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials and contact the authorized officer. The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best options for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

- F) No hazardous materials/hazardous or solid waste/trash shall be disposed of on public lands. If a release does occur, it shall immediately be reported to this office at (970) 826-5000.
- G) The permittee/lessee shall provide reasonable administrative access across private and leased lands to the BLM and its agents for the orderly management and protection of public lands.
- H) Application of a chemical or release of pathogens or insects on public lands must be approved by the authorized officer.
- I) The terms and conditions of this lease may be modified if additional information indicates that revision is necessary to conform with 43 CFR 4180.