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- 0115-EA

PROJECT (RIPS) NUMBER: 008368

PROJECT NAME: CDOW Serviceberry Juniper Treatment

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Portions of Sections 17-20, T 11N R 90W See Map Attachment 1

APPLICANT: Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW)

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: pg 38. The proposed project is within Management Unit 2. Management Objectives for Unit 2 are to provide for the development of the oil and gas resources. Wildlife habitat projects are allowed provided they are compatible with oil and gas development.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: The Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) is proposing to implement a treatment of encroaching juniper on private lands, lands managed by the Colorado State Land Board and lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The following Environmental Assessment will analyze the impacts of mechanical treatment on BLM managed lands. The treatment is designed to improve habitat for greater sage-grouse.

PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS: The project is listed on the NEPA log on the Little Snake Field Office website September 25, 2009.

BACKGROUND: The proposed treatment of encroaching juniper is located in an area with a high density of old aged (approx.100-200 years old) pinyon and juniper trees. The vegetation treatment will also be conducted on private lands and lands managed by the Colorado State Land Board. This project is intended to improve habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM special status

species.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

The Proposed Action is to mechanically treat approximately 130 acres to improve greater sage-grouse habitat. The project would involve removing 130 acres of old aged (approx. 100-200 years old) pinyon and juniper trees. This would be done with a large rubber tired tractor (similar to a skidder) with a 6' – 8' mulching head to shred and mulch trees up to 20" diameter. The treatment would leave small branches and wood chunks from pencil size up to bowling ball size. The mulch would be evenly scattered across the surface and stumps would be ground down to a height of 6" or less.

Project activities would not be permitted between March 1 and June 30 in order to protect breeding and nesting greater sage-grouse.

No surface disturbing activities between February 1 and August 15 in order to protect nesting ferruginous hawks. Exceptions to this timing restriction may be granted if the nest sites are determined to be inactive after May 15th or once chicks have fledged.

Site 5MF6887 must be avoided with a 100ft. buffer. The area to be avoided will be provided to Division of Wildlife and will be flagged on the ground.

The following standard stipulations apply for this project:

1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the 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 project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate vicinity of the find and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO) at (970) 826-5000. Within five working days, the AO 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 project activities again; and
- Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) (Federal Register Notice, Monday, December 4, 1995, Vol. 60, No. 232) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone at (970) 826-5000, and 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.

2. If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation costs. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

3. Unusual occurrences of plant and invertebrate fossils should be recorded, and representative examples may be collected if appropriate. Concentrations of common plant or invertebrate fossils that may be suitable for public hobby collection areas should also be noted and reported to the Field Office paleontology program coordinator or paleontology program lead. Additional mitigation measures may be appropriate in some cases for these types of localities.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: The habitat improvement project would not occur under the No Action Alternative.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES

CRITICAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: Air quality in the vicinity of the project area is considered to be in compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. There are six Class 1 (visibility) areas within 100 km of the resource area, two of which are in northwest Colorado (Mt. Zirkel Wilderness and Flat Tops Wilderness). There are no federal Class 1 areas in Utah or Wyoming within 100 km of the resource area.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Mechanical treatments proposed would not be expected to affect air quality other than localized short term dust production.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: There would be no impacts to air quality.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Kimberly Miller 9/30/09

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Affected Environment: Cultural resources, in this region of Colorado, range from late Paleo-Indian to Historic. For a general understanding of the cultural resources in this area of Colorado, see ***An Overview of Prehistoric Cultural Resources, Little Snake Resource Area, Northwestern Colorado***, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resources Series, Number 20, ***An Isolated Empire, A History of Northwestern Colorado***, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resource Series, Number 2 and ***Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Northern Colorado River Basin,*** Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The proposed project, Wildlife Habitat-CDOW Serviceberry juniper treatment, has undergone a Class III cultural resource survey:

Conner, Carl, Curtis Martin, Michael Brown, and Barbara Davenport. 2009. Class III Cultural Resource Inventory Report for a Proposed Serviceberry/Pinyon Juniper Encroachment Project in Moffat County, Colorado for the Colorado Division of Wildlife.
(11.4.09)

The survey identified one site eligible to the National Register of Historic Places cultural resources (5MF6887). The proposed project may proceed as described with the measures in place in the Proposed Action.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: There would be no impacts to cultural resources.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris 09/30/09

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in an area of isolated dwellings. Oil & gas development and ranching are the primary economic activities.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: The project area 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 09/22/09

FLOOD PLAINS

Affected Environment: There are no large floodplain areas in the proposed project location. The treatment is located in headwater stream segments.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 9/22/09

INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The whole project area is susceptible to the introduction and establishment of noxious and invasive weeds. Downy brome (cheatgrass) is common along roads and on disturbed areas in the vicinity of the project. Other species of noxious weeds are not known to be a problem in this area, but can always be introduced by vehicle traffic and wildlife. New weed infestations can occur from vehicles carrying seed from other areas. The BLM is in cooperation with Moffat County Cooperative Weed Management program to locate and control weeds on public lands. All principals of Integrated Pest Management are employed to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The threat of weed infestation following mechanical treatments is relatively low because little soil disturbance occurs; adequate desirable vegetation exists in the understory.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: There would be no new threats from invasive or nonnative plant species as a result of the No Action Alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The pinyon jay and juniper titmouse may nest in the juniper woodlands associated with this proposed project. Ferruginous hawks are known to nest near the

project area. Two historical nest sites are located directly adjacent to the treatment area. All three species are listed on the USFWS 2008 Birds of Conservation Concern List.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Mechanical removal of 130 acres of juniper trees could have a negative impact on nesting ferruginous hawks if conducted during the nesting season (February 1 – August 15). If conducted outside of this time period or during a year that the nests were inactive, this treatment is not likely to impact ferruginous hawks. Chance of take is low as a result of timing restrictions outlined in the proposed action.

Timing restrictions intended to protect ferruginous hawks and nesting greater sage-grouse will serve to protect nesting pinyon jays and juniper titmouse. As mitigated, chance of take is low.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to any migratory bird species as a result of the No Action Alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

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 followup 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 9/30/09

PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS

Affected Environment: No Prime and/or Unique Farmlands are present in the vicinity of the proposed project.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 9/29/09

T&E ANIMAL SPECIES

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered animal species or habitats for such species within the proposed project area. Areas surrounding the project area provide nesting habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM special status species. Greater sage-grouse currently do not use the project area.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would not have any impact on threatened or endangered species or their habitats. The Proposed Action to remove approximately 130 acres of juniper has the potential to improve greater sage-grouse nesting habitat. The removal of juniper trees in this area would eliminate a source of hunting perches for raptors that prey on sage-grouse. The removal of these juniper trees would allow for safer movements between nesting habitats and early brood rearing habitats along Willow Creek. Sage-grouse nesting in adjacent habitats might be disturbed if treatments were conducted during the nesting season (March 1 - June 30). The treatment of junipers within the project area would create additional nesting habitat as sage brush reestablishes the site. This would be a long term positive impact for greater sage-grouse in the area.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative would not impact any threatened, endangered or special status species or their habitats.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

T&E AND SENSITIVE PLANTS

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present within or in the vicinity of the proposed treatment.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 9/22/09

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous materials within the project area.

Environmental Consequences: There is the potential that oil or coolants could be released from equipment, however the potential for this to occur is small. If a release does occur, the environment affected would be dependent on the nature and volume of material released. In most every situation involving hazardous materials, there are ways to remediate the area that has been contaminated. Short-term consequences would occur, but they can be remedied, and long-term impacts would be minimal. If there are no releases, there would be no impact on the

environment.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 9/22/09

WATER QUALITY - GROUND

Affected Environment: The surface formation is the Wasatch formation.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Marty O'Mara 9/28/09

WATER QUALITY - SURFACE

Affected Environment: All of the lands within the project area drain towards Willow Creek. Willow Creek is a perennial tributary of the Little Snake River. The water quality of Willow Creek and its tributaries needs to support Aquatic Life Cold 1, Recreation E, Water Supply, and Agriculture. The water quality of the Little Snake River needs to support Aquatic Life Cold 1, Recreation 1a, Water Supply, and Agriculture.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Minimal surface disturbance would occur with the proposed mechanical treatments. Little to no effect to water quality would be expected to result from implementing the mechanical treatments. In the long term analysis, the proposed action would have a positive impact to water quality. This would be because of the decreased potential of experiencing a large scale wildfire and the expected increase in plant diversity and ground cover, resulting from the planned treatments.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: No Action Alternative: No direct effects on water quality are anticipated from selecting the No Action Alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/19/09

WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

Affected Environment: There are no wetlands or riparian zones within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Kimberly Miller 9/30/09

WSAs, WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Kimberly Miller 9/30/09

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

FORESTRY

Affected Environment: The area is predominately older growth juniper woodland. Trees range in age from approximately 150 years old to 250+ years old. Tree density is approximately 100 – 200 stems/acre. This is not an important area for wood products due to the remote location, although some isolated firewood cutting does occur.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The proposed action would involve the removal (mastication) of 100% of the trees over the 130 acre project area. The resulting mulch produced from tree mastication would have an inhibiting affect on seedling establishment until partially decomposed. The proposed action would have little effect on firewood availability.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

RANGE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The Proposed Action falls within two livestock grazing allotments – the Upper Fourmile (#04500), a Section 3 Allotment permitted to John Peroulis and Sons and the Serviceberry Mountain (#04039) Allotment, a Section 15 leased to James Bridges. Sheep are grazed on the Upper Fourmile Allotment from 5/20-6/10 and from 10/10-10/31. Cattle are grazed on the Serviceberry Mountain allotment from 5/01-07/07.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The area would not be closed to livestock grazing after the implementation of the Proposed Action. There would be no impacts to the livestock operation of either grazing permittee/lessee. The thinning of encroaching juniper trees would likely result in a flush of native grasses in the understory which would draw cattle to the area in higher numbers. Because sheep are browsers and are herded, the area would see an increase in sheep grazing.

In the long term, the proposed treatment would provide a benefit to livestock management. Opening up closing stands of juniper communities would increase grasses and forbs that are important to livestock. This treatment would increase the density and vigor of key livestock forage species such as western wheatgrass and thickspike wheatgrass, improving the nutritive quality and availability of these species to cattle.

Environment Consequences, No Action Alternative: Increasing juniper replacement of sagebrush communities would reduce key forage grasses and important forbs and reduce the overall grazing capacity of these allotments. Additionally, as diversity declines (a factor of climax conditions in sagebrush and pinyon-juniper communities), these areas would become less resilient to impacts from livestock grazing and more susceptible to invasion by exotic annual species such as cheatgrass when inevitable wildfires do occur.

There would be no direct impacts to the livestock operations in the area under this alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry 09/21/09

SOILS

Affected Environment: The Serviceberry Mountain and Upper Fourmile Creek contain the following soils within the project area:

Soil Mapping Unit	Map Unit Setting	Descriptions	Ecological Site
132—Milren fine sandy loam, 0 to 10 percent slopes	*Major Land Resource Area:* 34 *Elevation:* 6,200 to 6,900' *Mean annual precip:* 13 to 15" *Mean annual air temp:* 42 to 45°F *Freeze-free period:* 75 to 95 days	*Landform:* Hills *Drainage Class:* Well drained *Slowest Permeability:* .06 to 0.2 in/hr (slow) *Available Water Capacity:* 10.1" (high) *Runoff Class:* Very high	Claypan
149 – Pinelli loam, 3 to 12 percent slopes	*Major Land Resource Area:* 34 *Elevation:* 6,200 to 7,000' *Mean annual precip:* 12 to 14" *Mean Annual Air Temp:* 42 to 45°F *Freeze-Free Period:75* to 95 days	*Landform:* Benches, alluvial fans *Drainage Class:* Well drained *Slowest permeability:* .06 to 0.2 in./hr. (slow) *Available water capacity:* 9.4" (high) *Runoff class:* Very high	Clayey foothills
184—Styers-Pinelli-Taffom complex, 10 to 25 percent slopes	*Major Land Resource Area:* 34 *Elevation:* 6,200 to 7,300' *Mean annual precip:* 11 to 13" *Mean annual air temp:* 42 to 45°F *Freeze-free period:* 75 to 95 days	*Landform:* Hills *Drainage class:* Well drained *Slowest permeability:* 0.001 to .06 in./hr. (very slow) *Available water capacity:* 4.2" (low) *Runoff class:* Very high	Claypan

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Soils would be damaged during the hydro-axing project by the equipment. Repeated movement by the machinery would lead to compacted soils, new roads, loss of vegetation and erosion. However, these impacts would be lessened by the mulching material left on the ground from the hydo-axing operation. The mulch would lessen erosion and increase the water holding capacity of the soils.

Soils amongst juniper stands are typically hydrophobic due to the chemical nature of juniper needles. Removal of junipers from the project area would result improved soil conditions by eliminating the source. This effect will not be apparent for many years until the needles have broken down naturally.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to soils under this alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry 09/21/09

UPLAND VEGETATION

Affected Environment: In the proposed project area there are two range sites: clayey footslopes and claypan. The claypan range site typically supports alkali sagebrush, western wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, pine needlegrass, prairie junegrass, Nevada bluegrass, and muttongrass. Other grasses are Sandberg bluegrass, thickspike wheatgrass, and streambank wheatgrass. The major forbs are native clovers, buckwheat, Hoods phlox, rose pussytoes, tapertip onion, daisy fleabane, and aster. Stickyleaf low rabbitbrush and fringed sagebrush are other shrubs.

The clayey footslope range site typically supports Western wheatgrass, Indian ricegrass, and muttongrass. Other grasses are Letterman needlegrass, beardless wheatgrass, and bluebunch wheatgrass. The major forbs are buckwheat, scarlet globemallow, and penstemon. Wyoming big sagebrush and Douglas rabbitbrush are the main shrubs.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: This selective treatment would have impacts similar to hand thinning within the juniper stands. In sagebrush and mountain shrub communities, this treatment would have the effect of maintaining and improving the shrub, forb, and grass components of shrub dominated plant communities by reducing or eliminating the increasing competition of juniper for water and nutrients. Additionally, juniper possesses strong allelopathic characteristics which strongly suppress other competing plants once the stands become established. This treatment would eliminate threats to existing shrub dominated communities by arresting juniper allelopathy.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, no hydro-axing would occur within the juniper dominated plant community in the proposed project area. Disturbances, especially fire, could occur at some point and in an uncontrolled manner. Depending upon when such events occur, heavy fuel buildups could lead to hot, extensive burns within the other plant communities resulting in widespread type-conversions within the plant communities. Important species such as bitterbrush would be severely harmed, reducing this important wildlife food source.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry 09/21/09

AQUATIC WILDLIFE

Affected Environment: There are no habitats for aquatic wildlife on public lands within this project area.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE

Affected Environment: The proposed project area provides year round habitat for mule deer and elk. Both mule deer and elk may avoid using the area during the hardest winters when snow depths prevent use. Pronghorn antelope are not likely to use the project area in its current condition. A variety of small mammals, song birds and reptiles may also be found within the project area at various times of the year.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would likely displace most wildlife species during the actual treatment. Once the treatment is completed, displaced wildlife would return to the project area. The proposed treatment would increase pronghorn antelope use of the project area. Some song birds that depend on juniper for nesting habitat would be displaced from the project area. This would be a long term negative impact to these species. Species that use early succession habitats and sage-brush dominant habitats would likely benefit from the treatment.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: None

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

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		EMO 09/24/09	
Forest Management			See Forestry
Hydrology/Ground			See Ground Water
Paleontology		EMO 09/24/09	
Range Management			See Range Management
Realty Authorizations	LM 09/22/09		
Recreation/Travel Mgmt		KMM 9/30/09	
Socio-Economics		LM 09/22/09	
Solid Minerals		JAM 9/21/09	
Visual Resources		KMM 9/30/09	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	TMN 10/01/09		

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: The project area is utilized by people for hunting, camping, antler "hunting" and livestock grazing. BLM lands within the project area are within a travel restricted area. The Proposed Action to remove juniper trees to improve sage-grouse habitat in this area is compatible with other uses, both historic and present, and would not add any new or detrimental impacts to those already present.

STANDARDS

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD:

The proposed mechanical treatment of juniper trees would result in the short term displacement of most wildlife from the project area while the treatment is completed. Most wildlife would return to the project area once these activities are completed. Species that are dependent upon juniper trees are not likely to return to the project area. Sufficient juniper habitat exists in areas adjacent to the treatment area that is capable of supporting any displaced wildlife. This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met under the Proposed Action.

The No Action Alternative would not have any impact on wildlife species. This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met under this alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal) STANDARD:

There are no threatened or endangered species or habitats for such species present in the project area. The project area does provide suitable nesting habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM special status species. The removal of 130 acres of juniper trees would benefit greater sage-grouse by removing potential hunting perches for raptors that prey upon greater sage-grouse. Sagebrush would move into the area once the juniper trees are removed. This would create additional habitat for greater sage-grouse. This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met under the Proposed Action.

The No Action Alternative would have no impacts to threatened, endangered or special status species or their habitats. This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met under the No Action Alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD:

This standard is being met within the project area. The site consists of diverse plant

communities. Although noxious weeds and undesirable species may be present, there is a diverse and vigorous community of desirable native plant species to propagate and maintain healthy plant communities. The No Action and Proposed Action would continue to meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne 10/06/09

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant) STANDARD:

There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present within or in the vicinity of the proposed treatment. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 9/22/09

RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD:

There are no wetlands or riparian zones present within the project area. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/01/09

WATER QUALITY STANDARD:

The water quality standard for healthy rangelands is met for the project area under each of the alternatives. Runoff from snowmelt and storms flows into Willow Creek which has some wetland and stable ephemeral floodplain areas to help filter sediment, nutrients and other nonpoint sources of contamination. No impaired stream segments exist within the affected area.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny 10/19/09

UPLAND SOILS STANDARD:

The upland soil standard for healthy rangelands is currently being met for the proposed project area. Implementation of the Proposed Action would remove protective woody vegetation from the site but by leaving the mulch cover, combined with the long term re-growth of alternate vegetation, overall soil erosion would be minimal. Both the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative would meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 10/6/09

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

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: