

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-N010-2009-0040 EA

CASEFILE/ALLOTMENT NUMBER: 0501029 / 04541

PROJECT NAME: Renewal of the grazing permit on the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment #04541

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: See Allotment Map, Attachment #1.

Upper Dressler Gulch #04541

T9N, R92W parts of Secs. 22, 23, 26, 27

26 acres BLM

860 acres BLM LU

9 acres Private

895 acres Total

APPLICANT: Glenda Bellio

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 has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

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.

The allotment under the Proposed Action is located within Management Unit 2, Northern

Central. The Proposed Action is compatible with the management objectives for this unit. Management objectives of the Northern Central Management Unit are to provide for the development of oil and gas resources. The Proposed Action would not conflict with these objectives.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:

BLM permit #0501029, which authorizes livestock grazing on the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment #04541, expires on March 18, 2009. 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 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.

PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS: The BLM Little Snake Field Office sent out a Notice of Public Scoping on December 17, 2007 to determine the level of public interest, concern, and resource conditions on the grazing authorizations that were up for renewal in FY 2009. 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:

This allotment is located northwest of Craig, CO with access frontage along MCR 5. The allotment is primarily public land (99%). Elevation within the allotment is around 7,200 feet. The landscape includes rolling hills and ephemeral drainages with a vegetative community consisting of perennial grasses and sagebrush. The area includes a brush beating site (~10-15 years old) that is recolonizing and meeting the project objectives, as well as some old crested wheatgrass seedings.

The current permittee (Glenda Bellio) leases the base property associated with the grazing permit and has held this permit since 2000. The base property owner (Tim Stewart) has owned the

associated parcels since 1973 and has operated the grazing permit under his name as well as some other base property leases occurring over the term of this authorization. The current terms of the permit allow for both cattle and sheep use but the majority of actual use on the allotment has been by cattle.

An EA (EA-CO-016-97-025) was completed in 1997 renewing the allotment to Mr. Stewart for 10 years. In March of 2000 the permit was transferred to Ms. Bellio and renewed as needed for the term of the base property lease (every 3 years). In 2003 a change of dates was requested by the permittee to allow for earlier turnout (June 1 moved to May 16). In order to compensate for this use livestock are removed from the allotment for a period of 10-14 days during June 20 and July 4. A DNA was completed at the time this change occurred (CO-100-LS-03-011).

An allotment visit on 6/14/06 by an interdisciplinary team found the allotment to be meeting all Land Health Standards. No current actual use, utilization, or trend data is available for this allotment.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action

Renew the grazing permit on the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment #04541 for three years, expiring December 31, 2011, to coincide with the base property lease. The permit would be reissued with a change in class of livestock (adding horses) as shown below:

From:

Allotment Name & Number	Livestock Number & Kind		Dates		%PL	AUMs
			From	To		
Upper Dressler Gulch	21	Cattle	05/16	06/20	100	25
#4541	22	Cattle	07/06	11/02	100	<u>87</u>
TOTAL						112

Special Terms and Conditions:

1. Sheep or cattle may be authorized on this allotment as long as use does not exceed total AUMs.
2. Up to 5 days flexibility may be granted on the entry dates of the allotment.
3. Cattle will leave the public land for up to 2 weeks beginning June 20 until July 3. Up to five days flexibility may be granted on these dates, provided the overall AUMs are not exceeded.

To:

Allotment Name & Number	Livestock Number & Kind		Dates		%PL	AUMs
			From	To		
Upper Dressler Gulch	21	Cattle	05/16	06/20	100	25
#4541	22	Cattle	07/06	11/02	100	<u>87</u>
TOTAL						112

Special Terms and Conditions:

- 1. Sheep, cattle and/or horses may be authorized on this allotment as long as use does not exceed total AUMs. Up to 26 of the total 112 AUMs may be authorized for horses.
- 2. Livestock will leave the allotment for 2 weeks from June 20 until July 6.
- 3. Up to 5 days flexibility may be granted on the use dates of the allotment.

The permit would also be subject to the Standard and Common Terms and Conditions (Attachment #2).

No Action Alternative

No changes in the existing grazing permit would occur. The permit would be reissued with the same Terms and Conditions.

Allotment Name & Number	Livestock		Dates		%PL	AUMs
	Number	& Kind	From	To		
Upper Dressler Gulch	21	Cattle	05/16	06/20	100	25
#4541	22	Cattle	07/06	11/02	100	<u>87</u>
TOTAL						112

Special Terms and Conditions:

- 1. Sheep or cattle may be authorized on this allotment as long as use does not exceed total AUMs.
- 2. Up to 5 days flexibility may be granted on the entry dates of the allotment.
- 3. Cattle will leave the public land for up to 2 weeks beginning June 20 until July 3. Up to five days flexibility may be granted on these dates, provided the overall AUMs are not exceeded.

Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed:

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 Little Snake Field Office 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 Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment is not located within any

special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Renewing the lease to graze livestock in this allotment would not cause regional air quality impairment under either of the alternatives. Some localized dust may result from driving on unpaved roads, but this would be negligible compared to dust generated from all vehicle uses in the vicinity.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/5/09

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: Not Present

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison, 03/02/09

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Grazing permit renewals are undertakings under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. During Section 106 review, a cultural resource assessment was completed for allotment #04541 by Robyn Watkins Morris, Little Snake Field Office Archaeologist, on March 3, 2009. 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 GLO maps, 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 an allotment specific analysis developed for the allotment in this EA. The table shows known cultural resources, eligible and need data, and those that are anticipated to be in the 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)
4541	66	829	7%	0	18	6

(Note *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 have been conducted within the allotment resulting in the complete coverage of 66 acres and no cultural resources recorded. The GLO plats for this area have been consulted and nothing was identified that could be a cultural resource.

Based on available data, there is a low potential for cultural resources in this allotment. Subsequent cultural resource inventory will be conducted in areas where livestock concentrate. Subsequent field inventory is to be completed within the term of the permit.

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

Environmental Consequences, both 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, gulying, and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. Continued livestock use may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties. Allowing horses on the allotment in addition to sheep and cattle should not cause significant impacts. The roads have been previously surveyed so salt block placement should not be a problem.

Mitigation Measures: Standard Stipulations for cultural resources are included in the Standard and Common Terms and Conditions of the grazing permit (Attachment #2).

Allotment Specific Stipulations for this EA:

1. Survey 40 acres around reservoir and drainage.

Conducting Class II and III survey(s), monitoring, and developing site specific mitigation measures will mitigate the adverse effects to an acceptable level (Cultural Matrix Team Meeting 26 January 1999, NHPA Section 106, 36CFR800.9; Archaeological Resource Protection Act 1979; BLM Colorado and Colorado SHPO Protocol 1998; and NEPA/FLPMA requirements).

Name of Specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 3/03/09

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in an area of isolated dwellings. Ranching, farming and oil and gas exploration and development 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: Mike Andrews, 03/03/09

FLOOD PLAINS

Affected Environment: No large floodplain areas are present on the public lands within the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment. Drainages within the allotment are primarily ephemeral.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/5/09

INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Invasive and noxious weeds are present in the affected area. Invasive annuals such as downy brome (cheatgrass), halogeton, blue mustard and yellow alyssum commonly occur in the affected area and are occupying adjacent disturbed areas resulting partially from oil and gas development and recently disturbed pipeline corridors. Additionally, MCR 5 borders the north end of this allotment providing an avenue for weed infestations. Invasive annual weeds are typically established in disturbed and high traffic areas, whereas, biennial and perennial noxious weeds are less common in occurrence. Downy brome and halogeton are on the Colorado List C of noxious weeds. Colorado List B noxious weeds that are potentially present within the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment include Canada thistle and bull thistle. Other Colorado List B noxious weeds that are present in the vicinity, and could

become established within the allotment, include Russian knapweed, hoary cress (whiteweed), hound's tongue, Dalmatian toadflax and other biennial thistles. The BLM cooperates with the Moffat County Pest Management program to employ the principals of Integrated Weed Management to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: The adverse impact of increased invasive or noxious weed establishment is very similar under either alternative. Vehicular access to public lands for dispersed recreation, primarily hunting, and grazing operations, livestock and wildlife movement, as well as wind and water, can cause weeds to spread into new areas. Surface disturbance from livestock concentration and human activities associated with grazing operations can also increase weed presence. The perennial noxious weeds in the area are less frequently established on the uplands but some potential exists for their establishment in draws and swales with moister soils. The largest concern in the project area would be for biennial and perennial noxious weed species to establish and not be detected. Once an infestation is detected it could be controlled with various integrated weed management techniques. Land practices and land uses by the livestock operator and their weed control efforts and awareness would largely determine the identification and potential occurrence of weeds within the allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/6/09

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The vegetation within this allotment consists of perennial grass and sagebrush communities. Included in the allotment are older brush-beating treatment areas and crested wheatgrass seedings. These ecosystems typically provide nesting habitat for a large array of migratory birds during the breeding season. Priority species on the USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern List that may nest in the area include: sage sparrow and Brewer's sparrow.

A formal Land Health Assessment was completed for the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment and the allotment was determined to be meeting all land health standards. Sagebrush and grass communities were in good condition, providing suitable and productive habitat for a variety of migratory bird species. The crested wheatgrass plantings and brush beatings may receive higher utilization than the surrounding native shrublands. These areas would not have as high of value to nesting migratory birds as native sagebrush ecosystems within the allotment.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: While livestock grazing can directly impact reproductive success of migratory songbirds by trampling of nests, it is more likely that it indirectly influences reproductive success due to changes in vegetation such as species composition, height or cover. Overall, the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative should be compatible with maintaining local migratory bird populations.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus, 3/9/09

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

A letter was sent to the Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council on May 5, 2008. The letter listed the FY08 and FY09 projects that the BLM would notify them on and projects that would not require notification. A follow-up phone call was performed on June 16, 2008. 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 3/3/09

PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS

Affected Environment: There are no Prime and Unique Farmlands present within the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/5/09

T&E AND SENSITIVE ANIMALS

Affected Environment: The Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment provides habitat for two BLM sensitive species, greater sage grouse and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. There are two active leks located within 2.5 – 3.5 miles from the allotment. Sagebrush communities within this allotment potentially provide valuable nesting habitat for this species. In addition, one historic lek is located within the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment. The allotment is on the edge of sharp-tailed grouse habitat and does not provide any critical habitat for this species. The allotment does not provide habitat for any federally threatened or endangered species and therefore, there would be no effect to any of these species. A formal Land Health Assessment was completed for the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment and the allotment was meeting all land health standards. Sagebrush and grass communities were in good condition, providing suitable and productive habitat for both grouse species.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Livestock grazing can influence grouse reproductive success either directly by trampling nests or indirectly by altering habitat components such as species composition, height or cover.

Although livestock grazing can potentially reduce herbaceous cover important for nesting grouse, standard terms and conditions would help to minimize these potential impacts. In addition, it is probable that the crested wheatgrass plantings and brush beatings may receive higher utilization than the surrounding native shrublands. This may reduce some grazing

pressures on herbaceous cover within the sagebrush community, providing adequate conditions for nest concealment. Current conditions are expected to continue under both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus, 3/10/09

T&E AND SENSITIVE PLANTS

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present on the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 3/2/09

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no hazardous materials present within the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Potential releases of hazardous materials could occur due to vehicular access for livestock management operations. Coolant, oil, and fuel are materials that could be released. Due to the limited amount of vehicular activity that would be required, the potential for release 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 the allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/5/09

WATER QUALITY - GROUND

Affected Environment: The groundwater source rocks in the allotment are from the main body of the Eocene Wasatch Formation. The sandstone strata in the Wasatch frequently contain potable groundwater. For the most part, it is anticipated that the bedrock is overlain by Quaternary alluvium.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Continued use for the purpose of grazing would not have an additional impact on potential aquifers in the Wasatch Formation. Livestock grazing does not disturb the bedrock. The appropriate management of livestock grazing limits

increased potential run-off to watersheds and drainages, and thus protects the groundwater resource.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Marilyn D. Wegweiser, 03/09/09

WATER QUALITY - SURFACE

Affected Environment: Runoff water from snow and rain draining off public lands flows to ephemeral draws that are tributaries of Big Gulch, Dressler Gulch and Lay Creek. These drainages are tributaries of the Yampa River. The water quality within these affected streams is currently supporting classified uses.

Classified beneficial uses have been designated for Lay Creek and Big Gulch within this watershed. Lay Creek to the confluence with the Yampa River needs to have water quality that will support Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation 2 and Agriculture. Big Gulch needs to have water quality that supports Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation 1a and Agriculture.

The Yampa River at the confluence with Lay Creek needs to have water quality sufficient to support the classified beneficial uses: Aquatic Life Warm 1, Recreation 1a, Water Supply and Agriculture. None of these stream segments are designated use protected; therefore, "higher" use classifications could be designated for any of these stream segments in the future.

Other tributary waters of this segment of the Yampa River, which are tributary to Lay Creek or Big Gulch would need to have water quality that would support Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation 2 and Agriculture; these stream segments are designated as use protected.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Grazing use of the allotment would not impair water quality under either of the alternatives. Water quality would continue to support the present classified uses.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/5/09

WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

Affected Environment: A spring is located on the west side of the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment. It is located in a deep draw with rush and sedge riparian vegetation. The spring is rated as Functioning-At-Risk (FAR) with an upward trend. Some small alluvial fans are present and heavy wildlife traffic has brought in sediment from the side of the gulch. The area is in good shape, especially around the spring. Some small headcuts and sandy open expanses are present in the draw below the spring. These areas are beginning to revegetate and are improving.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Under this alternative horses would be added to the livestock classes permitted to graze the allotment. Grazing diets of horses are similar to those of cattle under the current use of the allotment. Foraging methods differ somewhat in that the bite is closer to the ground and plant base as well as repeated grazing of green re-growth. The two week rest period contained within the authorized use period would benefit the riparian area vegetation allowing plants to re-grow unaffected by grazing during this period. The majority of use noted during the assessment was by wildlife. This use would continue under the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Under this alternative the riparian area associated with the spring in this allotment would likely continue in an upward trend in the FAR rating. Current livestock grazing is not affecting the rating of this spring.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/5/09

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: Not Present

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison, 03/02/09

WSAs, WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

Affected Environment: Not Present

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison, 03/02/09

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

SOILS

Affected Environment: The table below (Table 1) describes the soils included within the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment. Surface soil characteristics are stable with good vegetative canopy to protect from accelerated erosion. There is no evidence of accelerated erosion in the form of rills, gullies, pedestalling, flow patterns, or compaction.

Table 1. Soil Summary for the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment #04541

Soil Map Unit (MU) & Soil Name (Acres in Allot.)	Map Unit Setting	Description
MU 15 Berlake-Taffom-Gretdivid complex (467 acres)	<u>MLRA</u> : 34 <u>Elevation</u> : 6,500' - 7,300' <u>Mean annual precipitation</u> : 13-15" <u>Ecological Site</u> : Deep Loam, Rolling Loam and Sandyland	These soils can be found on the hillslopes, hills and summits within the allotment. The parent material is colluvium and residuum derived from sandstone. Typical slope is 10-20% and they are well drained. They have a deep soil profile and moderate permeability. Available water capacity ranges from low to moderate.
MU 14 Berlake-Maysprings complex (241 acres)	<u>MLRA</u> : 34 <u>Elevation</u> : 6,200' - 7,300' <u>Mean annual precipitation</u> : 13-15" <u>Ecological Site</u> : Sandy Foothills and Rolling Loam	These soils can be found on the toeslope of plateaus and hills. Parent material is alluvium and residuum derived from sandstone. Typical slope is 3-12% and they are well drained. They have a deep soil profile with moderate permeability and low available water capacity.
MU 183 Styers-Ironsprings-Maysprings complex (114 acres)	<u>MLRA</u> : 34 <u>Elevation</u> : 6,200' - 7,300' <u>Mean annual precipitation</u> : 13-15" <u>Ecological Site</u> : Claypan and Sandyland	These soils can be found on the hills within the allotment on the backslopes, summits and footslopes. Parent material consists of residuum derived from shale, colluvium and residuum derived from sandstone, and residuum derived from sandstone. Slopes range from 10-20%. They are well drained to somewhat excessively drained and have a low available water capacity. Permeability ranges from very slow to moderately rapid. This is a shallower soil profile.
MU 79 Forelle-Evanot complex (52 acres)	<u>MLRA</u> : 34 <u>Elevation</u> : 6,200' - 7,200' <u>Mean annual precipitation</u> : 13-15" <u>Ecological Site</u> : Rolling Loam and Deep Loam	These soils can be found on the hillslopes and benches within the allotment. Parent material is Loess and the soils are well drained. Permeability ranges from moderate to moderately slow. Available water capacity is high and the soil profile is deep.
MU 107	<u>MLRA</u> : 34	These soils can be found on the hillslopes and hills

Ironsprings-Maysprings-Gretdivid complex (21 acres)	<u>Elevation:</u> 6,800' - 7,300' <u>Mean annual precipitation:</u> 13-15" <u>Ecological Site:</u> Sandyland	in the allotment. Parent material consists of colluviums derived from sandstone and residuum derived from sandstone. Slopes are 10-20% and drainage ranges from well drained to somewhat excessively drained. Available water capacity is low and permeability is moderate to moderately rapid. The typical soil profile is deep.
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*MLRA = Major Land Resource Area

Data taken from *Soil Survey of Moffat County Area, Colorado (2004)*.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Soil compaction and depleted soil cover are the most likely impacts to be incurred as a result of livestock grazing. These effects could occur on areas of concentrated use under either alternative. The affected land within the allotment has adequate plant and litter cover to reduce or eliminate associated soil erosion. No loss or gain of biological soil crusts would occur as a result of implementing either of the alternatives.

The utilization objective for perennial herbaceous forage is 50%. At this level, vegetative canopy cover would remain adequate to protect soil stability. Utilization levels that exceed the objective could lead to accelerated soil erosion due to increased loss of canopy cover and litter.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Grazing of livestock species included in this alternative would generally be similar in their effects to the soil resource. Adding horses to the permitted class of livestock would add an additional influence in the type of hoof action occurring and use patterns of grazing horses. The soils in the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment are primarily well drained. This soil type provides the most flexibility in regards to compaction resulting from hoof action under wet and dry conditions as more desirable soil stabilizing plants can be grown and maintained in this soil type.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/6/09

UPLAND VEGETATION

Affected Environment: The vegetation within this allotment consists of perennial grass and shrub communities. Grass species include Sandberg bluegrass, western wheatgrass, streambank wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, needle and thread, needle grasses, bluegrasses and cheatgrass. Shrub species included Wyoming big sagebrush, bitterbrush and green rabbitbrush. Diverse forbs are also part of the plant community including arrowleaf balsamroot, wild onion, lupine, yarrow, allysum, bastard toadflax, clovers, and Townsend daisy. Species diversity is high and contributes to desired objectives. Plant production and density are high and are adequate to provide resilience from human activity.

Included in the allotment are older brush-beating treatment areas and crested wheatgrass seedings. These areas contribute to the production level of this allotment. The treated brush areas are recolonizing and providing young sagebrush communities.

Environmental consequences, Proposed Action: This allotment is stable and has maintained production, diversity, and vigor in conjunction with livestock grazing. Under this alternative a change to allow horses to graze the allotment would have primarily neutral effects. Diet selection between cattle and horses are primarily the same focusing on herbaceous perennial grasses with little use of browse forage. This would result in continued recovery of the brush communities. Equine foraging does clip forage lower on the plant when compared to cattle and horses may tend to be more selective or repeat grazers. Horses have upper and lower incisors which enable them to graze plants closer to the soil level, whereas a cow has difficulty grazing plants that are two inches or shorter in height. The break in season of use would provide an opportunity for vegetative re-growth to balance the selective grazing habits of horses and allow these grazed plants to re-grow. Additionally, horses are more active grazers covering larger areas while cattle can be more sedentary in their grazing movement.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: This alternative would allow for continued grazing by both sheep and cattle during the existing season of use. The allotment is currently meeting land health standards under this use and maintaining desirable vegetative communities. This alternative would have a neutral effect on the allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 2/26/08

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC

Affected Environment: One spring is located within the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment. This spring and the associated riparian vegetation provides limited habitat for aquatic wildlife species.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: There would be minimal impacts to any aquatic wildlife utilizing the limited riparian habitat within the allotment. The spring is currently rated as Functioning At Risk with an upward trend. These conditions are expected to continue under both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus, 3/10/09

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL

Affected Environment: The Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment is dominated by sagebrush-grass plant communities. Sagebrush ecosystems typically provide habitat for big game species as well as small mammals, reptiles and birds. The allotment provides important habitat for wintering big game species. A formal Land Health Assessment was completed for the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment. The allotment is meeting all land health standards under the current

grazing regime. Sagebrush and grass communities are in good condition, providing suitable and productive habitat for both grouse species.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Current conditions are expected to continue under both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. The multiple livestock species use provided for in the grazing permit allows for different grazing patterns and different grazing preferences which overlap the diets of terrestrial wildlife species. Additionally, the addition of equine grazing will result in shorter clipping of grazed plants. At proper utilization levels (40-60%) this will not negatively affect terrestrial wildlife habitat.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus, 3/10/09

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	MDW 3/9/09		
Forest Management	CR 03/6/09		
Hydrology/Ground		MDW 03/09/09	
Hydrology/Surface		CR 3/05/09	
Paleontology		MDW 03/09/09	
Range Management		CR 03/04/09	
Realty Authorizations		MAA 03/03/09	
Recreation/Travel Mgmt		GMR 03/02/09	
Socio-Economics		MAA 03/03/09	
Solid Minerals		JAM 03/06/09	
Visual Resources		GMR 03/02/09	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	CR 03/4/09		

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: This allotment and areas surrounding have historically been grazed by sheep, cattle and horses. Oil and gas development is also active in the vicinity of this allotment. Numerous maintained and unmaintained roads exist throughout the area, including on the allotment. These roads are used regularly by local residents and ranchers as well as by 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. The primary cumulative impacts from 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 already present.

STANDARDS

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD: The Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Both alternatives would sustain viable plant communities and continue to provide productive habitat for terrestrial wildlife. This standard would be met under the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus, 3/10/09

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal) STANDARD: The allotment provides habitat for greater sage grouse and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, both BLM sensitive species. This standard is currently being met for both grouse species. Both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative would meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus, 3/10/09

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD: This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met in the future under the Proposed Action or No Action alternative. The dominant and key species are appropriate and as expected within the allotment. The vegetation is productive and vigorous exhibiting adequate resilience from human activities. Some non-native species are present in the allotment but are within an acceptable level.

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 2/26/09

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant) STANDARD: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present on the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 3/2/09

RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD: This standard is currently being met within the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment. The spring is rated FAR with an upward trend. Under the No Action alternative current livestock grazing is not contributing to negative effects within the riparian area. The Proposed Action would be similar in grazing patterns and would also not preclude this standard from being met in the future.

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/5/09

WATER QUALITY STANDARD: The water quality standard for healthy rangelands would be met with implementation of either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives. Runoff from snowmelt and rain storms drains from the allotment into stream segments that are presently supporting classified uses. No affected stream segments are listed as impaired.

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/5/09

UPLAND SOILS STANDARD: This standard is currently being met within the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment. Upland soils are stable and have good vegetative cover. There is very little

visual evidence of soil movement and surface litter is accumulating in place. No visual evidence of rills, pedestals, or flow patterns is present. Proposed levels of grazing would maintain sufficient residual forage for upland soil health to be maintained. This standard would be met with the implementation of either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives.

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/5/09

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, Glenda Bellio (permittee).

MITIGATION MEASURES:

BLM – Archeological survey of 40 acres around reservoir and drainage

COMPLIANCE PLAN(S): None

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment #1, Allotment Map
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:

Allotment #4541 Upper Dressler

T8N R92W

● Spring

▭ Allotment Boundaries

Surface management Status

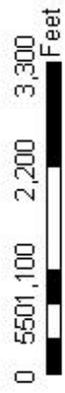
■ BLM

■ BLM_LU

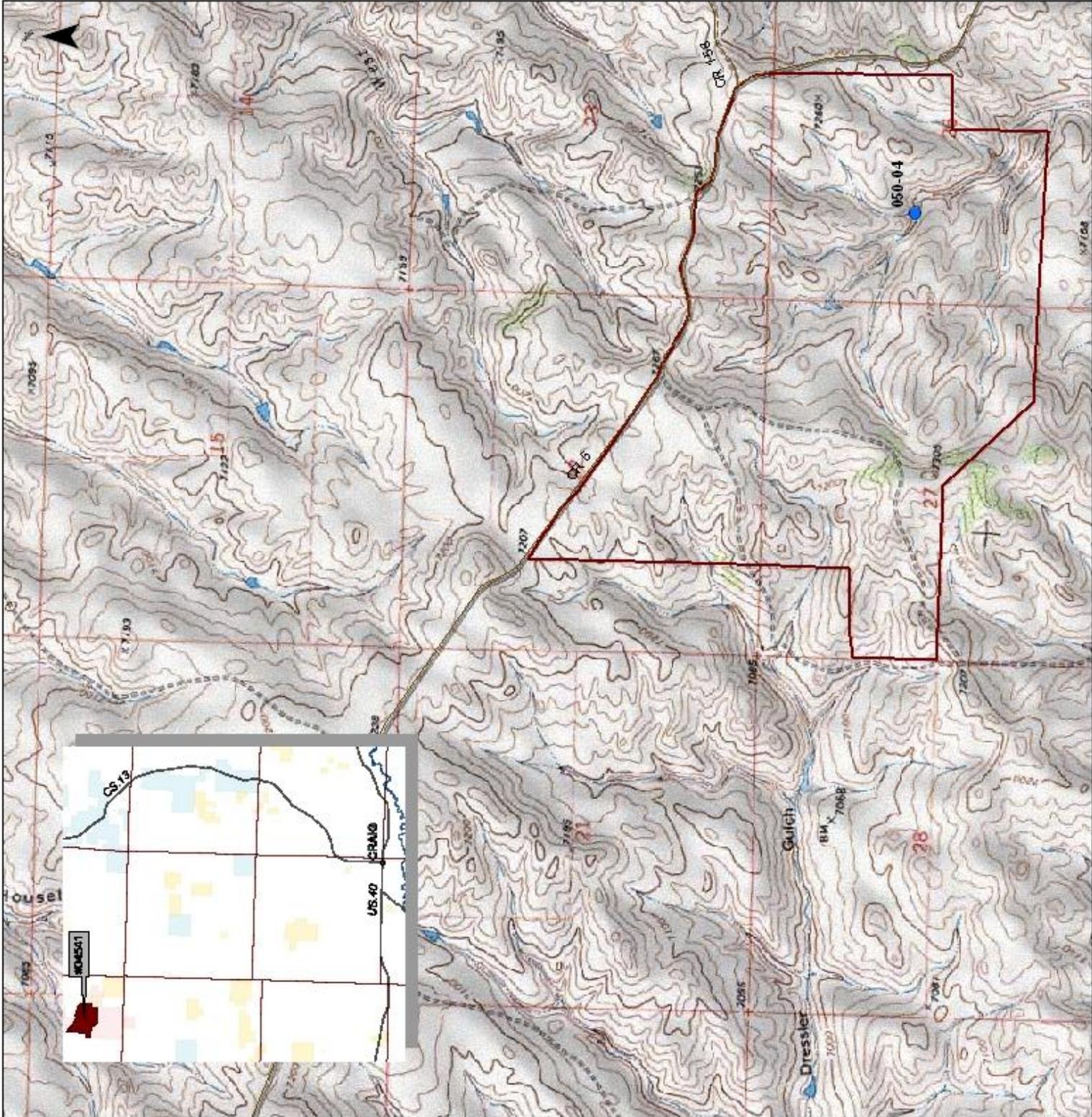
■ PRIVATE

BLM	26 acres
BLM LU	860 acres
Private	9 acres
Total	895 acres

Craig NW



1:24,000



**ATTACHMENT #2
DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2009-0040-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.

The terms and conditions of this permit may be modified if additional information indicates that revision is necessary to conform with 43 CFR 4180.