

**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-N010-2012-0010-EA

**CASEFILE/ALLOTMENT NUMBER:** 0501286/04084  
0501173/04081  
0501234/04106

**PROJECT NAME:** Grazing lease renewal for the Hayden Cutoff Draw #04084, Coon Gulch #04081, and Trull Creek #04106 Allotments.

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** See Maps Attachments 1a-1c

<b>Allotment</b>	<b>TWN RNG</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Hayden Cutoff Draw #04084	T7N R90W	Section 11 NE ¼ Section 2 SE ¼	151 Acres BLM <u>80 Acres Private</u> 231 Total Acres
Coon Gulch # 04081	T7N R90W	Section 4 W ½ SW ¼	80 Acres BLM
Trull Creek #04106	T7N R86W	Section 21 W ½ Section 25 NE ¼, N ½ SE ¼, SE ¼ NW ¼	360 Acres BLM <u>452 Acres Private</u> 812 Total Acres
	T7N R85W	Section 30 W ½ NW ¼ Section 19 SW ¼, SW ¼ NE ¼	

**APPLICANT:** David Meyer – Hayden Cutoff Draw Allotment #04084  
Orie Cook – Coon Gulch Allotment #04081  
Monger Family Limited Partnership – Trull Creek Allotment #04106

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:** The proposed action was reviewed for conformance (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3) with the following plan:

Name of Plan: Little Snake Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved: October, 2011

Results: The Proposed Actions and all alternatives are consistent with the Little Snake Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, Livestock Grazing Management goals to manage resources, vegetation, and watersheds to sustain a variety of uses, including livestock grazing, and to maintain the long-term health of the rangelands; provide for efficient management of livestock grazing allotments; and contribute to the stability and sustainability of the livestock industry.

Section/Page: 2.14 Livestock Grazing/RMP-41

**NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:** BLM grazing leases #0501286, #0501173, & #0501234, which authorize livestock grazing on allotments: Hayden Cutoff Draw #04084, Coon Gulch #04081, & Trull Creek #04106, expire on February 28, 2012. These leases are 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 leases 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 *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*. This Plan includes the *Colorado Public Land Health Standards* and the *Guidelines for Grazing Management*.

The following Environmental Assessment (EA) 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/lessee) must hold a grazing permit/lease. 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 15, 2010 to determine the level of public interest, concern, and resource conditions on the grazing authorizations that were up for renewal in FY 2012. A Notice of Public Scoping was posted on the Internet, at the Colorado BLM Home Page, asking for public input on permit/lease renewals. Individual letters were sent to the effected permittees/lessees, informing them their permit/lease was up for renewal and requesting any information they wanted included in or taken into consideration during the renewal process. There was no response to these scoping efforts.

**BACKGROUND:** All three allotments analyzed in this document are classified under the Taylor Grazing Act as Section 15 allotments with a management classification of "C", custodial. All three allotments have little to no public access and are, for all practical purposes, land locked by residential ranchette subdivisions and agricultural development.

The Hayden Cutoff Draw Allotment #04084 and the Coon Gulch Allotment #04081 lie approximately 7 miles north of Craig, CO off Colorado State Highway 13. For both allotments, elevation ranges from 6,400 to 6,700 feet and runoff drains into tributaries of Fortification Creek.

The Trull Creek Allotment #04106 lies approximately 10 miles northwest of Steamboat Springs, CO, north of Highway 40 on the southwest slopes of the geographic feature known as The Sleeping Giant. Runoff from this allotment drains into Trull Creek and eventually the Yampa River.

Due to the small acreage, limited public use, and limited resource management needs there is little historic and no monitoring information available for these allotments.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:**

**Administrative Actions (All Allotments)**

Administrative boundaries will be adjusted to only include public land parcels, there would be no private land acres within allotment boundaries.

**Alternative A – Proposed Action**

Renew the grazing leases on the Hayden Cutoff Draw #04084, Coon Gulch #04081, and Trull Creek #04106 Allotments for a period of ten years. These leases would begin on March 1, 2012 and expire on February 28, 2022.

The terms and conditions for this alternative would be as follows:

From:

Allotment	Livestock Number & Kind	Season of Use	% Public Land	AUMs
Hayden Cutoff Draw #04084	8 Cattle	06/01 – 10/15	100	36
Coon Draw #04081	14 Cattle	05/01 – 05/31	100	14
Trull Creek # 04106	20 Cattle	05/15 – 06/30	100	31

To:

Allotment	Livestock Number & Kind	Season of Use	% Public Land	AUMs
Hayden Cutoff Draw #04084	8 Cattle	06/01 – 10/15	100	36
Coon Draw #04081	14 Cattle	05/01 – 05/31	100	14
Trull Creek #04106	10 Cattle	05/15 – 06/30	100	15
	10 Cattle	10/01 – 11/17	100	16
				31 Total

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

**Alternative B - No Action Alternative (continue previous authorized use)**

Under this alternative the grazing leases would be renewed with no modifications to the terms and conditions.

<b>Allotment</b>	<b>Livestock Number &amp; Kind</b>	<b>Season of Use</b>	<b>% Public Land</b>	<b>AUMs</b>
Hayden Cutoff Draw #04084	8 Cattle	06/01 – 10/15	100	36
Coon Draw #04081	14 Cattle	05/01 – 05/31	100	14
Trull Creek # 04106	20 Cattle	05/15 – 06/30	100	31

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

**Alternative C – No Grazing Alternative**

The applications for renewal of the grazing authorization on all allotments would be denied. As a result, livestock grazing would not be authorized on public lands within the Hayden Cutoff Draw #04084, Coon Gulch #04081, and Trull Creek #04106 Allotments. The BLM would initiate a process in accordance with the 43 CFR 4110.3 regulations to remove authorized grazing on these parcels.

**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 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.

**Reduced Grazing Alternative**

This alternative is eliminated from detailed study because land health standards are being met for all allotments. Additionally, a reduction in grazing is not analyzed because no new issues or concerns have been identified that would require this action.

**AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

For the following resources and issues, those brought forward for analysis will be addressed below.

<b>Resource/Issue</b>	<b>N/A or Not Present</b>	<b>Applicable or Present, No Impact</b>	<b>Applicable &amp; Present and Brought Forward for Analysis</b>
Air Quality		X	
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	X		
Cultural Resources			X
Environmental Justice		X	
Flood Plains		X	
Fluid Minerals		X	
Forest Management	X		
Hydrology/Ground		X	
Hydrology/Surface			X
Invasive/Non-Native Species			X
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	X		
Migratory Birds			X
Native American Religious Concerns			X
Paleontology		X	
Prime and Unique Farmland	X		
Range Management		X	
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation/Transportation		X	
Socio-Economics			X
Soils			X
Solid Minerals		X	
T&E and Sensitive Animals			X
T&E and Sensitive Plants	X		
Upland Vegetation			X
Visual Resources		X	
Water Quality - Ground		X	
Water Quality - Surface			X
Waste, Hazardous or Solid	X		
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	X		
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X		
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	X		
Wilderness Study Areas	X		
Wildlife - Aquatic			X
Wildlife - Terrestrial			X

## 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 the Hayden Cutoff Draw (04084), Coon Gulch (04081), and Trull Creek (04106) allotments on November 20, 2011 by Ethan Morton, 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 below. Copies of the cultural resource assessment are on file at the Little Snake Field Office.

The prehistoric and historic cultural context for northwestern Colorado has been described in several recent regional contexts. Reed and Metcalf's (1999) context for the Northern Colorado River Basin is applicable for the prehistoric context and historical contexts include overviews compiled by Frederic J. Athearn (1982) and Michael B. Husband (1984). A historical archaeology context has also been prepared for the state of Colorado by Church and others (2007). In addition, an overview of significant cultural resources on BLM-LSFO administered lands has been compiled by McDonald and Metcalf (2006).

Data developed here was taken from the cultural program project report files, site report files, and atlases kept at the Little Snake Field Office. Electronic files were also accessed at the Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation through the on-line Compass database system. Government Land Office (GLO) plat maps, patent records, and United States Geological Service (USGS) 1:24,000 scale topographical maps were also reviewed for potential undocumented historic resources.

No cultural resource inventories have been completed within any of the allotments. A potential historic resource is depicted within the Hayden Cutoff Draw Allotment on the 1878 and 1912 GLO plats. This resource consists of a trail depicted in Section 11 on the 1878 GLO plat running in a northwestern-southeastern direction. This trail apparently developed into a wagon road depicted in the same location on the 1912 GLO plat. Two potential historic resources are also depicted within the Trull Creek Allotment on the 1922 GLO plat and Mad Creek (1962) USGS topographic map. A wagon road is depicted in Section 24 on the 1922 GLO plat and "Trull Creek Reservoir No 1" is also depicted in Section 24 on the 1962 topographic map. Due to a lack of inventory it is unknown if there are any potential cultural resources within the allotments. Site density is low to moderate in the surrounding regions. Any newly discovered cultural resources have the potential to be recommended eligible for the National Register.

Subsequent cultural resource inventory will be conducted in areas where livestock concentrate within ten years following issuance of a lease. This subsequent inventory will consist of approximately 38 acres within the Hayden Cutoff Draw Allotment and 24 acres within the Trull

Creek Allotment. These inventories will also involve the evaluation of the potential historic resources identified on the GLO plats. If archaeological or historic sites potentially eligible for the National Register are identified during the subsequent field inventory, and BLM determines that grazing activities are adversely impact the properties, mitigation will be identified and implemented in consultation with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer.

**Environmental Consequences, Proposed Actions (A and B):** 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 (Broadhead 2001, Osbourn et al. 1987). Indirect impacts include soil erosion, gullyng, 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. Placement of mineral supplements, which can create concentration areas, would potentially impact historic properties if they are in proximity of the placement.

Continued livestock management under the proposed action is appropriate, as long as new discovery's of cultural resources are property mitigated if grazing impacts are occurring. If archaeological or historic sites potentially eligible for the National Register are identified during the subsequent field inventory, BLM will field visit these properties and assess the livestock grazing impacts. Any mitigation will be identified and implemented in consultation with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer. The livestock impacts will be assessed within the ten-year period of the leases.

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

**Environmental Consequences, No Grazing Alternative (C):** While a no grazing alternative alleviates potential damage from livestock activities, cultural resources are constantly being subjected to site formation processes or events after creation (Binford 1981, Schiffer 1987). These processes can be both cultural and natural and take place in an instant or over thousands of years. Cultural processes include any activities directly or indirectly caused by humans. Natural processes include chemical, physical, and biological processes of the natural environment that impinge and or modify cultural materials. Sites which have been determined eligible for the National Register and are threatened may have to be mitigated.

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

#### References Cited

Athearn, Frederic J.  
1982 *An Isolated Empire: A History of Northwest Colorado*. Bureau of Land

Management-Colorado. Cultural Resource Series No. 2, Second Edition. Denver.

Binford, Lewis R.

1981 Behavioral archaeology and the "Pompeii Premise". *Journal of Anthropological Research* 37(3):195-208.

Broadhead, Wade

2001 Brief Synopsis of Experiments Concerning Effects of Grazing on Archaeological Sites. Ms. on file, Bureau of Land Management, Gunnison Field Office, Gunnison, Colorado.

Church, Minette C., Steven G. Baker, Bonnie J. Clark, Richard f. Carrillo, Jonathan C. Horn, Carl D. Spath, David R. Guilfoyle, and E. Steve Cassells

2007 *Colorado History: A Context for Historical Archaeology*. Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists, Denver.

Husband, Michael B.

1984 *Plateau Country Historic Context*. Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, State Historic Preservation Office, Denver.

McDonald Kae and Michael Metcalf

2006 *Regional Class I Overview of Cultural Resources for the BLM Little Snake Field Office*. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc. Eagle, Colorado.

Reed, Alan D. and Michael Metcalf

1999 *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Northern Colorado River Basin*. Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists, Denver, Colorado.

Osbourn, Alan, Susan Vetter, Ralph Hartley, Laurie Walsh, Jesslyn Brown

1987 Impacts of Domestic Livestock Grazing in the Archaeological Resources of Capitol Reef National Park, Utah. *Occasional Studies in Anthropology No. 20*. Ms. on file, Midwest Archaeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Schiffer, Michael B.

1987 *Formation Processes of the Archaeological Record*]Formation Processes of the Archaeological Record. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

## **INVASIVE/NON-NATIVE SPEICES**

**Affected Environment:** Invasive species and noxious weeds occur within the affected areas. Canada thistle, several species of biennial thistles, Dalmatian toadflax, downy brome, leafy spurge, hound's tongue and knapweeds are known to occur in these areas. Other species of noxious weeds could be introduced by vehicle traffic, livestock, wildlife and other means of dispersal. Principals of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) are employed to control noxious weeds on BLM lands in the Little Snake Field Office.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative A, Proposed Action and Alternative B, No Action:** The impact of invasive or noxious weed establishment is very similar under either alternative. Vehicular access to public lands for dispersed recreation, hunting, 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 increase weed presence. The largest concern in the allotments would be for biennial and perennial noxious weed infestations to establish and not be detected. Once an infestation is detected it could be controlled with various IPM techniques. Land practices and land uses by the livestock operator and their weed control efforts and awareness would largely determine the identification and potential infestations of weeds within the allotments.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative C, No Grazing:** This alternative removes the spread and introduction of weeds by livestock. Additional sources of seed dispersal would still be present throughout the allotments. Additionally, under this alternative there would be no presence by the grazing lessees to assist with the detection and management of infestations.

## **MIGRATORY BIRDS**

**Affected Environment:** Sagebrush stands and mixed mountain shrublands within the allotments provide habitat for a variety of migratory bird species. Limited aspen woodlands are also present in the Trull Creek allotment at higher elevations. Priority species on the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Birds of Conservation Concern List (2008) that may utilize habitat within the allotments include: golden eagle, Brewer's sparrow, sage sparrow, sage thrasher, loggerhead shrike, Williamson's sapsucker and Cassin's finch. Aspen woodlands provide nesting sites for cavity nesting species.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative A – Proposed Action:** Although the proposed grazing schedules for all three allotments coincide with the breeding season, proposed livestock grazing would not reduce the extent or quality of habitat available for migratory bird breeding functions. Under the Proposed Action, the Hayden Cutoff Draw allotment would be grazed by cattle for approximately four months and the Coon Gulch allotment for approximately one month. Although grazing would occur during most of the growing season, all allotments are grazed in conjunction with private land, which help to distribute livestock and reduce concentration on public lands. Data from Land Health Assessments for all allotments show the herbaceous component of the ecosystem to be healthy and vigorous. The allotments are currently providing healthy and productive habitat for migratory bird species and these habitat conditions would continue under the Proposed Action.

The Trull Creek allotment would continue with the same number of AUM's, but will split the number of AUM's between spring and fall season of use. The season of use is approximately 6 weeks and grazing would not alter habitat conditions to the extent that reproduction or foraging would be adversely impacted. The vegetative community is in good condition, providing suitable habitat for migratory bird species. These conditions would continue under the grazing system described in the Preferred Alternative.

Grazing by cattle could result in the accidental destruction of ground nests through trampling. This impact would be minimal and isolated and would not influence populations of migratory birds on a landscape level. Golden eagle nesting and fledgling activities would not be disturbed

by livestock grazing. Overall, the Preferred Alternative would be compatible with maintaining local migratory bird populations.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative B - No Action Alternative:** The allotments would continue to be grazed by cattle. The allotments are meeting all Land Health Standards under this grazing system. Sustainable and quality habitat conditions would remain unchanged under this alternative.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative C - No Grazing Alternative:** Elimination of grazing would directly and indirectly impact migratory birds and their habitat. Cessation of cattle grazing would eliminate nest loss and potential mortality of migratory birds through grazing and grazing-related activities. The no grazing alternative would have either a beneficial or detrimental effect on individual migratory bird species, depending on the response of range condition and individual species requirements, but affects at the population or species level would not be adverse.

## **NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS**

Letters were sent to the Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Utes Tribal Council, Shoshone Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs in the spring of 2011 discussing upcoming projects including range permit/lease renewals the BLM would be working on in FY11 and FY12. Letters were followed up with phone calls. No comments were received (Letters on file at the Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado). In addition to the stipulations for the protection of Cultural Resources if new information is brought forward any site-specific Native American mitigation measures suggested during previous notification/consultation would be considered during analysis of any future undertakings. If new information is provided by Native Americans, additional or edited terms and conditions for mitigation may have to be negotiated or enforced to protect resource values.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMICS**

**Affected Environment:** Agricultural practices, energy exploration and development, and hunting are the main economic activities of the areas listed under the Proposed Action. In these regions, livestock operations and public land management are strongly linked through grazing permits and leases.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternatives A and B - Preferred and No Action Alternatives:** Indirect benefits to the surrounding economy would occur due to overall employment opportunities related to the ranching service support industry in the region as well as the economic benefits to state and county governments related to taxes. Grazing operations would continue to supply personal income to the operator and employees and would proportionally influence the regional, state, and national economy.

Grazing activities may impact other public land users and nearby residents, but the impact is not considered substantial at this time due to the intermittent nature of the presence of cattle on the allotments. Neither of these alternatives would generate high levels of concern, opposition, or dissatisfaction among local residents.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative C:** Canceling the grazing preference for the allotments would have a negative economic impact from loss of employment due to this action. The indirect effects would include negative effects due to overall employment opportunities related to the ranching service support industry in the region. Loss of the grazing preference on the allotments would reduce the profitability of the ranches, reducing economic benefits to state and county governments related to taxes. This alternative could generate high levels of concern, opposition, or dissatisfaction among local residents.

## SOILS

**Affected Environment:** Soils for all allotments are dominated by loam and clay loam complexes that are well-drained and have medium to high or very high runoff potential. Nearly all soil types are susceptible to erosion unless close-growing vegetation is maintained. This is especially important in the Trull Creek Allotment, which has very steep terrain over most of the allotment. Biological soil crusts are present and intact in the Coon Gulch and Hayden Cutoff Draw Allotments. No biological soil crusts were found in the Trull Creek Allotment, though none are expected because of dense vegetation and its location within a higher precipitation regime. Surface soil characteristics are stable with a high vegetative cover and diversity to help protect from accelerated erosion. There is little to no evidence of soil movement or erosion in the form of gullies, pedestals, or observed flow patterns.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternatives A and B - Preferred and No Action Alternatives:** Soils within the allotments are loam and clay-loam dominated, which are relatively resilient but least susceptible to damage and compaction when dry or frozen (season of use is late spring/early summer and again in fall for Trull Creek; late spring for Coon Draw; summer through fall for Hayden Cutoff Draw). While some of these grazing periods are not during the driest part of the year (and during the growing season in Hayden Cutoff Draw), soils in these allotments are stable and protected by diverse and abundant shrub and grass cover. The very low AUM numbers proposed in either alternative, combined with current land health conditions will maintain or improve soil stability and function. There would be no adverse impacts.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative C - No Grazing Alternative:** Removal of livestock from public lands would lead to decreased compaction of soil surfaces caused by livestock hoof action. Over time the lack of compaction, combined with the annual freeze-thaw cycle, may lead to a decrease in soil bulk density and improved soil moisture conditions, which facilitates vegetation germination and root development. Removing livestock would also result in an increase of both plant litter and live vegetative ground cover that would provide more

protection from wind and water erosion. Any livestock trails and the resulting erosion would heal over time.

If grazing were to continue on adjacent private or other non-federal lands in the allotments, fences would have to be built by the landowner(s) to prevent trespass onto federally-managed lands. Given the natural tendency of cattle to congregate and trail along fence lines, it is likely that paths and forage depletion would occur along the fences. The resulting decrease in canopy cover would fail to decrease the impact of raindrops on the soil surface, while the expected increase in compaction would increase runoff from both rain and snowmelt. These factors would combine to increase the likelihood of both wind and water erosion in the areas adjacent to fences. This may result in blowouts and gullies which could indirectly impact federal lands through deposition or by the eroded area actually spreading onto federal lands.

## **T&E AND SENSITIVE ANIMALS**

**Affected Environment:** There are no threatened or endangered species or habitats for such species present within the proposed project areas. These allotments do provide breeding and nesting habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM special status species and a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). These allotments also provide habitat for the following BLM sensitive species: Columbia sharp-tailed grouse and bald eagle.

The allotments are mapped as overall Greater sage-grouse habitat and Greater sage-grouse production range by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife. Greater sage-grouse nesting habitat is scattered in patches of heavier sagebrush. Quality nesting habitat has an understory of residual grass cover that provides hiding cover for incubating females. Important brood rearing habitat for sage grouse is found along drainages and in moister sites near springs and seeps. Sage-grouse broods require high protein forbs and associated invertebrates. Winter habitat for sage-grouse overlaps with the big game winter range.

All of the allotments are mapped as winter range and production habitat for the Columbia sharp-tailed grouse by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The allotments are also mapped as bald eagle winter range by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative A - Preferred Alternative and Alternative B - No Action Alternative:** Livestock grazing has the potential to reduce residual grass cover, an important habitat component for sage-grouse nest concealment. Season long grazing, concentrated fall grazing or grazing the same areas in the spring and then again in the fall would have the most impacts on residual grass cover since there would be little to no opportunity for re-growth before the nesting season. Recent land health assessments show the herbaceous component is healthy and vigorous and would be resilient to continued livestock grazing. Overall, the Preferred Alternative and No Action Alternative would not degrade greater sage-grouse habitats on the allotments. The Preferred Alternative and No Action Alternative will not degrade or alter foraging opportunities for bald eagles.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative C - No Grazing Alternative:** The No Grazing Alternative would benefit wildlife by reducing and eventually eliminating direct and indirect effects of livestock grazing and associated activities to wildlife. Increases in forage and hiding cover amounts, types, and quality for wildlife would be expected with this option.

## **UPLAND VEGETATION**

**Affected Environment:** Vegetation within these allotments is diverse. Plant communities include sagebrush grasslands and areas of mountain shrub vegetation. Parts of the Trull Creek Allotment were burned by prescribed fire in 2009 to reduce dense mountain shrub and enhance herbaceous species. This project was successful with objectives being met. For all allotments vegetation is vigorous and productive. The topography in these allotments is varied ranging from rolling hills to steep cliffs and rocky terrain.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative A - Proposed Action:** The changes in season of use included in this alternative for the Trull Creek Allotment provides additional flexibility and greater distribution of livestock utilization, as different species would be utilized during the spring and fall seasons. For the other allotments current conditions of healthy and diverse plant communities would be maintained. Under this alternative there would be no adverse impacts to upland vegetation.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative B - No Action Alternative:** Healthy and diverse plant communities would be maintained under this alternative. There would be no adverse impacts to upland vegetation.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative C - No Grazing Alternative:** The elimination of authorized grazing use would result in no adverse impacts to upland vegetation. There are currently no degrading upland vegetation resource concerns on these allotments.

## **WATER QUALITY/HYDROLOGY – SURFACE**

**Affected Environment:** Any surface runoff from the Hayden Cutoff Draw and Coon Gulch Allotments would flow into intermittent drainages to Fortification Creek. Surface runoff from Trull Creek Allotment would flow into Trull Creek, a tributary to the Elk River. Water quality for all tributaries to Fortification Creek (from the confluence of the North and South Forks to the confluence with the Yampa River) are use protected and must support Aquatic Life Warm 2, Agriculture, and Recreation P beneficial uses. Water quality for the mainstem of the Elk River (including all tributaries and wetlands from the source to the confluence with the Yampa River) must support Aquatic Life Cold 1, Recreation E, Water Supply, and Agricultural beneficial uses.

As of 2010, Fortification Creek (from North and South Fork to the Yampa River) is on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) Section 303(d) list of Water

Quality Limited Segments because of a low priority selenium impairment (CDPHE 2010). There are no water quality impairments or suspected issues for the portion of the Elk River influenced by the Trull Creek Allotment.

### **Environmental Consequences, Alternatives A and B - Preferred and No Action**

**Alternatives:** Livestock wastes deposited in or near intermittent and perennial stream types or entrained or dissolved in runoff reaching streams may contribute to nutrient (nitrogen, phosphorous) and bacteria (*E. coli*) exceedances in surface waters influenced by grazing allotments, although the source(s) of these pollutants, when present, can be difficult to determine. Livestock use of perennial surface waters may also contribute to increased suspended solids (soil particles, organic matter particles) and increased water temperatures by removing or trampling streamside vegetation when use is concentrated for extended periods of time or during certain times of year.

Water quality in grazing lands is primarily influenced by the duration, amount, and intensity of precipitation and livestock use, as well as landscape characteristics (topography, soils, vegetative cover). Soils in the allotments are dominated by loam and loamy clay soils and have a medium to high potential for runoff from snowmelt and summer thunderstorms that could lead to erosion and sedimentation of surface waters downslope of the allotments, particularly if ground cover is not maintained or is in poor condition on steeper slopes. However, within all allotments analyzed here, surface soil characteristics are stable with high vegetative cover and diversity to help protect from accelerated erosion that could lead to such downstream water quality issues.

Permitting livestock grazing as proposed is consistent with land uses throughout the watersheds and would not result in direct changes to surface water quality. The proposed low level of grazing intensity would not compromise soil stability and vegetation community health given the relatively good condition of the vegetation within the allotments. Grazing and associated activities would not contribute to existing downstream water quality problems regarding selenium in Fortification Creek.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative C - No Grazing Alternative:** Potential direct and indirect impacts to water quality caused by livestock use, such as deposition and concentration of waste directly into the water body or trampling, trailing, overgrazing of streamside vegetation that may lead to increased sedimentation, would be eliminated. This alternative has the potential to benefit overall water quality both within and downstream of the allotment(s).

#### Reference:

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Water Quality Control Commission. 2010. Regulations #33, 37, and 93. <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/regulations/wqccregs/index.html>

Kansas State University Research and Extension. 2002. Kansas Grazing Land Water Quality Program: Understanding Grazing Land and Water Quality (pamphlet). [www.kdheks.gov/nps/resources/grazing/attach2.pdf](http://www.kdheks.gov/nps/resources/grazing/attach2.pdf)

## WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

**Affected Environment:** There are no identified riparian resources on public lands within the Coon Gulch and Hayden Cutoff Draw allotments. Trull Reservoir, an 8 acre developed reservoir, is the only water feature within the Trull Creek Allotment. Because the reservoir was developed primarily for livestock purposes, it is not considered a natural riparian feature and is not assessed or managed as such.

## WILDLIFE – AQUATIC

**Affected Environment:** Trull Creek runs through the Trull Creek Allotment and Trull Reservoir is also found within the allotment. Trull Creek supports aquatic invertebrates, amphibians, and reptiles. Trull Reservoir is an 8 acre man-made water development established for livestock purposes and authorized by a BLM right-of-way grant. Although no inventory data are available, these waterways may also support fish populations.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative A - Preferred Alternative and Alternative B - No Action Alternative:** Potential impacts from livestock grazing include trampling of individual species or nests/eggs, water displacement, sedimentation and nitrification, and removal or degradation of shading vegetation. There would be no measurable impacts on aquatic wildlife under either alternative.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative C - No Grazing Alternative:** Elimination of livestock grazing would result in improved riparian conditions and may improve ecological condition. As conditions improve, the health, vigor and abundance of forage species would increase. The probable increase in grass and forb availability would enhance habitat quality for aquatic wildlife.

## WILDLIFE – TERRESTRIAL

**Affected Environment:** These allotments provide year round habitat for elk, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, black bear, mountain lion and a variety of small mammals, reptiles and song birds. All of the allotments are mapped as elk severe winter habitat by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife. The rocky outcroppings and cliffs throughout the Trull Creek Allotment provide suitable nesting habitat for raptors.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative A – Proposed Action and Alternative B - No Action Alternative:** Either alternative would ensure that wildlife habitats remain capable of supporting healthy productive wildlife populations. The Proposed Action permits grazing to occur outside of the big game winter timing restrictions (December 1 – April 30). This timing restriction will prevent impacts to big game winter range habitats. Big game animals will not be directly impacted from livestock grazing. There is a potential that ground nesting songbirds using these allotments could have nests destroyed by livestock. This is unlikely to occur

frequently and would not have a negative impact on any species population. Livestock grazing will not have any impact on the raptor nests along the cliffs in the Trull Creek Allotment.

**Environmental Consequences, Alternative C - No Grazing Alternative:** Under the No-Grazing Alternative, there would no longer be direct competition between livestock and wildlife for forage, browse and cover. Wildlife habitat would moderately improve. The limitation for improvement would continue to be the inability to control livestock use of the parcels because of the expense of segregating the lands with fencing, and legal access to administer isolated parcels of public land. Since livestock grazing would not be permitted, range improvement projects that benefit wildlife, such as water developments, would be abandoned. New range improvement projects that would also benefit wildlife habitat, such as brush control, may not be implemented because these projects are primarily driven and funded through range improvement efforts.

### **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:**

Cumulative impacts may result from the renewal of these livestock grazing leases when added to non-project impacts that result from past present and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

Historically, these allotments and surrounding areas have been grazed by both sheep and cattle. Even though many of these areas have seen divisions from large commercial ranches and livestock operations to smaller ranchettes, hobby farms and sustenance ranching, it is not anticipated that land use, emphasizing agricultural practices, in any of the surrounding areas, public or private lands, would experience drastic changes outside of previous and or current use, or be abolished in the foreseeable future.

Wildlife populations in the area are high, especially for deer, pronghorn, and migratory elk that compete with livestock for available forage throughout the area. Agricultural and livestock management fences and other development contribute to habitat fragmentation for many wildlife species.

Numerous maintained and unmaintained roads exist throughout the area, including on the allotments. These roads are used regularly by landowners and very little by other public land users due to limited public access and relatively small public land acreages. In association with the implementation of the Final Little Snake Resource Management Plan, 2011 (RMP) a Travel Management Plan (TMP) would be completed within five years. This TMP will provide greater restrictions to OHV use compared to what is currently allowed. These restrictions would remove an additional impact in many areas, thus benefiting natural resources.

Energy and mineral development is currently authorized in many areas inside and outside the area of proposed action and some level of future developments will also occur. The Coon Gulch and Hayden Cutoff Draw allotments are adjacent to Colorado State Highway 13 which serves as a transportation and energy corridor. Currently there are two proposed high voltage interstate transmission projects in which one proposed route is along the Colorado State Highway 13

corridor near these allotments. Due to the location and proximity to the Sleeping Giant geographic feature and the characteristics of the surrounding residences energy and mineral development is less likely in the area around the Trull Creek Allotment.

Ranching and agriculture are major economic drivers for the local community and surrounding region. Continuation of these practices would provide commerce, employment, and stability to many businesses, families and individuals who depend on agricultural practices for their livelihood. If Alternative C - No Grazing Alternative were to be chosen a small number of individuals and families would lose employment and would be forced to seek/or train for other employment, relocate, or rely on public assistance. If this type of no grazing on public land trend were to continue, denying applications and or cancelling other or all public land grazing authorizations, the economy of the region and many other associated industries would no longer be sustainable, thus causing a much larger and far reaching adverse economic and social impact. Currently, and in the foreseeable future, there is no industry, or economic venture that could replace agricultural practices in terms of employment, commerce, and tax based revenue.

There is a consensus in the international community that global climate change is occurring, although defined causal factors and prevention measures are still being debated. There is currently a lack of guidance on how to perform a climate change analysis under NEPA and thus it is appropriate to restrict this discussion to a qualitative review. Livestock grazing under Alternative A - Proposed Action and Alternative B – No Action Alternative would be at the same level as it has historically been, so it follows that methane and carbon dioxide production would stay the same. Therefore, under Alternative A - Proposed Action there would be no increased contribution to global climate change. Greenhouse gas production would presumably be further reduced under a no grazing scenario, although it is likely that at least some of the livestock that would have been grazed on these allotments would simply graze elsewhere.

Future use on adjacent private lands would likely continue to include livestock grazing as a primary use in addition to energy development, recreational use and farming. When added to the existing activities in the project area, approval of this proposed action would not cause undue damage to natural resources.

Alternative A - Proposed Action and Alternative B – No Action Alternative continuing grazing on these allotments, is compatible with other uses, both historic, present, and future and would not add any new or detrimental impacts to those that are already present or will be cumulative in nature.

Alternative C – No Grazing Alternative, choosing this alternative could potentially be a trigger for current land owners to further subdivide their private property that would create additional home developments and denser populations. Reducing the open space quality of life many current residence of these areas enjoy.

**STANDARDS**

On October 19 & 20, 2011 a Rangeland Management Specialist and Wildlife Biologist conducted individual allotment Land Health Assessments for all allotments under the Proposed Action.

<b>Allotment</b>	<b>Assessment Date(s)</b>	<b>All Standards Met</b>	<b>Standard(s) Not Met</b>	<b>Current Livestock Management a Causal Factor</b>	<b>Management Actions</b>
<b>Hayden Cutoff Draw #04084</b>	10/19/11	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Coon Gulch #04081</b>	10/20/11	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Trull Creek #04106</b>	10/20/11	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A

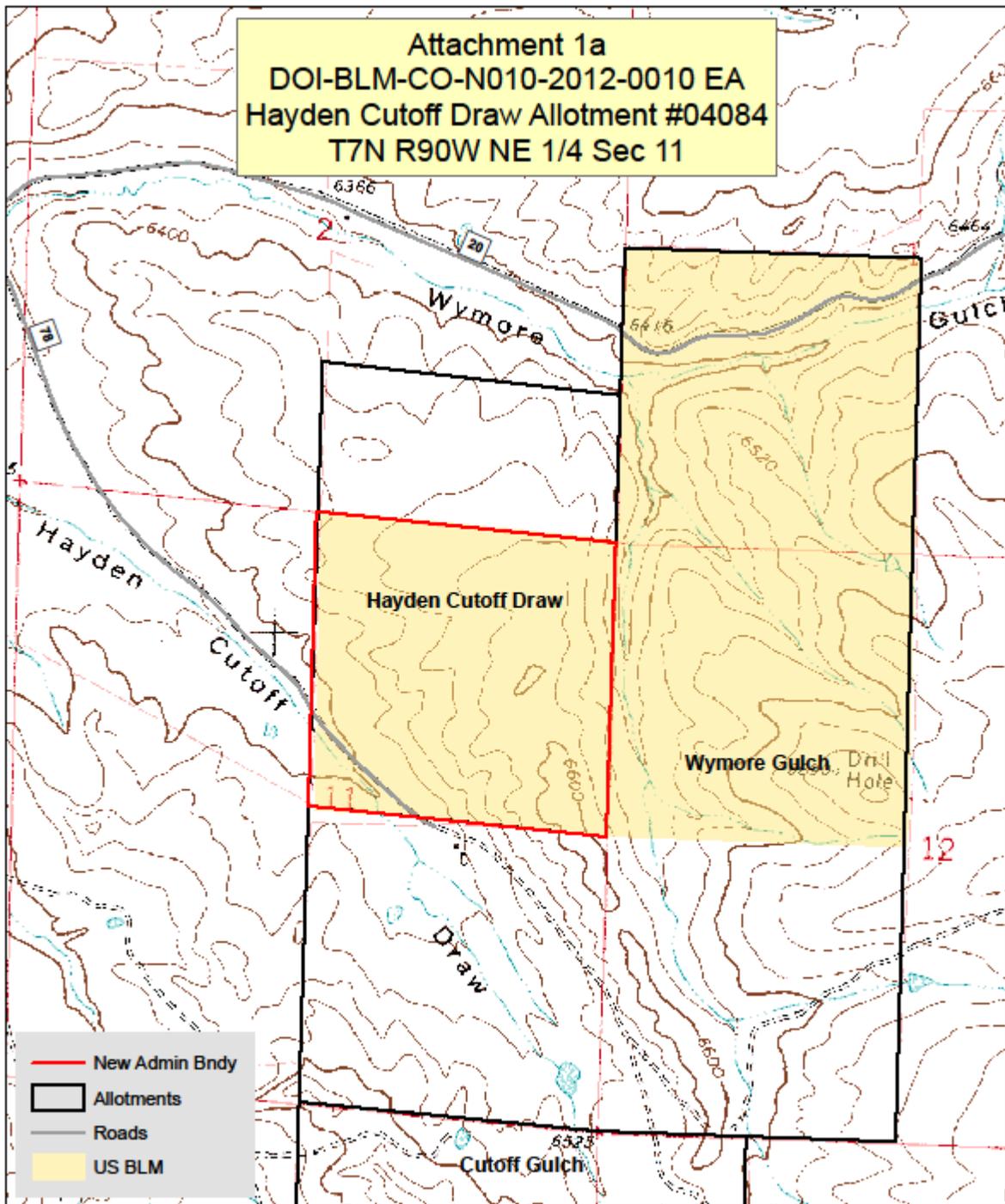
**PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:** Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, David Meyer, Orie Cook, and the Monger Family Limited Partnership.

**SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:** /s/ Mark Lowrey

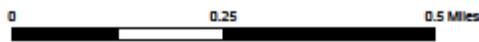
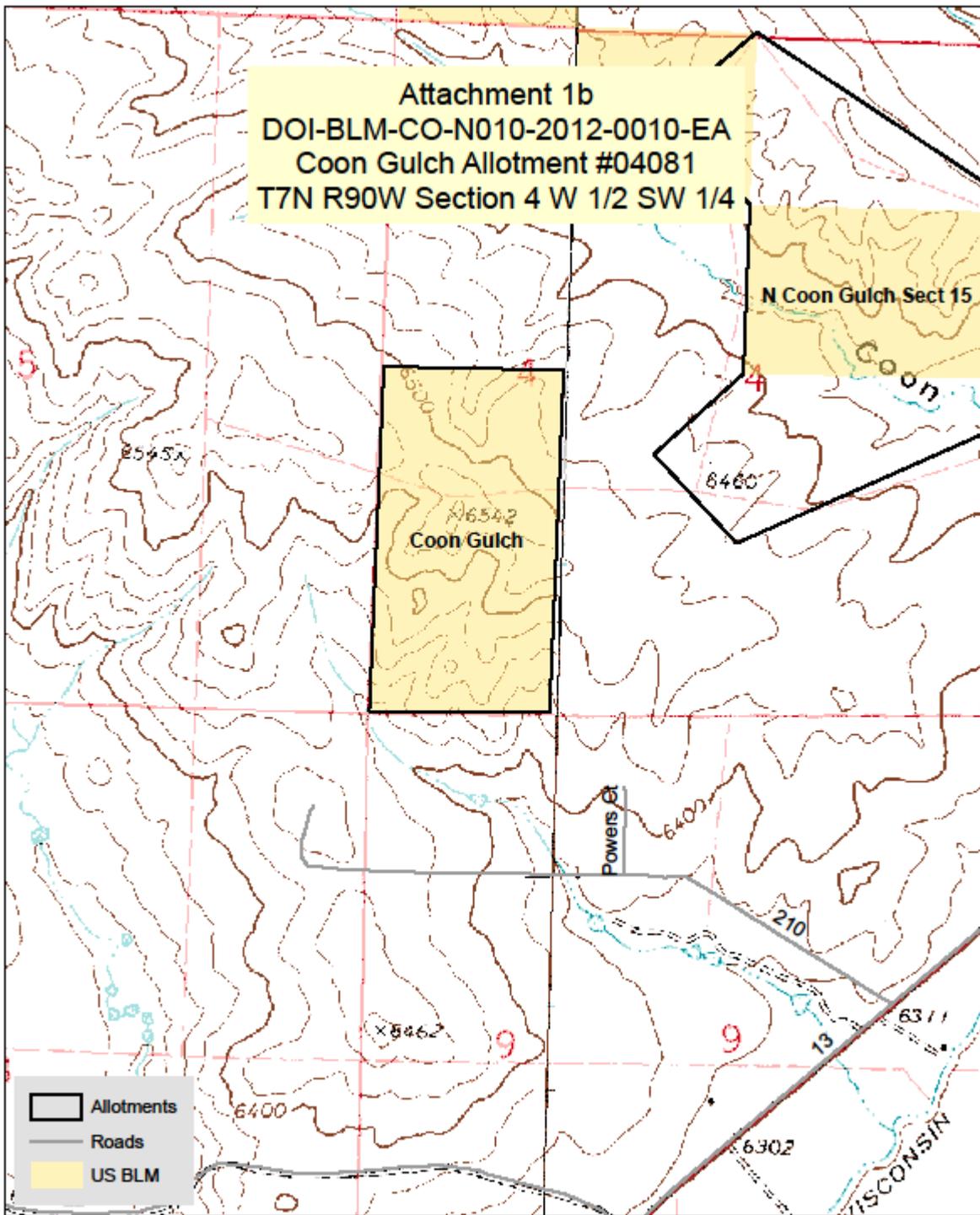
**DATE SIGNED:** 12/15/2011

**SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:** /s/ Barbara Sterling

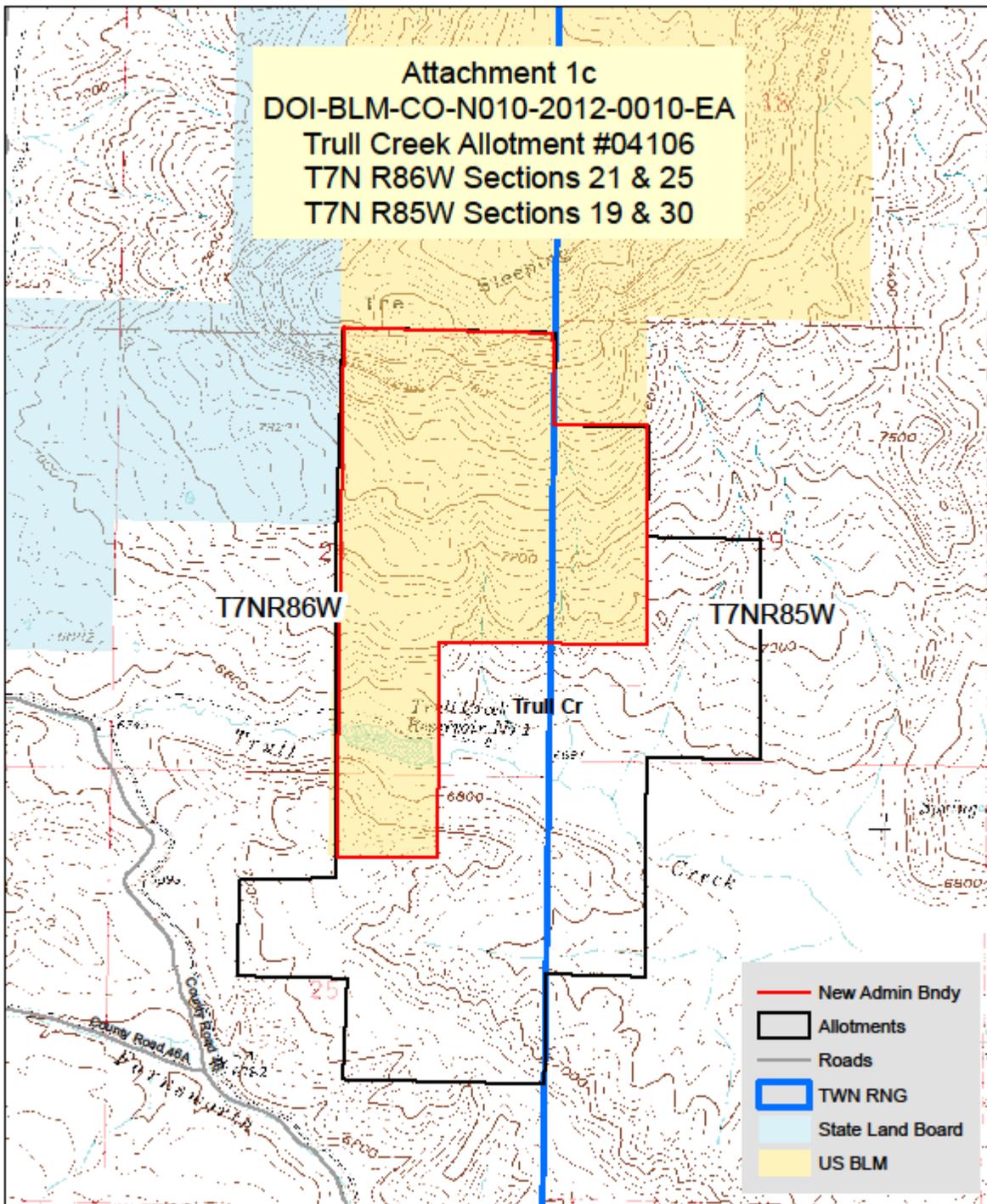
**DATE SIGNED: 12/16/2011**



**Attachment 1b**  
**DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2012-0010-EA**  
**Coon Gulch Allotment #04081**  
**T7N R90W Section 4 W 1/2 SW 1/4**



Attachment 1c  
DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2012-0010-EA  
Trull Creek Allotment #04106  
T7N R86W Sections 21 & 25  
T7N R85W Sections 19 & 30



**ATTACHMENT #2**  
**DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2012-0010-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 permit/lease may be modified if additional information indicates that revision is necessary to conform with 43 CFR 4180.

**Finding of No Significant Impact**  
**DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2012-0010-EA**

Based upon a review of this Environmental Assessment and the supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the Little Snake Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (2011). An environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

**Context:** The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public lands that do not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

**Intensity:** The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this Proposed Action:

**1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse**

The beneficial effects of the Proposed Action includes: in authorizing public land grazing this action sustains the local economy as grazing operations would continue to supply personal income to the operator and employees, and would have a proportional influence on the regional, Colorado, and national economy. This action supports the western livestock industry. The authorized livestock operator(s) have mandatory and special terms and conditions that must be met to maintain their grazing preference. This provides a certain level of stewardship of public lands in that if these lands were to become degraded by any activity or event, natural or human in origin, grazing and or other authorized uses would be terminated. This stewardship role of the livestock operator not only mandates proper livestock and forage management but also provides communication with the BLM as to other activities or events that could cause degradation to public lands. Long term effects would be limited in scope.

**2. Degree of effect on public health and safety**

There would be no effects on public health and safety.

**3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas**

There are no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas in the area of Proposed Action. As described in the EA, impacts to cultural resources were identified for the Proposed Action. As this action is not a new action but a continuation of historic land uses in this area there would be no affect to unique characteristics of the geographic area.

**4. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial**

Public input regarding the Proposed Action has been solicited during the planning process. The BLM Little Snake Field Office sent out a Notice of Public Scoping on December 15, 2010 to determine the level of public interest, concern, and resource conditions on the grazing authorizations that were up for renewal in FY 2012. A Notice of Public Scoping was posted on the Internet, at the Colorado BLM Home Page, asking for public input on permit/lease renewals. Individual letters were sent to the affected permittees/lessees, informing them their permit/lease was up for renewal and requesting any information

