United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Environmental Assessment for the Construction of the West Trapper Fence

Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, Colorado

DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2012-0080-EA

October 2012

BLM

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

PROJECT NAME**:** Construction of the West Trapper Fence

ALLOTMENT/PROJECT NUMBER: 04195 / 015660

1.2 PROJECT LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T2N, R85W Sec. 35. Also see map (Attachment #1).

ALLOTMENT NAME AND NUMBER: West Trapper Allotment #04195

ALLOTMENT SUMMARY: 292 acres BLM
1486 acres private
1778 acres total

COUNTY AND GENERAL LOCATION: Routt County, CO; south of Yampa, CO

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION: The project is located at just over 8,000' in rolling hills. It is an upland area within the Claypan ecological site.

CLIMATE/PRECIPITATION SUMMARY: Precipitation ranges from 18-26 inches per year. The mean annual air temperature is 37-41 degrees F. The frost-free period is 40 to 70 days.

1.3 BACKGROUND

In spring of 2012 the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) approached the BLM about coordinating a fence replacement project they were funding on the Finger Rock Preserve with Mr. Ren Martyn. The project included removal of existing woven wire fencelines to be replaced by wildlife friendly fencing targeting sage grouse habitat improvement. BLM concurred that this was a valid project and approved that the section (~1400') that crosses the BLM parcel could be replaced as part of their EQIP cost-share project. Fence removal was initiated and the contractor had started the project when we received a call from the adjacent landowner, Tom Belaustegui who owns the base property attached to the grazing permit on the West Trapper Allotment #04195 which includes the parcel of land the project was being implemented on. There had been a misunderstanding between the two neighbors about where the property ownership was in relation to the fenceline. Mr. Belaustegui requested construction of a new boundary fence that would include the BLM parcel, which was previously excluded by fencing, into his pasture within the West Trapper Grazing Allotment #04195. This parcel has previously been allocated through grazing authorizations to be included within the grazing of the West Trapper Allotment administrative boundary.

1.4 PURPOSE AND NEED

The need for the project is to correctly define a BLM grazing allotment boundary. The purpose is to evaluate a proposal to construct a boundary fence on the north end of the West Trapper

Allotment #04195. The construction of the fence would correctly define the allotment boundary and facilitate management of livestock grazing and administration of the grazing permit.

1.4.1 Decision to be Made

BLM will decide whether or not to approve the boundary fence construction on the West Trapper Allotment #04195 and, if approved, what stipulations and design specifications apply to the fenceline.

1.5 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW

The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

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

Date Approved: October 2011

Decision Language: The Proposed Action 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

1.6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1.6.1 Scoping: NEPA regulations (40 CFR §1500-1508) require that the BLM use a scoping process to identify potential significant issues in preparation for impact analysis. The principal goals of scoping are to allow public participation to identify issues, concerns, and potential impacts that require detailed analysis.

External Scoping Summary: The action in this EA is included in the NEPA log posted on the LSFO web site: http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/nepa/lsfo.html. Additionally, extensive discussions have been had with both adjacent landowners (Ren Martyn and Tom Belaustegui) and their comments have been incorporated into the alternatives in this analysis.

The approval of this range project is being carefully analyzed within the scope of the specific action being taken, resources issues or concerns, and public input received.

Persons/Agencies Consulted: Ren Martyn, Private Landowner
Brandon Miller, NRCS
Tom Belaustegui, Private Landowner and BLM Grazing Lessee

Internal Scoping Summary: Prior to accepting Mr. Belaustegui's request to construct a range improvement, the Rangeland Management Specialist and Wildlife Biologists had an internal discussion of sage grouse habitat in the area and potential impacts associated with the fence. The project is within preliminary priority sage grouse habitat. A site visit was conducted for a preliminary assessment of the project and it was determined that wildlife friendly fence construction could be considered and analyzed further.

Additionally, the project was previewed by the LSFO archaeologist.

Issues Identified: Identified issues have been included in the development of the analyzed alternatives.

CHAPTER 2 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Each private party involved in the process presented an alternative in the location of the fenceline where it crosses an existing water conveyance ditch. Mr. Belaustegui proposed that the fence be constructed on the surveyed property line. Mr. Martyn holds the water rights for this ditch and proposed Alternative 2 which excludes the irrigation ditch from the grazing allotment pasture. Both of these alternatives will be analyzed along with a No Action alternative.

2.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL

2.2.1 Alternative 1

Mr. Belaustegui would construct a fence on the boundary between public and private land as shown on the map in Attachment #1 and in Map #1 below. As the base property owner associated with the West Trapper Allotment #4195, this would allow him to include this BLM parcel within the management of the current grazing pasture. BLM administrative allotment boundaries previously associated this parcel with the allotment. The fenceline specifications would be for a three wire fence spaced at 16", 26", 38" with the top two wires barbed and the bottom wire smooth. A combination of wood posts, steel posts and stays would be used along the fenceline. The approximate fenceline length constructed on the property boundary line would be 4,450 feet. Vegetation could be removed along the construction corridor so long as the soil is not disturbed. Additionally, the fenceline would be marked for visibility to wildlife, primarily greater sage grouse, using plastic clips on the fence. Under this alternative the entire BLM parcel would be included within the fenced allotment. Gates would be installed allowing maintenance access along the ditchline. Construction would begin in fall of 2012. Due to greater sage grouse timing stipulations, construction would not be permitted between March 1 and June 30. Additionally, the sections of fence that cross or are near the floodplain of the creeks would be built in a manner to withstand the likelihood of surface flows, such as wide spacing of posts or eliminating low wires, to allow the passage of water without trapping debris that would damage the fence and alter surface flow paths. If fossils are discovered during construction or other operations, all activity in the area would cease and the Field Office Manager would be notified immediately. An assessment of significance would be made within an agreed time frame. Operations would resume only upon written notification by the Authorized Officer.

Cultural Resource Mitigation:

1. Any cultural and/or paleontological (fossil) resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered by the holder, or any person working on his behalf, on public or Federal land shall be immediately reported to the authorized officer. Holder shall suspend all operations in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the authorized officer. An evaluation of the discovery will be made by the authorized officer to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values. The holder will be responsible for the cost of evaluation and the authorized officer will make any decision as to proper mitigation measures after consulting with the holder.
2. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are encountered or uncovered during any project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate vicinity of the find and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO) at (970) 826-5000. Within five working days, the AO will inform the operator as to:
    - Whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
    - The mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the identified area can be used for project activities again; and
    - Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) (Federal Register Notice, Monday, December 4, 1995, Vol. 60, No. 232) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone at (970) 826-5000, and with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.
3. If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation costs. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

Map #1: *Note ditch in NW corner*

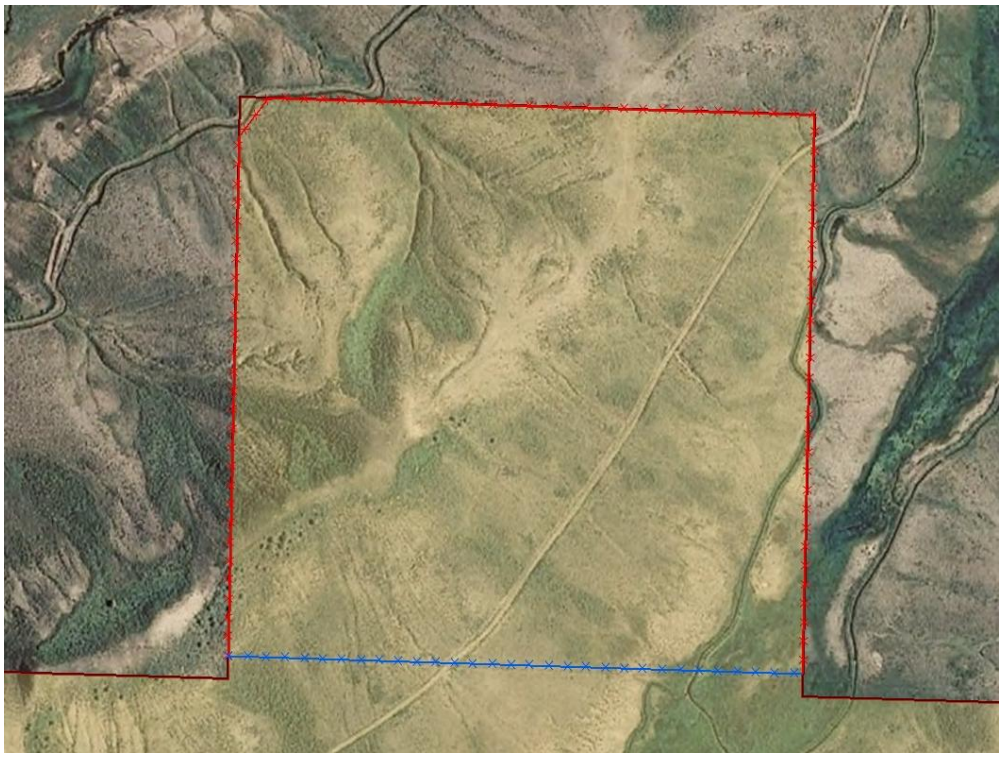
2.2.2 Alternative 2

Mr. Belaustegui would construct a fence on the boundary between public and private land as shown on the map in Attachment #1 and in Map #2 below. As the base property owner associated with the West Trapper Allotment #4195, this would allow him to include this BLM parcel within the management of the current grazing pasture. BLM administrative allotment boundaries previously associated this parcel with the allotment. The fenceline specifications would be for a three wire fence spaced at 16", 26", 38" with the top two wires barbed and the bottom wire smooth. A combination of wood posts, steel posts and stays would be used along the fenceline. Additionally, the fenceline would be marked for visibility to wildlife, primarily greater sage grouse, using plastic clips on the fence. Under this alternative the total fenceline length would be approximately 4,300 feet and would not include 0.07 ac of the BLM parcel. Vegetation could be removed along the construction corridor so long as the soil is not disturbed. The irrigation ditch runs through this section of the parcel. Mr. Belaustegui does not own the water rights within the ditch. If included in the allotment livestock would utilize this access point for water. Topographically, providing water in this corner of the pasture would limit even distribution of livestock grazing which could result in over-utilization (>60%) of forage in this area of the BLM parcel. Construction would begin in fall of 2012. Due to greater sage grouse timing stipulations construction would not be permitted between March 1 and June 30. Additionally, the sections of fence that cross or are near the floodplain of the creeks would be built in a manner to withstand the likelihood of surface flows, such as wide spacing of posts or eliminating low wires, to allow the passage of water without trapping debris that would

damage the fence and alter surface flow paths. If fossils are discovered during construction or other operations, all activity in the area would cease and the Field Office Manager would be notified immediately. An assessment of significance will be made within an agreed time frame. Operations will resume only upon written notification by the Authorized Officer.

The same Cultural Resource Mitigation applies to this alternative as listed in Alternative 1.

Map #2: *Note ditch in NW corner*



2.2.3 No Action Alternative

Under this alternative the fenceline would not be constructed and the existing fenceline would be rebuilt.

CHAPTER 3 – AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Affected Resources:
The CEQ Regulations state that NEPA documents "must concentrate on the issues that are truly significant to the action in question, rather than amassing needless detail" (40 CFR 1500.1(b)). While many issues may arise during scoping, not all of the issues raised warrant analysis in an environmental assessment (EA). Issues will be analyzed if: 1) an analysis of the issue is necessary to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, or 2) if the issue is associated with a significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impact, or where analysis is necessary to determine the significance of the impacts. Table 1 lists the resources considered and the determination as to whether they require additional analysis.

Table1. Resources and Determination of Need for Further Analysis

Determination[1]	Resource	Resource Issue/Rationale for Determination
Physical Resources		
NI	Air Quality	Activities associated with grazing and grazing related projects that may affect air quality, namely dust and exhaust from ranch operation vehicles as well as dust from livestock hoof action, fall below EPA emission standards for the six criteria pollutants of concern (sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, particulate matter [both PM2.5 and PM10], and lead). Furthermore, ranch operation and livestock activities are not a significant source of these pollutant emissions that do occur in Routt County. Impacts to air quality caused by any alternative are therefore considered negligible.
PI	Floodplains	See Section 3
NI	Hydrology, Ground	There would not be any significant impacts to ground hydrology.
PI	Hydrology, Surface	See Water Quality, Surface
NP	Minerals, Fluid	There would not be any significant impacts to fluid minerals.
NI	Minerals, Solid	There would not be any significant impacts to solid minerals.
PI	Soils	See Section 3
NI	Water Quality, Ground	There would not be any significant impacts to ground water quality.
PI	Water Quality, Surface	See Section 3
Biological Resources		
PI	Invasive, Non-native Species	See Section 3

Determination[1]	Resource	Resource Issue/Rationale for Determination
NI	Migratory Birds	There would not be any significant impacts to migratory birds.
PI	Special Status Animal Species	See Section 3
NP	Special Status Plant Species	There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present within the proposed project area.
PI	Upland Vegetation	See Section 3
PI	Wetlands and Riparian Zones	See Section 3
PI	Wildlife, Aquatic	See Section 3
NI	Wildlife, Terrestrial	There would not be any significant impacts to terrestrial wildlife.
NP	Wild Horses	There are no HMA's in or near the proposed project.
Heritage Resources and the Human Environment		
PI	Cultural Resources	See Section 3
NP	Environmental Justice	According to the most recent Census Bureau statistics (2000), there are no minority or low income populations within the LSFO.
NP	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	There are no known hazardous or solid wastes present within the project area.
NP	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	There are no LWCs within the proposed project area.
PI	Native American Religious Concerns	See Section 3
PI	Paleontological Resources	See Section 3
NI	Social and Economic Conditions	There would not be any substantial changes to local social or economic conditions.
NI	Visual Resources	The proposed project is located in a VRM Class III area where moderate change to the characteristic landscape would be allowed as long as the existing characteristics of the landscape are partially retained. The Scenic Quality Rating is B and the Sensitivity Level Rating is Moderate. No impacts to visual resources would be anticipated.
Resource Uses		
NI	Access and Transportation	There would not be any significant impacts to access and/or transportation. There is no legal public access.
NI	Fire Management	This project would not affect Fire Management.
NP	Forest Management	There are no Forest Management resources within the project area.
PI	Livestock Operations	See Section 3
NP	Prime and Unique Farmlands	There are no special status farmlands present within the project area.
NP	Realty Authorizations, Land Tenure	There are no realty authorizations within the project area.

Determination[1]	Resource	Resource Issue/Rationale for Determination
NI	Recreation	There would not be any significant impacts to recreation. There is no legal public access.
Special Designations		
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	The proposed project is not located near the Irish Canyon ACEC and, therefore would have no impact.
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	There are no WSRs near the proposed project area.
NP	Wilderness Study Areas	There are no WSAs near the proposed project area.

[1] NP = Not present in the area impacted by the Proposed Action or Alternatives. NI = Present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required. PI = Present with potential for impact analyzed in detail in the EA.

3.2 PHYSICAL RESOURCES

3.2.1 Floodplains

Affected Environment: The proposed fenceline route crosses or is adjacent to a FEMA-identified 100-year floodplain along an unnamed tributary to Chimney Creek that floods frequently (meaning that flooding is likely to occur often under normal weather conditions) in the southeast corner of the area of interest.

Source: USDA-NRCS Soil Data Viewer version 5.2.0016: http://soildataviewer.nrcs.usda.gov/

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 1 and 2: It is likely that portions of the fenceline would experience overbank surface flows that occur during spring runoff and thunderstorm events. Potential impacts include damage to the fence as debris is caught up in wires and around posts that results in changes to overland flow paths, direction, and speed.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: The fence would not be built and so the risk of flooding and damage to the fenceline and changes in surface runoff would not exist.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: The proposed project would slightly increase the risk of floodplain alteration across the landscape. This impact would likely be negligible and would not drastically alter floodplain form and function.

3.2.2 Soils

Affected Environment: Soils within the portion of the allotment where the fenceline is proposed are primarily well-drained clays and silty clays, with slopes between 3-45%.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 1: There would be limited disturbance to soil as a result of actual fence construction. The addition of a boundary fence between the ownership parcels may lead to trailing along the fenceline, given the natural tendency of cattle to congregate along fence lines. As a result, it is possible that some degree of soil compaction and a higher level of forage utilization would occur along the fences within the West Trapper allotment. The resulting decrease in vegetation would not decrease the impact of raindrops on the soil surface, while the expected increase in compaction would increase

runoff from rain and snowmelt and potentially lead to localized erosion. Also, livestock access to the ditch could result in increased sediment into the ditch as a result of expected congregation around the single water source in that portion of the allotment.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 2: Impacts to soils would be similar as in Alternative 1 along most of the fenceline. Because the ditch would be fenced out and unaccessible to livestock, increased erosion and sedimentation into the ditch as a result of livestock congregation would not occur.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: There would be no additional disturbance to soils. The potential for localized erosion as a result of trailing along fencelines and the ditch would not occur.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: The proposed project would slightly increase the risk of erosion and soil compaction across the landscape. This impact would likely be negligible in comparison with other surface disturbing activities that occur in the area.

3.2.3 Water Quality, Surface

Affected Environment: Surface runoff from the West Trapper allotment flows primarily into an unnamed tributary to Chimney Creek, which is a perennial tributary to Phillips Creek in the headwaters region of the Yampa River. This unnamed tributary bisects the BLM parcel in the southeast corner of the area where the fenceline is proposed. Water quality for the mainstem of Chimney Creek (including all tributaries and wetlands which are not on National Forest lands, from the source to the confluence with the Yampa River) must support Aquatic Life Cold 1, Recreation P, and Agricultural uses. There are no water quality impairments or suspected water quality issues for waters influenced by the project area.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 1: Livestock wastes deposited in or near streams (or a ditch) or entrained or dissolved in runoff reaching streams, may contribute to nutrient (nitrogen, phosphorous) and bacteria (*E. coli*) exceedances in surface water quality. Livestock use of 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.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 2: Impacts to water quality would be similar to those described in Alternative 1 regarding livestock access to the riparian area in the southeast corner of the area of interest. However, impacts to surface water quality in the ditch would largely be eliminated since livestock access to the ditch would be prevented.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: Impacts to surface water quality would not change. There would be no fenceline built and livestock would have access to the ditch and the riparian area along the tributary to Chimney Creek in the southeast corner of the parcel.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: The proposed project in Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 would slightly increase the risk of erosion and sedimentation into waterways across the landscape. This impact would likely be negligible in comparison with other surface disturbing activities that occur in the area.

Reference: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Water Quality Control Commission. 2012. 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

3.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

3.3.1 Invasive/Non-Native Species

Affected Environment: Invasive and noxious weeds are present in the vicinity of the project area. Invasive annuals such as cheatgrass, and allysum commonly occur. Additional invasive species of concern include white top, Canada thistle, hound's tongue knapweeds, leafy spurge and biennial thistles. These species are on the Colorado list B of noxious weeds. Cheatgrass is on the Colorado List C of noxious weeds. Additional noxious weeds may also be present in the area. The BLM cooperates with partners to employ the principals of Integrated Pest Management to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 1 and Alternative 2: The mechanical methods for fence construction as proposed would cause some disturbance to the herbaceous plant community. This project provides an opportunity for infestation establishment through use of equipment which could introduce new weeds as well as lightly disturbed areas where weeds could establish. This opportunity is minimal and is mitigated by awareness of lessee to implement initial control at first sign of infestation.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: No new opportunities for invasive species establishment as a result of construction would occur under this alternative.

Cumulative Effects: The proposed project could increase the risk for establishment and spread of noxious and invasive species increasing the occurrence of weeds within the landscape. This project would result in a total potential area of about 10 acres for infestations to establish and spread from. If noxious weeds establish in these plant communities the health of upland plant communities and associated ecological function would decline. The risk level of establishing infestations is low in the area and would be minimized further by operator awareness. Under the No Action Alternative there would be no additional contribution to previous, existing or future weed infestations.

3.3.2 Special Status Animal Species

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered species or habitats for such species present within the proposed project area. The area does provide breeding and nesting habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM special status species and a candidate for listing

under ESA. The area also provides habitat for the following BLM sensitive species: Columbia sharp-tailed grouse and bald eagle.

The project area is mapped as Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH) (per WO IM No. 2012-043). The area is 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 where high protein forbs and associated invertebrates are present. The project area is also mapped as winter range and production habitat for the Columbia sharp-tailed grouse by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife. The area is also mapped as bald eagle winter range by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife.

Habitat for one additional BLM sensitive species, the Brewers's sparrow, also occurs in the project area. Brewer's sparrows are a summer resident in Colorado and nest in sagebrush stands. Nests are constructed in dense patches of sagebrush and other shrubs. This species would be nesting in the project area from mid-May through mid-July.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 1 and Alternative 2: Fences can provide new perch sites for raptor species, some of which prey on grouse. Fences also have the potential to result in mortality of individual grouse from collisions with wires which have low visibility. Fences near leks pose a greater risk to grouse species. Under both Alternatives 1 and 2, fence markers would be used to increase visibility of the new fence, which would help minimize collisions risks. Since several fences exist in the area, including a riparian enclosure near the active lek, it is unlikely that the new fence would increase predation risks from raptor species.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: The additional fence line in the area contributes to the fragmentation of habitat. Wildlife populations in the area are stable and the addition of the fence line is not expected to impact grouse species on a population level.

3.3.3 Upland Vegetation

Affected Environment: The project area consists of upland mixed shrub and grass community. Vegetation present within the area includes western wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, needle and thread grass, June grass, mule's ear, western yarrow, phlox, asters, cinquefoil, wild rose, bud sage, snowberry, serviceberry, green rabbitbrush, rubber rabbitbrush, and big sage. The vegetation exhibits good diversity of species with some recruitment of young sagebrush present.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 1 and 2: There would be no long term adverse impacts to native vegetation as a result of fence construction. The surface disturbance caused by the fence construction may result in an increase in undesirable plant species. As long as weeds are controlled and disturbance is minimized in accordance with construction stipulations, healthy native plant communities would be resilient to the disturbance.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no effect to the upland vegetation.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Under Alternative 1 and 2 a potential of 10 acres of vegetation may be disturbed during construction of the project with minimal to no long term effects. Under the No Action Alternative there would be no additional contribution to previous, existing or potential future impacts within the upland vegetation

3.3.4 Wetlands and Riparian Zones

Affected Environment: An unnamed tributary to Chimney Creek occurs in the southeast corner of the area of interest. This riparian area has never been assessed (no condition assessment is available). However, given assessments of other riparian areas in the area as well as aerial imagery provided, the riparian area appears to be lotic in nature and likely has a variety of riparian species present, such as rushes, sedges, and willows.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 1 and Alternative 2: A small section of this riparian area would be included in the fence line footprint resulting in additional riparian acreage that is readily accessible to livestock during the permitted season of use. Livestock use during the vegetative growing season (spring through early fall) could lead to concentration in riparian areas and in the stream channel itself, where plant vigor could be reduced and vegetation communities and channel form could change over time. Changes to the channel configuration could increase sediment delivery and alter substrate composition that macroinvertebrates and native fish prefer.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: The riparian area excluded by the existing fenceline is currently authorized for livestock grazing under the current grazing lease. However, actual use is limited by the ability to manage livestock grazing on the parcel. Under this alternative there would be no change to the current condition of the riparian area.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: The proposed project would increase slightly the ability of livestock to use the riparian area on this parcel during the period of time permitted in the existing grazing lease. This increase in use is not significantly additive when compared to livestock use of riparian areas on private lands (the majority of land ownership) and other BLM-administered grazing leases in the area.

3.3.5 Wildlife, Aquatic

Affected Environment: Throughout the allotment there are a few intermittent streams that are tributaries of Chimney Creek. Specific to the project area, there is a tributary on the southeast corner. No inventory data currently exists for this tributary, but data for similar riparian areas in the vicinity suggest that it may support aquatic invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and may also support fish populations.

Environmental Consequences, All Alternatives: Livestock have access to this area at all times, with varying degrees of intensity of use. Potential impacts from livestock grazing include trampling of individuals 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 these alternatives.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: The proposed action would slightly increase the use of aquatic wildlife habitat by grazing livestock. Current livestock use does not appear to have impacted the habitat and future grazing practices are not expected to impact aquatic wildlife habitat within this allotment.

3.4 HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

3.4.1 Cultural Resources

Affected Environment: 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, significant cultural resources administered by the BLM-LSFO have been discussed in a Class 1 overview (McDonald and Metcalf 2006) and valuable contextual information is available in synthesis reports of archaeological investigations for a series of large pipelines in the area (Metcalf and Reed 2011; Rhode and others 2010; Reed and Metcalf 2009).

The removal of an existing fence line and construction of a new fence is considered an undertaking under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). BLM has the legal responsibility to take into account the effects of its actions on cultural resources located on federal land. BLM Manual 8100 Series, the Colorado State Protocol and BLM Colorado Handbook of Guidelines and Procedures for Identification, Evaluation, and Mitigation of Cultural Resources provide guidance on how to accomplish Section 106 requirements with the appropriate cultural resource standards. Section 106 of NHPA requires federal agencies to: 1) inventory cultural resources to be affected by federal undertakings, 2) evaluate the importance of cultural resources by determining their eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places (National Register), and 3) consult with the federal and state preservation agencies regarding inventory results, National Register eligibility determinations, and proposed methods to avoid or mitigate impact to sites determined to be eligible (Historic Properties). Within the state of Colorado, BLM's NHPA obligations are carried out under a Protocol Agreement between BLM, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). If the undertaking is determined to have "no effect" on Historic Properties by the BLM Little Snake Field Office Archaeologist then it may proceed under the terms of the Protocol. If the undertaking is determined to have "adverse effects" then consultation is initiated with the SHPO.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action (Alternatives 1 and 2): Historic Properties can be directly or indirectly adversely impacted by the proposed action. Direct impacts include ground disturbance and or the construction, modification, or removal of buildings or

structures. Indirect impacts include but are not limited to collection of artifacts/cultural material, inadvertent trespass, alteration of the environmental setting, and the detraction of the integrity of a view-shed.

The construction or removal of fence lines also indirectly creates areas of livestock concentration. Direct impacts from where livestock concentrate 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 and gullying.

The proposed undertaking has undergone a Class III cultural resource study:

Morton, Ethan and Gary D. Collins.
2012 *Class III Cultural Resource Inventory of the Proposed West Trapper Fence, Routt County, Colorado*. BLM LSFO #10.67.2012. OAHP RT.LM.NR158. Bureau of Land Management, Craig, Colorado.

This study did not identify any Historic Properties within the area of potential effect for the proposed undertaking. The proposed undertaking will have "no effect" on Historic Properties and may proceed with the standard mitigative measures in place.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: While a no action alternative alleviates potential adverse impacts from the undertaking, cultural resources are constantly being subjected to site formation processes or events after primary deposition (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. Any ongoing adverse impacts to potential Historic Properties unrelated to the proposed action may not be discovered and mitigated if the no action alternative is selected.

Environmental Consequences-Cumulative Effects: The cumulative impacts to Historic Properties are within project area, lands adjacent to the project area, and lands within the view shed of the project area. The region has been historically improved for livestock for over fifty years. Any Historic Property that has the potential to be adversely impacted by the present proposed actions was likely adversely impacted to a greater degree during the past when livestock use was more intensive. While continued livestock use may not directly impact areas where prior intensive use was present, secondary effects such as increased erosion may cause long term irreversible effects to Historic Properties if present. The presence of livestock has increased ground visibility and decreased erosion exposing deposits that would otherwise be obscured by vegetation or remain buried. The installation of range improvements and placement of mineral supplements has caused additional ground disturbances over time. Maintenance of roads and the removal and or replacement of range improvements have likely resulted in the obliteration of historic properties. Continued livestock use may cause additional ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties if present.

References

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.

Metcalf, Michael D and Aland D. Reed
2011 *Synthesis of Archaeological Data Compiled for The Piceance Basin Expansion, Rockies Express Pipeline, and Uinta Basin Lateral Projects Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties, Colorado and Sweetwater County, Wyoming.* Volume 2. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Eagle, CO.

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.

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.

Reed, Alan D. and Michael Metcalf
1999 *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Northern Colorado River Basin.* Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists, Denver, Colorado.

2009 *Synthesis of Archaeological Data Compiled for The Piceance Basin Expansion, Rockies Express Pipeline, and Uinta Basin Lateral Projects Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties, Colorado and Sweetwater County, Wyoming*. Volume 1. Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Inc, Montrose, CO.

Rhode, David, Lisbeth A. Louderback, David Madsen, and Michael D. Metcalf
2010 *Synthesis of Archaeological Data Compiled for The Piceance Basin Expansion, Rockies Express Pipeline, and Uinta Basin Lateral Projects Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties, Colorado and Sweetwater County, Wyoming.* Volume 3. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Eagle, CO.

Schiffer, Michael B.
1987 *Formation Processes of the Archaeological Record*. Formation Processes of the Archaeological Record. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

3.4.2 Native American Religious Concerns

Affected Environment: Four Native American tribes have cultural and historical ties to lands have administered by the BLM LSFO. These tribes include the Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Uinta and Ouray Agency Ute Indian Tribe, and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe.

American Indian religious concerns are legislatively considered under several acts and Executive Orders, namely the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, the Native American Graves Environmental Assessment Protection and Repatriation Act, and Executive Order 13007 (Indian Sacred Sites). In summary, these require, in concert with other provisions such as those found in the NHPA and Archaeological Resources Protection Act, that the federal government carefully and proactively take into consideration traditional and religious Native American culture and life and ensure, to the degree possible, that access to sacred sites, the treatment of human remains, the possession of sacred items, the conduct of traditional religious practices, and the preservation of important cultural properties are considered and not unduly infringed upon. In some cases, these concerns are directly related to "historic properties" and "archaeological resources". In some cases elements of the landscape without archaeological or other human material remains may be involved. Identification of these concerns is normally completed during the land use planning efforts, reference to existing studies, or via direct consultation.

Consultation for the type of proposed undertaking is consulted on annually with the tribes. Letters were sent to the tribes in the spring of 2012 describing general range improvement projects. No comments or concerns were received.

Environmental Consequences-Proposed Action (Alternatives 1 and 2): Cultural items, sites, or landscapes determined to by culturally significant to the tribes can be directly or indirectly adversely impacted by range improvements. Direct impacts could include but are not limited to physical damage, removal of cultural objects or items, and activities thought to be disrespectful. Indirect impacts include but are not limited to prevention of access (hindering the performance of traditional ceremonies and rituals), increased visitation of a previously little used area, and loss of integrity related to religious feelings and associations.

There are no known cultural items, sites, or landscapes determined to be culturally significant to the tribes within and near the undertaking area. The proposed action does not prevent access to any known sacred sites, prevent the possession of sacred objects, or interfere or otherwise hinder the performance of traditional ceremonies and rituals.

Mitigation Measures-Proposed Action: There are no known adverse impacts to any cultural items, sites, or landscapes determined to by culturally significant to the tribes. 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.

Environmental Consequences-Cumulative Impacts: Continued use of the area by livestock had an additive effect of changing the landscape from that known by the tribes. There are

no specific sites of concern identified in the project area; it is rather the broader continued change that modern culture brings to the landscape.

3.4.3 Paleontological Resources

Affected Environment: The geologic formation at the surface is the Cretaceous Age Mancos Shale Formation (Km). This formation has been classified a Class II formation for the potential for occurrence of scientifically significant fossils. Scientifically significant fossils are occasionally found within this formation (Armstrong & Wolney, 1989). The potential for discovery of significant fossils on this location is considered to be moderate.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 1 and Alternative 2: If any such fossils are located here, construction activities could damage the fossils and the information that could have been gained from them would be lost. The significance of this impact would depend upon the significance of the fossil.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no affect to paleontological resources.

References

Armstrong, Harley J. and Wolney, David G., 1989, Paleontological Resources of Northwest Colorado: A Regional Analysis, Museum of Western Colorado, Grand Junction, CO, prepared for Bur. Land Management, Vol. I of V.

Miller, A.E., 1977, Geology of Moffat County, Colorado, Colo. Geol. Surv. Map Series 3, 1:126,720.

3.5 RESOURCE USES

3.5.1 Livestock Operations

Affected Environment: The project area is within a BLM parcel included in the West Trapper Allotment #04195. Historically, this parcel has been fenced out of the allotment but included in the grazing authorization lease.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 1: Construction of a fenceline to include this parcel within the allotment would coordinate the allotment boundary and grazing lease with actual on the ground management. If the irrigation ditch were included within the fenced area livestock would utilize this water source. This would increase livestock utilization within this section of the allotment.

Environmental Consequences, Alternative 2: Construction of a fenceline to include this parcel within the allotment would coordinate the allotment boundary and grazing lease with actual on the ground management. Excluding the irrigation ditch from the allotment would eliminate this water source for livestock. Additionally, since the neighboring parcels are part of separate operations excluding this section would help reduce user conflicts and allow for maintenance along the ditch line.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: This alternative would continue to exclude a parcel from the managed grazing area, making administration and control of livestock grazing on the BLM parcel more difficult.

Environmental Consequences, Cumulative Impacts: Alternatives 1 and 2 would match up an additional 40 acres actual on the ground management with the BLM grazing lease authorization.

CHAPTER 4– PUBLIC LAND HEALTH STANDARDS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The West Trapper Allotment #04195 was assessed for compliance with the Colorado Standards of Public Land Health by an interdisciplinary team consisting of two Rangeland Management Specialists, a Wildlife Biologist and the grazing lessee (private landowner) on August 26, 2002. This was an allotment specific site assessment.

4.2 COLORADO PUBLIC LAND HEALTH STANDARDS

In January 1997, the Colorado State Office of the BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health and amended all RMPs in the State. Standards describe the conditions needed to sustain public land health and apply to all uses of public lands.

4.2.1 Standard 1 Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes.

Finding of most recent assessment: Soil community conditions are meeting all standards.

Alternative 1 and 2: These alternatives may slightly increase erosion and compaction along fencelines, however, this is not expected to prevent this standard from being met.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, the current condition of soils and vegetation communities will continue to meet standards.

4.2.2 Standard 2 Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods.

Finding of most recent assessment: There is no assessment for the small section of riparian corridor present within the project area.

Alternative 1 and 2: These alternatives are not likely to significantly change the expected condition and function of the riparian area present within the allotment.

No Action Alternative: This alternative would not significantly change the expected condition and function of the riparian area present within the allotment.

4.2.3 Standard 3 Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential.

Finding of most recent assessment: All plant and animal community standards are being met.

Alternative 1 and 2: These alternatives would not cause any long term negative effects to plant and animal communities within the project area.

No Action Alternative: This alternative would cause no change to the health of plant and animal communities and the allotment would continue to meet land health standards.

4.2.4 Standard 4 Special status, threatened and endangered species (federal and state), and other plants and animals officially designated by the BLM, and their habitats are maintained or enhanced by sustaining healthy, native plant and animal communities.

Finding of most recent assessment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present within or in the vicinity of the proposed project. For plants, this standard does not apply. Habitat for greater sage grouse, a federal candidate species for listing, is good, with habitat areas large enough to support viable populations and is connected to other similar habitats. The area also provides habitat for the following BLM sensitive species: Columbia sharp-tailed grouse, bald eagle and Brewer's sparrow. This standard is met.

Alternative 1 and 2: These alternatives would not preclude this standard from being met.

No Action Alternative: Current management has resulted in this standard being met and this would not change under this alternative.

4.2.5 Standard 5 The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado.

Finding of most recent assessment: All water quality standards are met for perennial surface waters influenced by the allotment and project area.

Alternative 1 and 2: Water quality standards are expected to be maintained as a result of either alternative.

No Action Alternative: Water quality standards are expected to continue to be met under this alternative.

SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:

SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:

DATE SIGNED:

Finding of No Significant Impact
DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2012-0080-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 fenceline construction the proposed action benefits public land grazing which 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 of the Proposed Action 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. 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. Involved agencies and adjacent landowners were consulted in the alternative development process. Comments received were incorporated into the alternative analysis.

5. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk
No highly uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment were identified during analysis of the Proposed Action.

6. Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration
The Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts
No individually or cumulatively significant impacts were identified for the Proposed Action. Any adverse impacts identified for the Proposed Action, in conjunction with any adverse impacts of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions will result in negligible impacts to natural and cultural resources.

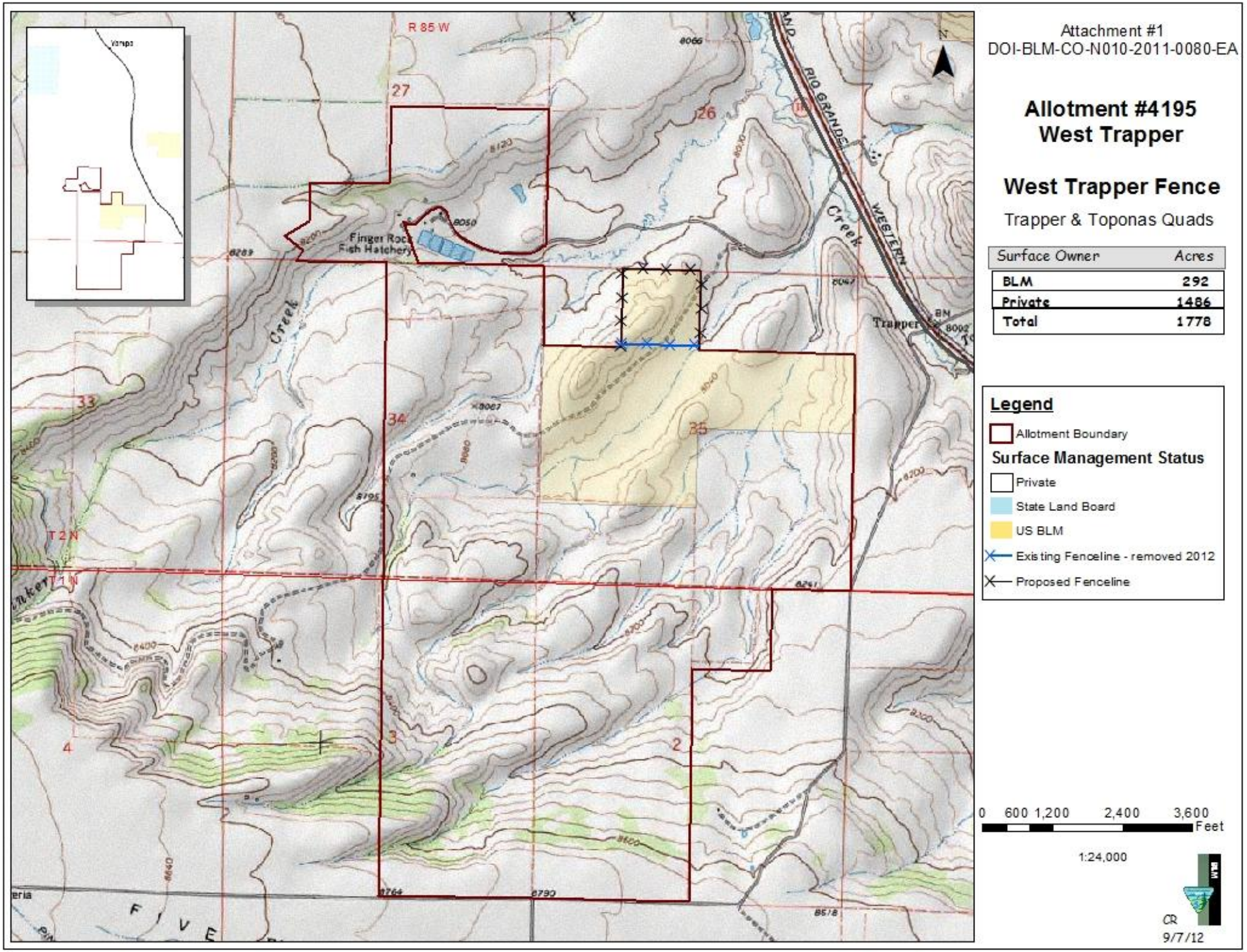
8. Degree to which the action may adversely affect district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources:
There would be no loss or destruction to these resources. A cultural resources study is initiated prior to any action considered and undertaking under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Any adverse effects to Historic Properties are mitigated in consultation with the Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (SHPO).

9. Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat
There are no threatened or endangered species or habitats for such species present within these allotments.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law
The Proposed Action violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ Matt Anderson for,
Wendy Reynolds, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 11/06/12


Attachment #1
DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2011-0080-EA
Allotment #4195
West Trapper
West Trapper Fence
Trapper & Toponas Quads
Surface Owner | Acres
BLM | 292
Private | 1486
Total | 1778
Legend
Allotment Boundary
Surface Management Status
Private
State Land Board
US BLM
Existing Fenceline - removed 2012
Proposed Fenceline
0 600 1,200 2,400 3,600
Feet
1:24,000
CR
9/7/12
R 85 W
T 2 N
T 1 N
Finger Rock Fish Hatchery
Rio Grande Western
Trapper Creek
Five