

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: CO-100-2007-091 EA

PERMIT/LEASE/ALLOTMENT NUMBER: 0502903/0502904/04540/04075

PROJECT NAME: Three year renewal of the grazing permit on the South Great Divide, #04540, Allotment and the three year renewal of the grazing lease on the LU#23, #04075, Allotment. This EA will also analyze the construction of associated range improvement projects.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: See allotment maps, Attachments 1 and 1a.

South Great Divide Allotment #04540

T. 9 N., R. 92 W. sec. 34 all
T. 9 N., R. 92 W. sec. 35, W½
T. 9 N., R. 92 W. portions of secs. 26 and 27
1,287 acres- BLM
25 acres- private
1,312 acres- total

LU #23 Allotment #04075

T. 8 N., R. 92 W. sec. 3, NE¼
165 acres – BLM LU
1,148 acres – private
1,313 acres – total

APPLICANT: Wilton Earle and Sons

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

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

Date Approved: April 26, 1989

Results: The Proposed Action is consistent with the Little Snake Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision, Livestock Grazing Management objective to improve range conditions for both wildlife and livestock through proper utilization of key forage plants and adjusting livestock stocking rates as a result of vegetation studies.

The Proposed Action is located within Management Unit 2 (Northern Central). The Proposed Action is compatible with the management objective for this unit, which is to provide for the development of the oil and gas resource. Public lands are open to livestock grazing. Management practices or range improvement projects will be permitted and existing range improvements will be maintained consistent with the management objectives for this unit.

The Proposed Action and Alternatives have been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

Other Documents:

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, as amended (43 USC 1752).

Rangeland Reform Final Environmental Impact Statement, December, 1994.

Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing in Colorado, February 12, 1997.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: BLM permit #0501059, which authorizes livestock grazing in the South Great Divide Allotment, expired on April 20, 2006. The permit was extended for one year until April 20, 2007, and again until April 20, 2008, under the same terms and conditions as the existing permit, in accordance with Section 325, Title III, H.R. 2691, Department of Interior and related agencies appropriations act, 2004 (P.L. 108-108). In 2007, the base property owner transferred the grazing preference, in both allotments, to Wilton Earle and Sons for a period of three years. Therefore the expiring permit, #0502903, would be renewed for a three-year period to coincide with the base property lease.

BLM lease #0502904, which authorizes livestock grazing in the LU #23 Allotment, does not expire until 2009; however, it would be renewed for a three-year period to coincide with the base property lease. In addition, the Proposed Action is to create a grazing system, which would use the LU#23 Allotment and the South Great Divide Allotment as two pastures of one grazing system.

The permit and lease are subject to renewal for a period of up to ten years at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior, who delegated the authority to BLM. The BLM has the authority to renew the livestock grazing permits consistent with the provisions of the *Taylor Grazing Act*, *Public Rangelands Improvement Act*, *Federal Land Policy and Management Act*, and Little Snake Field Office's *Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*. This Plan/EIS has been amended by Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management in Colorado.

In addition to the renewal of the grazing permit and lease, two range improvement projects - the relocation of a fence and the construction of a pit reservoir - are proposed within the South Great Divide Allotment to improve livestock distribution.

The following Environmental Assessment (EA) will analyze the impacts of livestock grazing and the construction of range improvement projects on public land managed by the BLM. The analysis will recommend terms and conditions to the permit and lease which will 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/lessee has a preference right to receive the permit/lease if grazing is to continue. The land use plan allows grazing to continue. This EA will be a site specific analysis 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 Little Snake Field Office sent out a Notice of Public Scoping in September of 2004, to determine the level of public interest, concern and resource conditions on the grazing permits and leases that were up for renewal in FY 2006. 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 they wanted included in or taken into consideration during the renewal process. The issuance of a grazing permit and lease for these allotments has been carefully analyzed within the scope of the specific action being taken, resource issues or concerns, and public input received.

BACKGROUND: Both allotments are located approximately 15 miles northwest of Craig, Colorado. To the north of the allotments is the Upper Dressler Gulch Allotment; private land lies to the west and east of the allotments and the Prospect Allotment lies to the south. Elevations are fairly consistent throughout both allotments at approximately 7,053 feet. The terrain is gently rolling with slopes of 10 – 20%. Mean annual precipitation is 13-15 inches. The dominant range sites are rolling loam and deep loam. These range sites typically support mixed sagebrush- antelope bitterbrush and grass communities.

The South Great Divide Allotment is classified as a category I (improve) allotment, which is defined by the Rangeland Program Summary for the Little Snake Resource Management Plan as 1) an allotment that has high to moderate production potential for livestock forage; 2) major resource conflicts or controversy may exist; 3) opportunities exist for positive economic return from public investments; 4) present management is currently not accomplishing desired results and, 5) the allotment is currently in unsatisfactory condition and is producing less than 60% of its potential production.

The LU#23 Allotment is classified as a category C (custodial) allotment, which is defined by the Rangeland Program Summary for the Little Snake Resource Management Plan as an allotment that has low production potential for livestock forage, there are no major resource conflicts or controversy and present management is accomplishing the desired results.

The season of use authorized on the South Great Divide Allotment is currently 5/1 through 10/01 for 79 cattle at 43% PL for a total of 172 AUMs. The LU #23 Allotment is permitted for 4

cattle from 5/01-10/01 at 100% PL for a total of 20 AUMs. The South Great Divide Allotment is a Section 3 grazing allotment while the LU#23 Allotment is a Section 15 allotment. Ideally, these allotments should be combined into one allotment, but because of the grazing laws and regulations, this is not possible. The base property owner, prior to 2007, had been the grazing permittee on both allotments for the past 35 years. He owns the private lands to the west and south of the allotments which have been used in conjunction with the BLM lands as part of the grazing rotation. For this reason, the South Great Divide Allotment has always been licensed at 43% PL. The allotments are equal in size and have approximately the same carrying capacity; however the South Great Divide allotment is almost 100% public lands while the LU#23 Allotment is 88% private lands. This is why the cattle herd size can remain constant throughout the rotation but the grazing lease for the LU#23 cannot reflect this.

MONITORING DATA:

Utilization data has been collected in the South Great Divide Allotment since 1987. Although utilization has exceeded the standard objective of 50% on occasion, the average utilization over the past 20 years has been 55%, which is acceptable for a summer/fall use period. The degree of allowable use should generally be 50% or less, depending on the amount of precipitation received during the year.

This is no monitoring data for the LU #23 Allotment.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

PROPOSED ACTION: Continue to authorize livestock grazing on both the South Great Divide and LU #23 Allotments by renewing grazing permit #0502903 for a period of three years, expiring January 1, 2010 and renew grazing lease #0502904, also expiring January 1, 2010 to coincide with the base property lease. A new rotational grazing system would be incorporated to allow growing season deferment on each allotment every other year. Two range improvement projects would be constructed to facilitate improved livestock distribution. Total permitted use would be limited to 172 AUMs per grazing year as a term and condition of the permit. The permit and lease would be renewed as follows:

Section 3 Grazing Permit

| Allotment name and number | Livestock number and kind | Dates | | %PL | AUMs |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|
| | | Begin | End | | |
| South Great Divide #04540 | 79 cattle | 05/01 | 10/01 | 43 | 172 |

Section 15 Grazing Lease

| Allotment name and number | Livestock number and kind | Dates | | %PL | AUMs |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|
| | | Begin | End | | |
| LU#23 | 4 cattle | 05/01 | 10/01 | 100 | 20 |

A rotational grazing system would be implemented as follows:

| Year 1 (2008) | Dates | Livestock Number and Kind | AUMs |
|---|--------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| South Great Divide | 05/01-07/15 | 88 | 95 |
| LU#23 ¹ | 07/16-10/01 | 88 | 97 |
| Year 2 (2009) | | | |
| South Great Divide | 07/16-10/01 | 88 | 97 |
| LU#23 | 05/01-07/15 | 88 | 95 |
| <small>1 - There are 192 AUMs total between the South Great Divide and the LU #23 Allotments. They are approximately equal in size and have the same livestock carrying capacity. The two allotments have been run together along with a large amount of private land by the permittee using a constant herd size. The grazing lease for the LU #23 Allotment reflects only the AUMs on the BLM LU lands.</small> | | | |

Although unlikely, there is a possibility that the base property for one allotment could be transferred independently of the other, therefore, a default grazing system for the South Great Divide and LU #23 Allotments has been developed. This system would be as follows:

| Year 1 (2008) | Dates | Livestock Number and Kind | AUMs |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| South Great Divide | 05/01-10/01 | 79 | 172 |
| LU #23 | 05/01-10/01 | 4 | 20 |
| Year 2 (2009) | | | |
| South Great Divide | 06/15-10/01 | 111 | 171 |
| LU #23 | 05/01-10/01 | 4 | 20 |

The following Special Term and Condition would apply to the default system:

A maximum of 45 days grazing use is allowed during the growing season (5/1-7/31), or all the grazing use may be made between 8/1 and 10/1.

FENCE RELOCATION

In addition to the permit and lease renewal, one new fencing project is proposed for construction on the allotment to prevent livestock from drifting between the two allotments. Currently, the allotment boundary fence goes through the middle of a pit reservoir in NW¼NW¼ Section 3, T. 8N., R.92W. The fence at the mid-point of the reservoir has fallen down, so at very low water levels, cattle are able to travel between the two allotments at will. The fence would be relocated north of the reservoir and gates placed in the fence, which would allow cattle access to the water, but not into the other the allotment.

The fence would be a three-strand barbed wire, bottom wire smooth. The fence would be built to BLM standards, with wires spaced at 16", 26", and 38" above the ground as shown in Attachment 4a. The fence would be constructed with metal posts spaced 12 feet apart with one wood or wire (preferably wood) stay between each post. A 15-foot wide line may be brushbeat

to facilitate fence construction. This line of brush removal would also aid wildlife in recognizing the presence of the fence.

The construction of this fence would be subject to the following stipulations:

1. To protect wintering elk, fence construction, pit construction, and site preparation (including brushbeating) for proposed developments shall not occur from December 1 through April 30. Under certain conditions, the last 60 days of this timing period may be suspended at the discretion of a BLM biologist. A formal request must be submitted to the BLM if an exception to this timing restriction is desired. *If feasible*, fence design should include the use of high-tensile wire.
2. To protect nesting grouse, pit construction activities and brush beating or vegetation removal/treatment for fencelines shall not occur from March 1 to June 30. Actual fence construction and/or demolition are permitted during this period. If sage grouse are observed in the affected area (i.e., there is a potential for direct or indirect disturbance), operations will immediately cease and a BLM biologist will be notified.
3. If schedules and time permit, it is recommended that fence and reservoir work should be conducted outside migratory bird breeding season (April - August).
4. The permittee will be responsible for fence construction using BLM supplied materials.
5. The permittee will be responsible for maintenance of the fence.
6. Metal or wire gates will be placed at all intersections with existing roads.
7. Gates will be left open when livestock are not present in the South Great Divide Allotment #04540 and LU #23 Allotment #04075.
8. Fence construction will not occur until a Form 4120-6, Cooperative Agreement for Range Improvements, is signed by the permittee or the authorized representative and the BLM. The Cooperative Agreement will include all of the above stipulations.
9. Fence construction will not occur until a Class III cultural resources survey is completed. If sensitive cultural resources are identified during the survey, mitigation may include moving the fence to avoid any identified cultural resources.

POND CONSTRUCTION

The pit pond would disturb approximately 1 acre or less. It would be constructed to BLM specifications by BLM personnel and/or the base property owner/permittee. The pond would capture up to approximately .5 acre foot of water collected as runoff. The dike for the pond would be approximately 100 feet in length and be no taller than 20 feet above the toe of the dam. The downhill side of the dike would be constructed at a 2:1 slope, while the uphill side of the

dike would be constructed at a 3:1 slope. The dam would have 4 feet of freeboard from the spillway to the top of the structure to account for settling.

The construction of this fence would be subject to the following stipulations:

1. To protect wintering elk, pit construction and site preparation shall not occur from December 1 through April 30. Under certain conditions, the last 60 days of this timing period may be suspended at the discretion of a BLM biologist. A formal request must be submitted to the BLM if an exception to this timing restriction is desired.
2. To protect nesting grouse, pit construction activities shall not occur from March 1 to June 30.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: No changes to the season of use would occur under this alternative. No new range improvements would be constructed. This alternative would not address the livestock drift problem between the South Great Divide and LU#23 Allotments. Livestock would continue to graze the allotments as permitted in the expiring permit and lease.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED:

No Grazing Alternative: This alternative would cancel the permit and lease on the allotments. As a result, livestock grazing would cease on the allotments. This alternative is eliminated from analysis in this EA because it would not conform to the RMP/ROD. The RMP/ROD identified livestock grazing as a suitable and appropriate uses on the allotments.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES

CRITICAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: Neither the South Great Divide nor the LU#23 Allotments lie in any EPA non-attainment areas for air quality.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Vehicular access on existing roads for livestock management activities would result in minimal releases of PM 10 (dust) emissions, but this would be minor and not affect the overall air quality of the area.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 10/10/07

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Rob Schmitzer, 10/24/07

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Grazing permit and lease renewals are undertakings under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Range improvements associated with the allotment (e.g., fences, spring improvements) are subject to compliance requirements under Section 106 and will undergo standard cultural resources inventory and evaluation procedures. During Section 106 review, a cultural resource assessment (Heritage #10.2.08) was completed for each allotment on October 22, 2007 by Robyn Watkins Morris, Little Snake Field Office Archaeologist. The assessment followed the procedures and guidance outlined in the 1980 National Programmatic Agreement Regarding the Livestock Grazing and Range Improvement Program, IM-WO-99-039, IM-CO-99-007, IM-CO-99-019, and IM-CO-01-026. The results of the assessment are summarized in the table below. Copies of the cultural resource assessments are in the Field Office archaeology files.

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

The table below is based on the allotment specific analysis developed for the allotments in this EA. The table shows known cultural resources, eligible and need data, and those that are anticipated to be in each allotment. Fieldwork for the cultural resources on the table will be carried out in current fiscal year or within the three year permit and lease renewal.

| Acres Inventoried at a Class III level ¹ | Acres NOT inventoried at a Class III Level | Percent-%-of Allotment inventoried at a Class III level | # of Cultural Resources known in allotment | High Potential of Historic Properties | Eligible or Need Data Sites – Known in Allotment (Site Numbers) | Estimated Sites for the Allotment ² (Total Number) | Management Recommendations (Add'l inventory required and historic properties to be visited) |
|---|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 23 | 2602 | .008% | 0 | Low-although the land was homesteaded | 0 | | Survey areas near known water courses |

(Note: ¹Acres are derived from GIS allotment maps and are BLM only acres or BLM and other acres in the allotment. See allotment specific analysis form. ²Estimates of site densities are based on known inventory data. Estimates represent a minimum figure which may be revised upwards based on future inventory findings.)

Three cultural resource inventories have been previously conducted within the allotments resulting in the complete coverage inventory of 23 acres and the recording of no cultural resources.

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

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: The direct impacts that occur where livestock concentrate include trampling, chiseling, and churning of site soils, cultural features, and cultural artifacts, artifact breakage, and impacts from standing, leaning, and rubbing against historic structures, above-ground cultural features, and rock art. Indirect impacts include soil erosion, gullyng, and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. Continued grazing may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties.

Cultural Review Process

Monitoring of the previous years range permit renewal/lease environmental documentation for FY98, FY99, FY00, FY01, FY02, FY03, FY04, and FY05 has been carried out. These reports represent three field seasons of evaluation work on the eligible and need data sites. The fieldwork conducted in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2005, identified impacts to some of the cultural resources being evaluated. This information is covered in the following reports:

Keesling, Henry S. and Gary D. Collins, Patrick C. Walker
 2000 Cultural Resource Evaluation of Known Eligible and Need Data Sites within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EAs FY98 and FY99. Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D., and Patrick C. Walker, Sam R. Johnson, Henry S. Keesling
2001 **Addendum to Cultural Resource Evaluation of Known Eligible and Need Data Sites within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EAs FY98 and FY99, Range Permit Renewal EAs FY00 and FY01.** Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D. and Ryan J. Nordstrom, Henry S. Keesling
2002 **The Second Addendum to The Cultural and Need Data Sites within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EAs FY98, FY99, FY00, FY01 and FY02.** Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D. and Henry S. Keesling
2003 **The Third Addendum to The Cultural and Need Data Sites Within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewals EAs FY98, FY99.** Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D. and Henry S. Keesling
2005 **The Fourth Addendum Range Permit Renewal FY04 and FY05 to The Cultural Resource Evaluation of Known Eligible and need Data Sites Within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EAs FY00, FY01, FY02, FY03.** BLM 10/27/05. Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy of file at that office.

BLM has committed to a ten year phased evaluation being conducted for cultural resources that takes into account identified livestock concentration areas and the cultural resources that are either eligible and/or need data and to carrying out mitigation on cultural resources that require this action. The phased monitor and mitigation approach will mitigate identified adverse effects, significant impacts and data loss, (NHPA Section 106, 36CFR800.9; Archaeological Resource Protection Act 1979; BLM/Colorado SHPO Protocol 1998; NEPA/FLPMA requirements) to an acceptable level.

The GIS mapping and evaluation effort will establish areas that have potential conflicts between livestock and prehistoric cultural resources. The GIS maps will provide a computer generated visual departure point for the proposed cultural fieldwork. GIS maps using USGS and BLM best available data, will be created showing springs, stream course features, riparian areas, and slopes that are greater than 30% slope within the allotment. Current understanding of prehistoric settlement and subsistence patterns will be applied to the GIS map review and used to establish prehistoric cultural areas. These potential livestock concentration areas will be evaluated in the field.

Other project specific Class III surveys initiated by the BLM, industry, or ranching will identify previously unrecorded cultural resources within these allotments. Newly identified cultural resources will need to be mitigated in relationship to the proposed project(s).

Further, these cultural resources will be incorporated into current and future grazing review efforts to be evaluated and monitored as necessary.

Mitigative Measures: Standard Stipulations for cultural resources are included in Standard Terms and Conditions for the Range Renewal Permit (Attachment 2).

Allotment Specific Stipulations for this EA:

1. GIS maps based upon stream course features and springs from the 7.5 minute USGS maps and BLM best available riparian/spring data in this office will be used to initially establish evaluation areas for livestock concentrations. Current archaeological understanding of settlement and subsistence patterns for prehistoric cultural resources will be applied to these maps. Identified livestock concentration areas will be field evaluated. Those areas with no livestock impacts but with potential for cultural resources will undergo the same Class III survey discussed below. This survey will be conducted documenting archaeological resources which may be impacted if grazing practices change in the future. Identified concentration areas that exhibit livestock impacts will have the following cultural surveys:

Springs, riparian areas, streams or creeks, and intermittent drainage will have a Class III survey in the area of concentration that includes an additional 50 feet around the impacted area. Identified cultural resources will be recorded to include the total site area and mitigation developed.

Springs will have a Class III survey in the area of concentration and include an additional 50 feet around the impacted area. Identified cultural resources will be recorded to include the total site area and mitigation developed.

2. GIS maps showing slope potential, 30% or greater, where rock art and rock shelters are predicted to occur, will be used to initially establish evaluation areas for Class III survey. These areas will be evaluated for livestock concentrations. Identified concentration areas will have the following cultural surveys performed:

Potential rock shelters, rock art areas will be evaluated to see if cultural materials are present. When cultural resources are identified the site will be recorded and appropriate mitigation will be developed.

3. Previously identified sites, table above, and new sites recorded and evaluated as eligible and/or need data during other project specific Class III survey will need to be evaluated as well. Initial recording of new sites and re-evaluation of the known sites will establish current condition of the resource and help in developing a monitoring plan for all sites. Some sites will have to be monitored more often than others. Sites that are impacted by grazing activities will need further monitoring, physical protection or other mitigative measures developed.

4. Site monitoring plans, other mitigation plans, will be developed and provided to the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer in accordance with the Protocol (1998) and subsequent programmatic agreements regarding grazing permit renewals.

The Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) agreed with the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado, (BLM) that the BLM could issue its Range Renewal Permits with the proposed Cultural Resource Management actions, monitoring known eligible and need data sites and conducting Class III and/or modified Class III surveys on selected areas of BLM lands within in a ten year time frame (Cultural Matrix Team Meeting 26 January 1999, Colorado BLM State Office).

The Little Snake Field Office will initiate the monitoring of known eligible and need data sites the first field season following the issuing of the permit if possible. This survey will be based upon an accepted, BLM and SHPO, research design that will establish criteria for evaluation of the sites for livestock impacts and any needed mitigation and future monitoring needs.

Name of Specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 10/22/07

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in an area of isolated dwellings. Ranching, farming and oil and gas development are the primary economic activities.

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

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of Specialist and Date: Mike Andrews, 10/18/07

FLOOD PLAINS

Affected Environment: A short segment of North Fork Big Gulch and its small floodplain cross the southeast corner of the South Great Divide Allotment. Two two-track road crossings occur within this short segment of this gulch. A small wetland system occurs on the upstream end, continuing downstream from private lands. Water ponds in areas of trailing and it flows a short distance before disappearing in the sandy substratum. A headcut is present downstream of the wetland system and most of the soil resource downstream has been scoured and eroded. Small remnant areas of floodplain soils occur as clumps of vegetated soils. Western wheatgrass, bluegrass and Baltic rush are trying to establish from deposited sands. The floodplain areas are generally not distinguishable from the sandy channel. Trailing by cows and deer and some

grazing is occurring within the sandy drainage. Some vehicle tracks are also present for a short distance from one of the road crossings. Many of the tributary drainages are actively eroding.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Soil moisture, especially in the early period beginning May 1st would be higher in the floodplain areas and the soils would be more susceptible to hoof shear and compaction; soils on the upstream portion of the gulch and isolated clumps downstream would be most susceptible. The sandy substratum which comprises most of the soils within the gulch is less affected by compaction, but hoof shear would occur under all moisture regimes. Hoof shear and trampling on the sandy soils would reduce the potential for vegetation establishment and floodplain stability.

The floodplain areas do not have developments associated with them, except for the allotment fencing which crosses the floodplain twice. No threat to human safety, life, welfare and property would result from renewing the grazing permit and lease under any of the alternatives.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Rotating spring use between the two allotments would reduce spring grazing impacts on floodplain soils and would help increase the stability of the floodplain area associated with North Fork Big Gulch. The establishment of an upland pond in the vicinity of the North Fork Big Gulch would also decrease trailing within the gulch.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: No requirements for a grazing rotation or alternating spring use would be attached to the permit and lease. Although this could still be implemented by the livestock operator it would be at his or her discretion. Excessive trailing within the floodplain areas could potentially occur with livestock use in the South Great Divide Allotment from May 1 to October 1. This likely would occur because of the water source in the upper end of the gulch which provides a water source in this portion of the allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 11/05/07

INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Invasive, nonnative species occur within the allotments. Downy brome (cheatgrass) and yellow alyssum were common throughout both allotments. Other species of invasive and/or noxious weeds are not known to be a problem in this area, but could be introduced from other areas. Noxious weeds typically establish themselves in disturbed and high traffic areas. Any surface disturbance activity such as road construction and maintenance, grazing near salt licks and riparian areas, or fence building can create a potential environment for noxious weeds. Noxious weed seeds are spread by vehicles, wind, livestock, birds, campers, hikers, wildlife and waterways.

The BLM is in cooperation with the Moffat County Cooperative Weed Management program to employ the principals of Integrated Pest Management to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: The adverse impact of increased invasive and/or noxious weed establishment is very similar under either of the alternatives. Vehicular access to public lands for dispersed recreation and grazing operations, livestock and wildlife movement, as well as wind and water, can cause weeds to spread into new areas. Surface disturbance due to livestock concentration and human activities associated with grazing operations can also increase weed presence. Land practices and land uses by the livestock operator and their weed control efforts would largely determine the identification and potential occurrence of weeds within the allotment. The Proposed Action which provides improved grazing practices would enhance the vigor of desirable plant species, reducing the potential for invasive species to be introduced and slowing their rate of spread.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 10/30/07

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: This locality provides potential nesting, foraging, and/or roosting habitat for the following USFWS 2002 Birds of Conservation Concern: golden eagle, northern harrier, vesper sparrow, Brewer's sparrow, and sage sparrow. Although several of these species are known to breed in the area, GIS data for specific nest locations are currently unavailable.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Livestock grazing can alter vegetation structure, composition, and function. Effects on migratory birds are dependent on the species of interest and may be adverse or beneficial depending on grazing timing, frequency, and intensity. Birds may be displaced as a result of fence and pit construction and/or grazing; and trampling of nests, eggs, or young could occur. Grazing would occur during breeding season for most of these species. However, it is unlikely that the proposed action would influence migratory bird populations on a landscape level. In the long term, habitat value for migratory birds in these allotments should improve as a result of fence and water developments, a deferred rotation grazing system, and more even cattle distribution.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Currently, poor cattle distribution is producing fair wildlife habitat with weedy patches and poor production of key forage species. A downward trend would likely continue under current grazing management.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Charlie Sharp, 10/25/07

NATIVE AMERICAN CONCERNS

A letter was sent to the Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council, and the Eastern Shoshone on July 11, 2007. The letter listed the

grazing allotments up for renewal in FY07 and included a map of the areas. A follow up phone call was performed on August 14, 2007. No comments were received (Letter on file at the Little Snake Field Office). This project requires no additional notification.

Name of Specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 10/22/07

PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS

Affected Environment: Not present in either allotment.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 11/02/07

T&E SPECIES - SENSITIVE PLANTS

Affected Environment: There are no BLM sensitive plant species present on either the South Great Divide or the LU#23 Allotments.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 10/17/07

T&E AND SENSITIVE ANIMALS

Affected Environment: No federal status animal species or habitat occurs within either allotment under consideration. The area provides breeding and nesting habitat for greater sage grouse. One lek occurs in the Upper Dressler Gulch allotment (the allotment directly north of South Great Divide). Habitat quality is fair for the greater sage grouse.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Federal status species and their habitat would not be affected by this action. Livestock grazing can alter vegetation structure, composition, and function. Effects on wildlife are dependent on the species of interest and may be adverse or beneficial depending on grazing timing, frequency, and intensity. Potential impacts include habitat degradation, fragmentation, and loss; individual displacement; and reduced fitness. Such impacts are more significant during breeding and wintering seasons. In the long term, habitat value for sage-grouse in these allotments would improve as a result of fence and water developments, a deferred rotation grazing system, and more even cattle distribution.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Federal status species and their habitat would not be affected by this action. Poor cattle distribution under current grazing management is

producing fair wildlife habitat with weedy patches and poor production of key forage species. Wildlife habitat would continue to be maintained in fair condition.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Charlie Sharp, 10/25/07

T&E SPECIES – PLANTS

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered plant species present on either the South Great Divide or the LU#23 Allotments.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 10/17/07

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous materials present on either the South Great Divide or the LU#23 Allotments.

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

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 10/16/07

WATER QUALITY - GROUND

Affected Environment: The surface formation is the Tertiary Wasatch.

Environmental Consequences: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Jennifer Maiolo, 10/17/07

WATER QUALITY - SURFACE

Affected Environment: Snowmelt and other runoff water flows south to the North Fork Big Gulch and an unnamed ephemeral tributary to Lay Creek. The North Fork Big Gulch is an ephemeral tributary to Big Gulch and Big Gulch is an intermittent tributary of Lay Creek. Lay Creek is an intermittent tributary of the Yampa River. Big Gulch needs to have water quality that will support the classified uses of Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation 1a and Agriculture. Lay Creek needs to have water quality that will support the classified uses of Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation 2 and Agriculture. The segment of the Yampa River beginning just above the confluence of Lay Creek needs to have water quality that will support Aquatic Life Warm 1, Recreation 1a, Water Supply and Agriculture.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Slight beneficial impacts to water quality would result from implementation of the Proposed Action. Rotating spring use between the two allotments would allow the key forage plants and their root systems to improve in vigor which would result in more production and soil cover. The proposed fence relocation would eliminate the drift of cows between the two allotments. Grazing distribution would be improved with the establishment of an additional upland water source. Benefits to water quality would occur through the improvement of forage resources that would occur under this alternative on both allotments.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The water quality of the affected stream segments would continue to support the classified beneficial uses of the water.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 11/05/07

WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

Affected Environment: No riparian systems are present in the LU#23 Allotment. The South Great Divide Allotment does have a few small riparian systems that have not been formally assessed due to the marginality of the hydrologic component. The more important riparian areas within the allotment are discussed below.

BLM Spring No. 50-17 was inventoried in 1981 as a spring fed pond, but it was determined to be non-riparian in 2002. On July 26, 2005 the reservoir was fairly full but no area of seep was observed outside the present water level. No riparian vegetation lined the pond nor was any partially submerged within it, indicating that this pond had water fluctuations beyond the range of plant tolerance.

BLM Spring No. 50-06 was visited on July 26, 2005 by an inter-disciplinary team and it was determined to be supporting a very marginal lentic riparian system. It is located in the bottom of a deeply entrenched ephemeral drainage having characteristics of a gully, with active erosion. A small area of Nebraska sedge was present in the drainage bottom. A small seep was observed on

the gully slope, supporting Baltic rush. Two very small areas of Nebraska sedge were present downstream. It was considered to be too marginal for rating.

BLM Spring No.50-16, evaluated in 1999, was a seep emerging from the side of a gully near the headcut in close proximity to an overflowing livestock trough (windmill water source). It only supported Baltic rush, which was heavily trampled by cattle. This seep was looked at in 2005 and again in 2006 when it was dry and not supporting any riparian vegetation. Upon a re-inspection of this area on November 2, 2007 conditions had not changed in the location of BLM Spring No.50-16, but a few hundred feet down the gully a new spring was found having much of the same characteristics as BLM Spring No. 50-06. It occurs in a deep gully with active erosion. Tiny amounts of Nebraska sedge were present and had been grazed.

An additional lentic riparian system was also found on November 2, 2007 in the upper end of the North Fork Big Gulch on public lands in the SE corner of the South Great Divide Allotment. A fragmented system occurs throughout the length of the gulch on the public lands. The upper end was wetter and vegetation consisted of a monoculture of Nebraska sedge where the soils and vegetation were still withstanding runoff in the gulch, but trailing by cows and wildlife was apparent. A small headcut a few hundred feet downstream defines the extent of the continuous nature of the soil resource, channelization begins and the system is only expressed further downstream by clumps of soil held together by Baltic rush within a sandy wash drainage. Because of the trailing observed in the wetter portion of this riparian system and the headcut directly below it, this system would be considered to be functioning at risk.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Two of the riparian systems located within the South Great Divide Allotment (BLM Spring No. 50-06 and the new spring) are found in actively eroding gullies and any impairment caused by livestock is uncertain due to the limited extent of the water source and vegetation supported by it. The other system within the upper end of the North Fork Big Hole Gulch and remnants of the riparian system downstream remaining as isolated clumps of soil are also being impacted by runoff flow, but trailing by livestock and wildlife (deer) is also apparent. The grazing rotation that would be required with implementation of the Proposed Action would provide early season rest every other year when Nebraska sedge is more palatable. Establishment of the pit pond in this portion of the allotment should also reduce trailing to the water that is present. Less grazing pressure on the riparian plants and less trailing to water would be expected under this alternative.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: No improvement in the condition of the riparian systems within the South Great Divide Allotment would occur under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 11/13/07

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Rob Schmitzer, 10/17/07

WILDERNESS, WSAs

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Rob Schmitzer, 10/24/07

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

RANGE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The season of use authorized on the South Great Divide Allotment is currently 5/1 through 10/01 for 79 cattle at 43% PL for a total of 172 AUMs. The LU #23 Allotment is permitted for 4 cattle from 5/01-10/01 at 100% PL for a total of 20 AUMs. The permittee voluntarily rotates spring turnout between the South Great Divide and LU #23 Allotments. The poor fence location has resulted in livestock being in the wrong allotment at the wrong time, which has caused increased livestock supervision and herding for the operator. There is no water source in the southeastern portion of the South Great Divide Allotment which has resulted in poor livestock distribution around the existing water sources in the northern and southwestern portions of the allotment.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: A grazing system would be implemented which would authorize early turnout in the South Great Divide Allotment with cattle moving into the LU#23 Allotment later in the summer in Year 1 and the reverse in Year 2: cattle would be turned out into the LU#23 Allotment first in the spring. This is the system the permittee has been voluntarily following for several years, but through this permit/lease renewal, the voluntary system would become required as a term and condition of the permit and lease. This may result in reduced flexibility for the livestock operator, especially in drought years when water may be limited in one allotment or the other; however the BLM grazing regulations allow for temporary changes in use for a variety of reasons, so this potential impact can be mitigated through adaptive management, timely cooperation and communication with the BLM. The relocation of the fence between the two allotments would result in livestock remaining in the correct allotment at the correct time. The construction of a new water source in the southeastern portion of the South Great Divide Allotment would improve livestock distribution throughout the allotment.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The livestock operator could continue to rotate his livestock between the allotments and his private land, using any pasture at any time between 5/01 and 10/01. Without the relocation of the fence, livestock would continue to drift between the two allotments making any type of rotational grazing system ineffective. A new water source would not be developed in the southern portion of the South Great Divide Allotment; livestock distribution would not be improved.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of Specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 12/05/07

UPLAND VEGETATION

Affected Environment: The dominant range sites within the South Great Divide and the LU#23 Allotments are rolling loam and deep loam. These range sites typically support mixed sagebrush- antelope bitterbrush and grass communities. Shrubs within the South Great Divide and the LU#23 Allotments consist of Wyoming big sagebrush, bitterbrush, serviceberry, green rabbitbrush, and Oregon grape. Forbs include arrowleaf balsamroot, wild onion, sego lily, lupine, and yarrow. Perennial grasses consist of bluebunch wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, prairie junegrass, Sandberg bluegrass, streambank wheatgrass, needleandthread, and basin wildrye.

As stated previously, utilization data have been collected in the South Great Divide Allotment since 1987. Although utilization has exceeded the standard objective of 50% on occasion, the average utilization over the past 20 years has been 55%, which is acceptable for a summer/fall use period. The degree of allowable use should generally be 50% or less, depending on the amount of precipitation received during the year.

The number of user-created roads within the allotment is causing a substantial amount of vegetation loss and surface disturbance.

Environmental Consequences: Spring use by cattle in each allotment, every other year would result in the greatest use occurring on new growth of perennial grasses. Repeated use of perennial grasses during the critical spring growth period can cause suppression of this component of the plant community if utilized grasses, bitten repeatedly, are not allowed to regrow. Deferment of use until July 15 every other year along with the creation of new water sources as proposed would allow better distribution of livestock and allow perennial grasses time to recover vigor and replenish root reserves before grazing begins after a year of early use.

Direct impacts of fence construction would be localized disturbance to vegetation. The shrub cover is not particularly dense in the area of the proposed fence relocation, therefore, brush beating is not anticipated, however, the vegetation would be crushed due to vehicular traffic along the new fence route during construction. This disturbance would be highly localized and minimal within the larger plant communities and the vegetation would recover over time. The disturbance of vegetation associated with fence construction could increase the presence of non-native species. There is the potential for construction activities to increase and/or introduce non-

native species into new areas, but it is unlikely that motorized vehicle use along the fence line would increase non-native species to a level greater than what is already present.

The construction of a new pit reservoir would result in the removal of less than one acre of vegetation. Livestock would congregate around the new water source and vegetation would be trampled in the immediate vicinity of the new pond. Surrounding vegetation, up to a ¼ mile around the pond, would experience an increase in utilization. Under proper stocking levels, however, utilization throughout the pasture would be 50% or less.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The season of use would not be deferred on a rotational basis in each allotment. This could result in native plants that are less vigorous and lessen the ability of native species to compete with non-native species.

The fence would not be relocated around the pit reservoir and the new pit reservoir would not be constructed so there would be no direct or indirect impacts of construction. Livestock would continue to drift between the allotments.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 10/30/07

SOILS

Affected Environment: The primary soils within these allotments are: Berlake-Maysprings complex, 3 to 12 percent slopes; Berlake-Taffom-Gretdivid complex, 10 to 20 percent slopes; Styers-Ironsprings-Maysprings complex, 10 to 20 percent slopes; and Forelle-Evanot complex, 1 to 12 percent slopes. Most of these soil types were formed from alluvium, colluvium and residuum from sandstone. The Styers soil was derived from residuum from shale. The Forelle-Evanot complex soils are derived from loess. Most of the soils within these two allotments have moderate permeability, low water holding capacities and moderate runoff rates. The Forelle-Evanot complex soils have high water holding capacities, but represent the least amount of area within the allotments. The Styers Soil has a very high runoff rate and the Evanot soil has a high runoff rate. The Rolling Loam Range Site is the primary site classified on these allotments followed by the Sandy Land and Clay Pan Range Sites.

Numerous roads are present within the relatively small area of the South Great Divide Allotment. The greatest amount of use on these roads is occurring as a result of hunting in the fall, although dispersed recreation activity throughout the year cannot be completely discounted due to the close proximity of this public land tract to Craig. Many of the roads occur on moderate slopes and have deep ruts and areas of mud puddles. These road conditions have led to users driving on the adjacent vegetated surface and widening the road disturbance.

Current data indicate that overall, soils are stable and without excessive erosion.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Soil compaction and depleted soil cover can occur as a result of livestock grazing. These effects may occur on areas of concentrated use with either alternative, but the majority of the affected lands within the allotments have adequate plant and litter cover based on the proper utilization of forage resources. The majority of the soils has a low water holding capacity and do not have the capability to produce high amounts of forage unless climatic conditions in the spring and early summer are favorable.

Biological soil crusts do not typically develop into complex diverse crust communities within grazing allotments. Most of the biological soil crusts found within grazing allotments occurs below the edge of the brush canopy, where trampling effects are lessened and sunlight is available. It is not anticipated that loss or gain of biological soil crusts would occur as a result of implementing either of the alternatives.

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

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The grazing rotation and reduced grazing period that would be required with implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would increase plant cover and below ground biomass of the plant communities. Deferred grazing use would allow the plant community, especially the grasses, to set seed and recruit new plants. Reducing the grazing period would generally allow more time for natural processes to occur which would benefit the hydrologic regime and productivity of the soils. Establishment of an additional water source would improve the overall distribution of grazing within the allotment. All of these benefits provided in the Proposed Action Alternative would allow the soil resource to improve properties associated with infiltration and runoff.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The season of use would not be deferred on a rotational basis in each allotment. This could result soil compaction and depleted soil cover. Without the additional water source, cattle trailing would continue between forage in the southern portion of the allotment and the water source in the northern end of the allotment. This trail may lead to increased erosion.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of Specialist and Date: Ole Olsen, 11/10/07

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC

Affected Environment: Aquatic habitat in this allotment is limited to several lentic springs and ponds. These systems may support important invertebrates, amphibians, and reptiles.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Potential impacts from livestock grazing include trampling of individuals or nests/eggs; water displacement, sedimentation, and nitrification; and removal or degradation of shading vegetation. However, habitat value for

aquatic species in these allotments should improve as a result of fence and water developments, a deferred rotation grazing system, and more even cattle distribution. Neither alternative would have measurable impacts on aquatic wildlife.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Poor cattle distribution under current grazing management is producing fair terrestrial habitat. A downward trend would likely continue under the current grazing system. It is reasonable to assume similar conditions and trends would also be seen in nearby aquatic habitats.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of Specialist and Date: Charlie Sharp, 10/25/07

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL

Affected Environment: The area provides habitat for a variety of species including mule deer, elk, small mammals, birds, and reptiles. Elk severe winter range occurs throughout these allotments.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Livestock may compete for forage with wild ungulates, particularly elk. Uneven grazing distribution may degrade habitat and forage bases in localized areas. The proposed fence design is in compliance with BLM standards and should provide for the movement of big game. In some cases, however, fences may impede individual elk or deer movement through the area. Potential impacts for other species include habitat degradation, fragmentation, and loss; individual displacement; and reduced fitness. Such impacts are more significant during breeding or wintering seasons. In the long term, habitat value for terrestrial species in these allotments should improve as a result of fence and water developments, a deferred rotation grazing system, and more even cattle distribution.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Poor cattle distribution under current grazing management is producing fair wildlife habitat with weedy patches and poor production of key forage species. A downward trend would likely continue under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Charlie Sharp, 10/25/07

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

| Non-Critical Element | NA or Not Present | Applicable or Present, No Impact | Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Fluid Minerals | | JAM 10/16/07 | |
| Forest Management | KLM 10/12/07 | | |
| Hydrology/Ground | | JM 10/17/07 | |
| Hydrology/Surface | | | OO 11/10/07 |
| Paleontology | | JAM 10/17/07 | |
| Range Management | | | KLM 10/12/07 |
| Realty Authorizations | MAA 10/18/07 | | |
| Recreation/Travel Mgmt | | RS 10/24/07 | |
| Socio-Economics | | MAA 10/18/07 | |
| Solid Minerals | JAM 10/16/07 | | |
| Visual Resources | | RS 10/16/07 | |
| Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt | KLM 10/16/07 | | |

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

STANDARDS

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD: The South Great Divide and LU #23 Allotments currently provide productive habitat for a variety of wildlife species. This allotment was assessed in 2006 and was found to be meeting this standard for rangeland health. The Proposed Action would not result in diminished animal production, diversity, or resilience. This standard would be met under the Proposed Action.

Based on the 2006 assessment, this standard would continue to be met under the no action alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Charlie Sharp, 10/25/07

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal)

STANDARD: The Proposed Action would not appreciably impact the stability or growth of sage-grouse populations. This standard would be met under the Proposed Action.

Based on the 2006 assessment, this standard would continue to be met under the no action alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Charlie Sharp, 10/25/07

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD: This allotment is not currently meeting this standard due localized areas that contain inappropriately high amounts of cheatgrass, green rabbitbrush and arrowleaf balsamroot. Although some of these species are not native and/or perennial, they do provide canopy and litter cover that aid in the prevention of soil erosion. The implementation of a deferred rotation between the two allotments would allow for increased plant cover and vigor. Improvement in the native plant community would reduce the potential of cheatgrass spreading further through the allotment. Disturbance caused as a result of the pond construction and fence relocation would be highly localized and would not jeopardize the larger plant community. These projects would help with the distribution of cattle and encourage even utilization across the allotment. Implementation of the Proposed Action would make progress towards meeting this standard.

The No Action Alternative would most likely lead to no improvement in either allotment. Current livestock management practices have lead to localized areas of overutilization and a plant community that is lacking in vigor and appropriate species composition.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 11/19/07

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant)

STANDARD: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species on either the South Great Divide or the LU#23 Allotments. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 10/17/07

RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD: The riparian standard for healthy rangelands would be met with the implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative. Rotating early spring use and the establishment of an upland water source in close proximity to the wetland system within the North Fork Big Hole Gulch should decrease trailing and grazing by livestock on the wetland system within the gulch.

Selection of the No Action Alternative would allow grazing to continue in the South Great Divide Allotment from May 1 to October 1. If this long period of grazing use actually occurs the riparian systems would continue to be functioning at risk. Livestock pressure on the wetland system within the North Fork Big Hole Gulch would cause trailing impacts that reduces the

capability of the riparian system to withstand runoff within the gulch. Erosion of the riparian soils would continue under the No Action Alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 11/13/07

WATER QUALITY STANDARD: The water quality standard for healthy rangelands would be met with implementation of either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives. Runoff from snowmelt and summer storms drains from the South Great Divide and LU#23 Allotments into stream segments that are presently supporting classified uses. No stream segments are listed as impaired.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 11/02/07

UPLAND SOILS STANDARD: The upland soil standard for healthy rangelands would be met with the implementation of either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives. The soils within these allotments are stable. However, improved soil health would occur with the reduced grazing periods and alternating use during the growing season which would be implemented with the Proposed Action. The creation of a new water source in the southern portion of the allotment would result in better livestock distribution which would benefit the soil and vegetation resources.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 11/10/07

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, Winfield Pankey (base property owner).

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1- South Great Divide Allotment Map
- Attachment 1a – LU#23 Allotment Map
- Attachment 2- Standard and Common Terms and Conditions
- Attachment 3 – Proposed range improvements map
- Attachment 4 – BLM fence standards
- Attachment 5 – BLM Water Control Structure Design

SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:

DATE SIGNED:

SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:

DATE SIGNED:

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in EA CO-100-2007-091 and all other available information, I have determined that the proposal and the alternatives analyzed do not constitute a major Federal action that would adversely impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is unnecessary and will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following factors:

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

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

DATE SIGNED:

Attachment 2
EA CO-100-2007-091
Standard Terms and Conditions

- 1) Grazing permit or lease terms and conditions and the fees charged for grazing use are established in accordance with 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. Non compliance by the permittee/lessee with rules and regulations;
 - b. Loss of control by the permittee/lessee of all or 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 allotments(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 of 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 due 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 the 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 to be 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 may be modified if additional information indicates that revision is necessary to conform with 43 CFR 4180.