

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Royal Gorge Field Office  
3028 E. Main Street  
Cañon City, CO 81212**

## **Environmental Assessment**

**Grazing Permit Renewal for the Red Gulch #05188 and Mud Gulch**

DOI-BLM-CO-200-2012-0021 EA

February, 2012



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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: Grazing Authorization #050369

PROJECT TITLE: Range-Grazing Permit Renewal for the Red Gulch #05188 and Mud Gulch #05192 Allotments

PLANNING UNIT: Waugh Mtn. / Tallahassee Creek Subregion #6

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

<u>ALLOTMENT</u>	<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>LEGAL</u>	<u>PUBLIC ACRES</u>
Mud Gulch	Fremont	T48N, R12E, S. 11-14	1,169
Red Gulch	Fremont	T49N, R11E, S. 26 & 35 T48N, R11E, S. 1 & 2 T49N, R12E, S. 30 & 31 T48N, R12E, S. 6	3,430

APPLICANT: Warren Ross

### 1.2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND: This EA has been prepared by the BLM to analyze the renewal of permitted authorization to graze livestock on the Red Gulch and Mud Gulch Allotments. In addition, the applicant (permittee) requests a change in season of use on the Red Gulch Allotment. Both allotments were previously analyzed for permit renewal under CO-200-2006-0017 EA.

Grazing use on both allotments are currently scheduled as follows:

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Grazing Period</u>		<u>% Public Land</u>	<u>AUMs</u>
			<u>Begin</u>	<u>End</u>		
<b>Red Gulch</b>	73	Cattle	11/15	03/15	100%	244
<b>Mud Gulch</b>						
Year 1						
Lower Pasture	20	Cattle	5/1	6/1	83%	21
Upper Pasture	20	Cattle	6/8	7/1	100%	16
Year 2						
Upper Pasture	20	Cattle	5/1	5/24	100%	16
Lower Pasture	20	Cattle	5/25	7/1	83%	21

The current permit includes the following terms and conditions:

## Red Gulch

1. Maximum utilization levels on the allotment will be 80% of the previous years annual forage growth on desirable grass species. Willows and cottonwoods will be limited to 60% of the previous year's annual leader growth. If grazing use reaches these levels, livestock will be removed.
2. Emergency feeding and supplemental feeding will be allowed if conditions warrant. Supplements may include weed free high protein hay.
3. Water hauling to temporary tanks, for the purpose of improved livestock distribution will be allowed in areas agreed to by BLM.
4. The permittee will have the flexibility to adjust grazing dates by +/- 2 weeks as long as total grazing use does not exceed the estimated carrying capacity of the public land. If livestock drift off of the allotment onto uncontrolled private land, the permittee must remove livestock within 2 days of notice.
5. The permittee and all persons associated with the allotment operations shall not damage, destroy, remove, move or disturb any objects or sites of cultural, paleontological or scientific value, such as historic or prehistoric resources, graves or grave markers, human remains, ruins, cabins, rock art, fossils and artifacts. If in connection with allotment operations under this authorization any of the above resources are encountered, the permittee shall protect such resources and immediately notify the BLM authorized officer of the findings.

## Mud Gulch

1. The Mud Gulch Allotment supports 99 AUMs, 37 are scheduled and 62 not scheduled. The unscheduled AUMs are available, but require nepa review if requested for use.
2. Grazing use will not exceed 40% utilization on the upland and riparian species. If grazing use reaches these levels, livestock will be removed.
3. The permittee and all persons associated with the allotment operations shall not damage, destroy, remove, move or disturb any objects or sites of cultural, paleontological or scientific value, such as historic or prehistoric resources, graves or grave markers, human remains, ruins, cabins, rock art, fossils and artifacts. If in connection with allotment operations under this authorization any of the above resources are encountered, the permittee shall protect such resources and immediately notify the BLM authorized officer of the findings.

The total amount of authorized livestock grazing on the allotments is currently:

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Authorized Livestock Grazing</u>		
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Suspended</u>	<u>Active</u>
Red Gulch # 05188	246	0	246
Mud Gulch #05192	37	0	37

Review of grazing use on these allotments included an assessment of the "health" of public land within these allotments in relation to Standards for Public Land Health and conformance with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management in Colorado. "On the ground" efforts to gather information necessary to assess the land health on both the Red Gulch and Mud Gulch Allotments occurred in 2002. The interdisciplinary land health evaluations indicated that the area is meeting applicable standards for public land health. In 2010, the interdisciplinary team reviewed these two allotments again and no issues or concerns were brought forward. The interdisciplinary team determined that the previous health assessments are still valid for this renewal.

The developed springs located on both allotments have been unreliable or not producing any water since 2002.

The applicant (grazing permittee) wishes to defer grazing use on the Red Gulch Allotment to late winter and early spring. This change would coincide with use on the Mud Gulch Allotment. In addition, the Colorado State Land Board and applicant (grazing permittee) is planning on drilling a new well within the Dirty Gulch State Section located in the Red Gulch Allotment. The new well will be utilized to water livestock and promote better livestock management on the allotment.

### **1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED**

The purpose of the proposed action is to complete a site-specific evaluation of grazing that provides information to be analyzed by the BLM in conformance with the implementing regulations for the NEPA (40 CFR Part 1500), FLPMA, and Public Law 106-113 section 325 to determine whether changes are necessary to current management of the allotment to be in accordance with 43 CFR 4100 and consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act. The purpose of the action is also to ensure that all authorizations implement provisions of, and is in conformance with, the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan (5-13-1996), and in conformance with the Secretary Approved Rangeland Health Standards for Colorado. The action is needed to respond to the expiring permit and new grazing use on BLM land.

1. This analysis is needed to consider the impacts of livestock grazing use on public lands within the respective allotments to determine if they are meeting the Standards for Public Land Health and are within the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing in Colorado.
2. Secondly, the proposed action is needed to ensure that grazing use continues to help the allotments meet Standards for Public Land Health and future grazing use on the allotment is consistent with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management in Colorado.

### **1.4 DECISION TO BE MADE**

The BLM will decide whether to approve the proposed Grazing Permit Renewal project based on the analysis contained in this Environmental Assessment (EA). This EA will analyze impacts associated with renewing the ten year grazing permit with additional modifications to season of use and the installation of new range improvements. The BLM may choose to: a) accept the project as proposed, b) accept the project with modifications/mitigation, c) accept an alternative to the proposed action, or d) not authorize the project at this time. The finding associated with this EA may not constitute the final approval for the proposed action.

### **1.5 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW**

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: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 05/13/96

Decision Number/Page: 6-4, 6-6, C-30, C-31, C-35, C-36, C-38, C-41, C-42, C-43, C-44

Decision Language:

- 6-4: Grazing is authorized on 70 allotments
- 6-6: 22 allotments are categorized as Improve
- C-30: Base livestock grazing management on the 1981 Royal Gorge Area Grazing EIS.
- C-31: Authorize adjustments in the actual AUMs when warranted by weather and other conditions.
- C-35: Conduct EIS on allotments with conflicts, and adjust stocking rates and season of use accordingly.
- C-36: Grazing systems will be implemented by an IAP. Plans will be prepared in consultation, cooperation, and coordination with the permittee and other affected parties to meet multiple use objectives.
- C-38: Continue to construct range improvement projects on an as needed basis. Complete NEPA documentation on each project as needed.
- C-41: Adjustments in grazing use will be made by allotment on a case by case basis. Changes in number of livestock, season of use, duration of use, and class of livestock can be made based on monitoring studies and inventory data.
- C-42: The grazing treatment on Improve category allotments will require a rest standard to allow a time period for forage species to recover from the last grazing period before the plants are regrazed.
- C-43: Maximum allowable utilization on allotments with dormant season grazing will be 80% annual production on grass species and 60% of annual production on shrub species.
- C-44: On single pasture allotments with season long spring-summer grazing, utilization will be held to the 40 – 60% range on forage species in lieu of a rest standard. This requirement will be on high elevation allotments where deferment or dormant season use is impracticable because of deep snow and fencing the allotment into smaller units is uneconomical.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

Because standards exist for each of these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in Chapter 3 of this document.

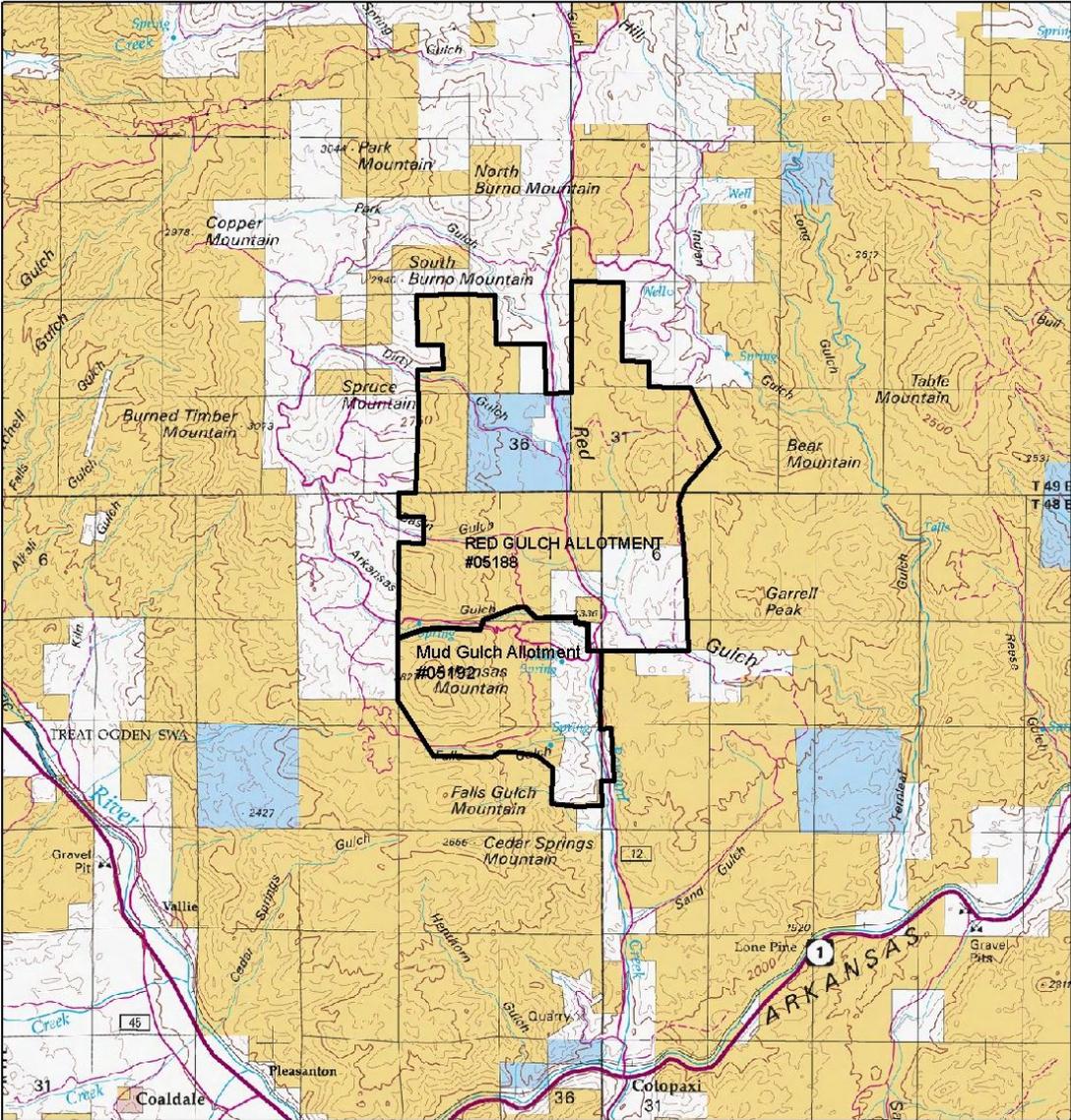
## **1.6 SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES**

**1.5.1 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.

Persons/Public/Agencies Consulted: Scoping, by posting this project on the Royal Gorge Field Office website, was the primary mechanism used by the BLM to initially identify issues. In addition to the website, agencies from the Colorado State Land Board and Colorado Parks and Wildlife were consulted. No comments or issues were received.

Issues Identified: No issues were identified during the scoping process.

# CHAPTER 2 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES



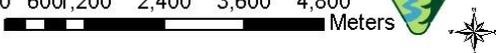
**Legend**

- Allotment Boundary
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- US Forest Service
- Private

**Red Gulch and Mud Gulch Allotment TPR**  
DOI-BLM-CO-200-2012-0021EA

**NOTE TO MAP USERS**  
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0 600 1,200 2,400 3,600 4,800 Meters





## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information on the Proposed Action and Alternatives.

## **2.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

### **2.2.1 Proposed Action**

The Proposed Action:

1. Changes the grazing season of use on the Red Gulch Allotment with design features to mitigate potential impacts and renews the permit for ten years with these changes.
2. Renews the permit on the [Mud Gulch Allotment](#) as currently scheduled (see background section) for ten years.

#### [Red Gulch Allotment #05188](#)

Under the Proposed Action alternative, the [Red Gulch Allotment #05188](#) would be scheduled as follows:

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Grazing Period</u>		<u>% Public</u>	<u>AUMs</u>
			<u>Begin</u>	<u>End</u>	<u>Land</u>	
<b>Red Gulch</b>	73	Cattle	<b>01/01</b>	<b>– 04/30</b>	100%	244

The following terms and conditions would be included in the grazing permit:

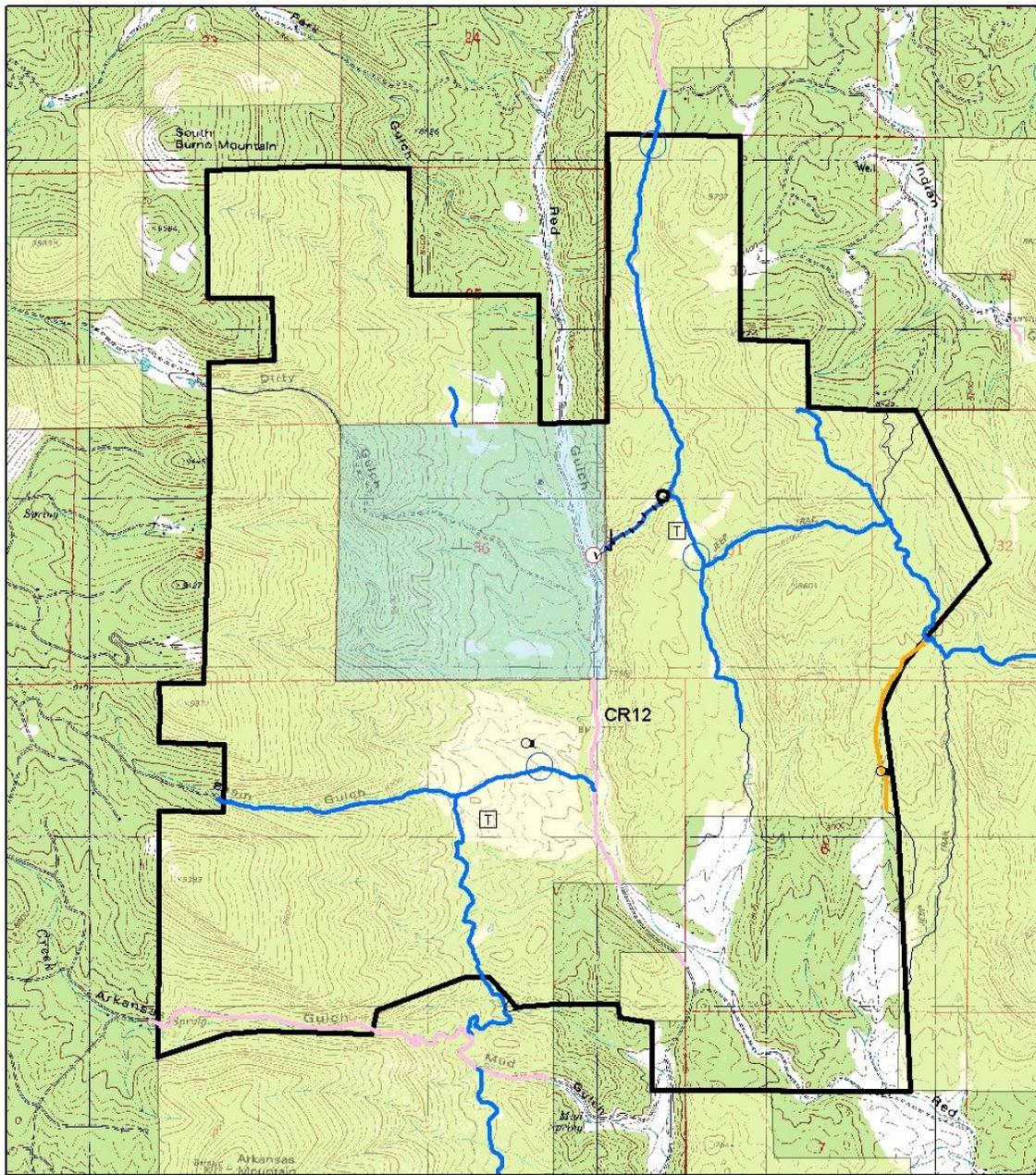
1. Maximum utilization levels on the allotment will be 80% of the previous year's annual forage growth on desirable grass species (1/1-3/31). Willows and cottonwoods will be limited to 60% of the previous year's annual leader growth. If grazing use reaches these levels, livestock will be removed.
2. During the early plant development period (4/1 – 4/30) on the allotment, utilization on active growing grasses will be limited to 40% of the current vegetative growth. Livestock will be removed from these areas once this limit is reached.
3. The permittee will utilize livestock water locations to control livestock use on the allotment. Different water locations will be used throughout the grazing season to promote even livestock use on the allotment. The temporary water tanks will be removed from BLM lands immediately following the grazing season.
4. The permittee and all persons associated with the allotment operations shall not damage, destroy, remove, move or disturb any objects or sites of cultural, paleontological or scientific value, such as historic or prehistoric resources, graves or grave markers, human remains, ruins, cabins, rock art, fossils and artifacts. If in connection with allotment operations under this authorization any of the above resources are encountered, the permittee shall protect such resources and immediately notify the BLM authorized officer of the findings.
5. This Grazing Permit has been fully processed in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. The grazing schedule complies with Guidelines for Grazing Management in Colorado and is designed to help the public land achieve the Standards for Public Land Health. **In the event that the grazing schedule fails to help public land achieve the Standards for Public Land Health, grazing use on this allotment may be revised at any time.**

**New Range Improvements:** New range improvements are proposed under this alternative to help reduce any negative impacts associated with the changes in season of use and ensure that future livestock use continues to help the allotment meet Standards for Public Land Health. These improvements are designed to serve as a livestock control feature to improve even utilization and defer grazing use in areas as needed.

- **Temporary Tank Locations:** Designated areas on the allotment where the permittee will place temporary stock water tanks and deliver water to these tanks on a daily basis. The tanks will be rotated to all designated areas throughout the grazing season to help promote better livestock use of the allotment. Tanks will be removed after the grazing season.
- **Pipeline and Tank:** A new water well would be drilled on the Dirty Gulch State Section to water livestock on the allotment. A new pipeline would be tapped into this new well and service a permanent water tank located on BLM. The pipeline would be buried along the existing road BLM#6045 for a length of 1,620 feet. The pipeline would end at a new permanent tank location to water livestock on BLM. The pipeline would be buried 6 – 24 inches deep along the outside edge of the existing road and consist of 1 ½ HDP DR11 pipe.
- **Drift Fence:** A 4 wire drift fence would be built along the east boundary of the state/BLM boundary line. The new fence line would be located within 300 feet of the State/BLM boundary line. The new fence would be built to BLM standards (not exceeding 42 inches in wire height and no less than 16 inches from ground level to the bottom wire). The fence would be approximately 500 feet in length and a wire/pipe gate would be placed on the road row to allow for vehicle travel on BLM Road#6045. Depending on TMP designation, gate may be locked open or removed when livestock are not authorized on allotment.

**Monitoring:** The Red Gulch Allotment would be evaluated for vegetation changes in response to the new grazing season. As part of the Proposed Action, the existing trend studies located on the upland areas of the allotment would be read during the initial year of implementation and again every 5 – 7 years thereafter. It will be determined through this monitoring if the new grazing schedule is having a negative impact to vegetation on the allotment.

Red Gulch Allotment



**Legend**

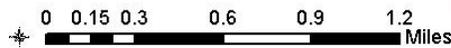
- ✂ Proposed Drift Fence
- |— Proposed Pipeline
- Permanent Tank
- Well
- Temporary Tank Locations
- α Existing Spring Developments
- T Existing Trend Study Plots
- ▭ Red Gulch Allotment Boundary

**Red Gulch Allotment #05188**

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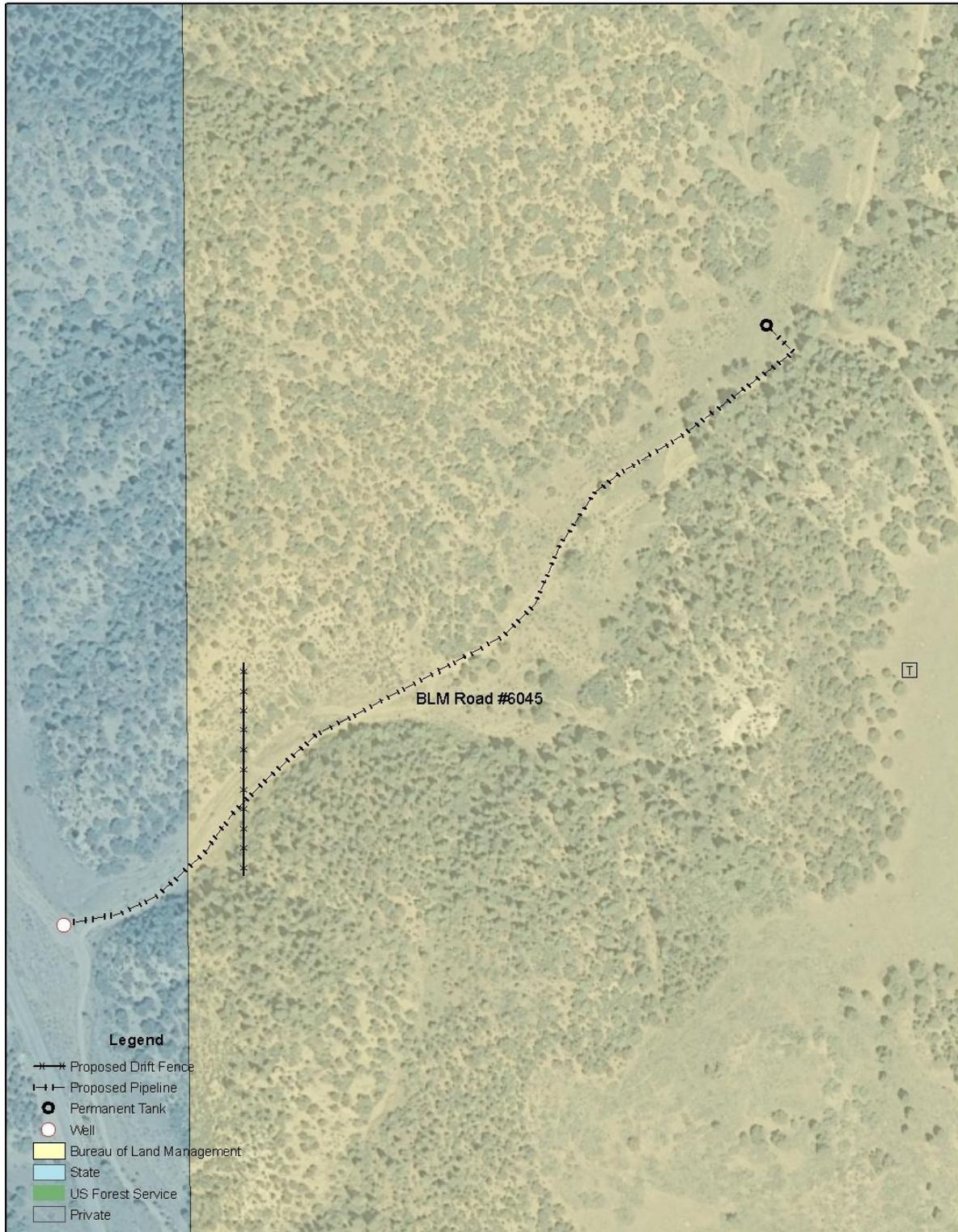
T49N, R11E, T48N, R11E

T49N, R12E, T48N, R12E

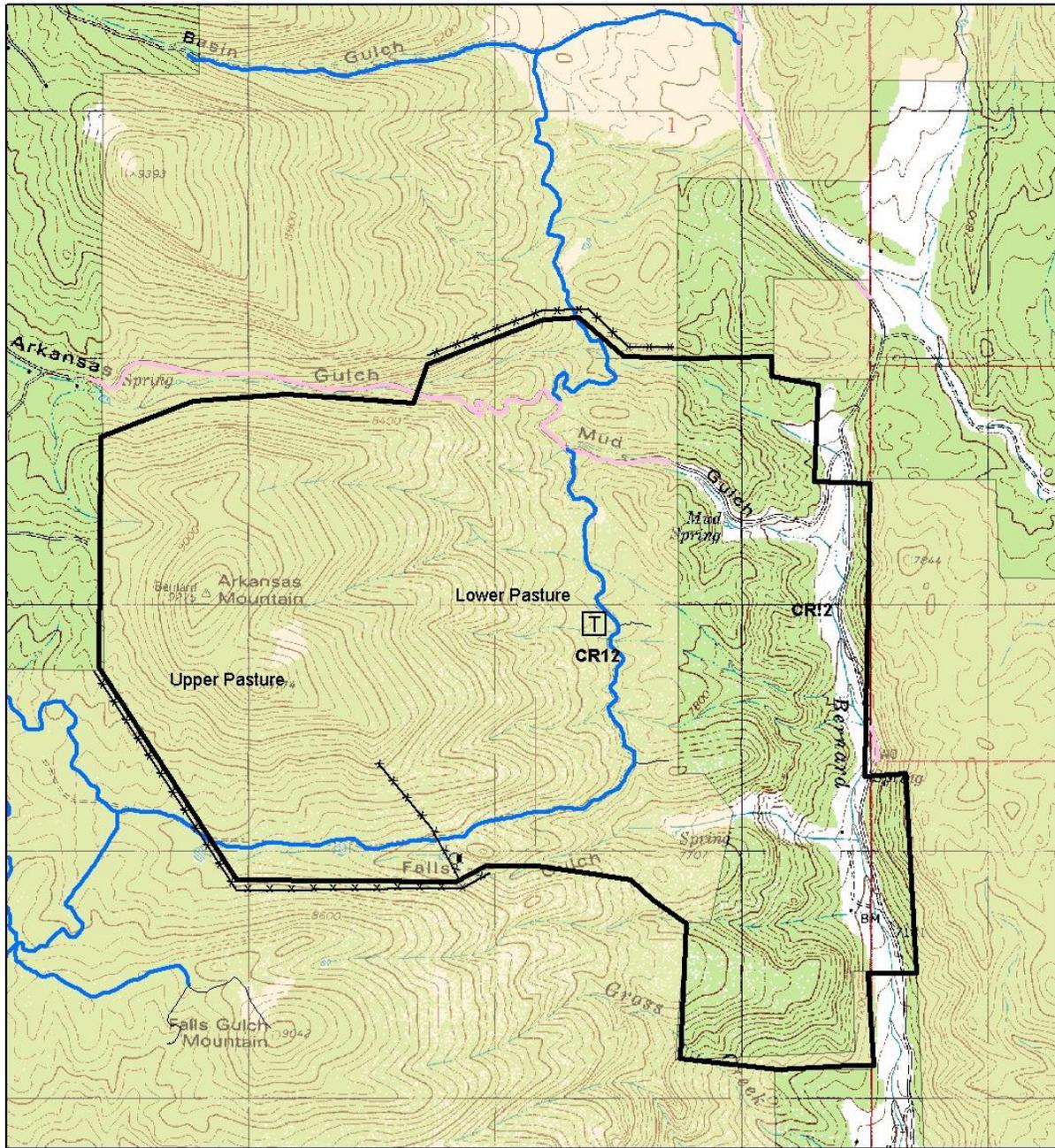


**NOTE TO MAP USERS**  
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# Pipeline & Tank



# Mud Gulch Allotment



**Legend**

- Mud Gulch Allotment Boundary
- Existing Fences
- Existing Spring Developments
- Existing Trend Study Plots

**Mud Gulch Allotment #05192**  
 DOI-BLM-CO-200-2012-0021EA  
 T48N, R12E, S. 11-14

NOTE TO MAP USERS  
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0.0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4  
 Miles

The [Mud Gulch Allotment #05192](#) would be renewed for ten years as currently scheduled (See Background section).

Under the Proposed Action, grazing use will be evaluated and future improvements may be required on BLM to help better manage grazing use. Other improvements may include: water developments, fences, livestock trails, livestock handling facilities and cattle guards. Proposals for new range improvement projects are subject to review under NEPA. This review will determine the appropriate level of NEPA analysis to be conducted.

### **2.2.2 No Change Alternative**

Renew the permit for both allotments as currently scheduled (see background section) for ten years. Under this alternative, BLM would deny the permittees' request to change season of use on the Red Gulch Allotment and would not designate stock water locations. No monitoring would be conducted as outlined in the Proposed Action.

### **2.2.3 NO GRAZING Alternative**

Under this alternative grazing use would not be authorized on both the Red Gulch and Mud Gulch Allotments. The BLM would initiate a process in accordance with the 4100 regulations to permanently eliminate grazing on the allotments. This alternative does not preclude grazing use on the adjacent private and state lands currently used by the grazing permittee. The boundaries of these lands are currently unfenced from BLM and there is a strong possibility of unauthorized livestock use without new fencing.

## **2.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

None.

## **CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action and presents comparative analyses of the direct, indirect and cumulative effects on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the actions under the Proposed Action and other alternatives analyzed.

#### **3.1.1 Interdisciplinary Team Review**

The following table is provided as a mechanism for resource staff review, to identify those resource values with issues or potential impacts from the proposed action and/or alternatives.

Those resources identified in the table as potentially impacted will be brought forward for analysis.

Impact Types: NP = Not Present; NI = Present but Not Impacted; PI = Present and Potentially Impacted\*

\*All PIs are brought forward for analysis in the EA. NIs needing longer comment or discussion use Affected Environment in EA – Review Comment should read “see affected Environment

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Impact Type</u>	<u>Date Reviewed</u>	<u>Initials</u>	<u>Review Comment</u>
<u>Air Quality</u> <i>Ty Webb, Angela Z.</i>	NP	2/03/12	TW	Neither the proposed action nor any of the listed alternatives will result in air quality standards that are degraded from the current situation.
<u>Geology/Minerals</u> <i>Stephanie Carter</i>	NI	03/05/12	SSC	There are no pending mineral actions in this area at this time. However, the federal minerals in the subject parcels are open to location under the Mining Law of 1872.
<u>Soils</u> <i>Jeff Williams</i>	NI	03/05/2012	JW	Standard 1 is currently meeting on both allotments and the proposed action and alternatives as described will not deviate from this achievement. Any impacts would be negligible.
<u>Water Quality</u> <u>Surface and Ground</u> <i>John Smeins</i>	PI	3/06/12	JS	The Proposed Action has the potential to effect surface water quality; overall the proposal leaves sufficient ground cover to protect water quality.
<u>Invasive Plants</u> <i>John Lamman</i>	PI	03/30/2012	JL	See affected environment.
<u>T&amp;E and Sensitive Species</u> <i>Matt Rustand</i>	NI	2/9/2012	MR	No T&E species are present on the allotment. Two sensitive plant species occur near the action area, but are not likely to be found.
<u>Vegetation</u> <i>Jeff Williams, Chris Cloninger, John Lamman</i>	PI	2/29/2012		
<u>Wetlands and Riparian</u> <i>Dave Gilbert</i>	NI	2/15/2012		Only ephemeral gulches are present on these allotments except for Falls Gulch. Elevated water table in some location supports some wetland plants, and occasionally seeps, but no other riparian areas. Falls Gulch is historically grazed, but in functional condition and no Alternative alters anticipated use within Falls Gulch. Range improvements should lead to greater livestock distribution and lessen overall utilization elsewhere.
<u>Wildlife Aquatic</u> <i>Dave Gilbert</i>	NI	2/15/2012		Perennial aquatic habitat exists in Falls Gulch in the Mud Gulch Allotment. No Alternative alters use within Falls Gulch where riparian conditions are good and associated aquatic habitat remains protected.
<u>Wildlife Terrestrial</u> <i>Matt Rustand</i>	PI	2/9/2012	MR	A large portion of the allotments are unsuitable for grazing due to topography; therefore, a discountable impact to terrestrial wildlife is will occur.
<u>Migratory Birds</u> <i>Matt Rustand</i>	PI	2/9/2012	MR	Implementation of the Public Land Health Standards will result in a negligible impact to migratory birds as a result of grazing. However, to avoid take, do not install well

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Impact Type</u>	<u>Date Reviewed</u>	<u>Initials</u>	<u>Review Comment</u>
				and a pipeline during the primary nesting season (May 15-July15).
<b><u>Cultural Resources</u></b> <i>Monica Weimer, Erin Watkins</i>	NP	3/27/2012	EW	Pursuant to BLM Instruction Memorandum Number CO-2002-029, RGFO cultural resources staff conducted a literature review of previous inventories conducted and sites recorded on the public land in the allotment area. During a field visit, the areas of new range improvements were evaluated and no historic properties were present. Based on the information collected during the literature review, it was determined that no historic properties would be impacted by the proposed undertaking.
<b><u>Native American Religious Concerns</u></b> <i>Monica Weimer, Erin Watkins</i>	NP	3/27/2012	EW	BLM consulted with 17 tribes regarding the proposed grazing permit renewal, BLM received no comments.  The literature review indicated that aboriginal sites have been recorded within the allotment boundaries. Site distribution is low in density and not coincident with livestock concentration areas. Therefore, it is unlikely that any traditional cultural properties or other sites of concern to the tribes will be affected by grazing.
<b><u>Economics</u></b> <i>Martin Weimer</i>	NP	3/6/12	mw	This action will not result in significant impacts to the socio economics of the region.
<b><u>Paleontology</u></b> <i>Melissa Smeins</i>	NI	3/6/2012	MJS	The geology in this area is not likely to contain recognizable paleontological resources and therefore this project will not have an adverse impact.
<b><u>Visual Resources</u></b> <i>Kalem Lenard</i>	NI	2/13/2012	KL	The project is not within a sensitive view shed and would not introduce strong visual contrasts.
<b><u>Environmental Justice</u></b> <i>Martin Weimer</i>	NP	3/6/12	mw	The proposed action affects areas that are rural in nature. The land adjacent to these parcels is open rangeland. As a result, there is no minority or low-income populations in or near the project area. As such, the proposal will not have a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effect on minority or low-income populations.
<b><u>Wastes Hazardous or Solid</u></b> <i>Stephanie Carter</i>	NI	03/05/2012	SSC	It is assumed that conditions associated with the proposed project site are currently clean and that no contamination is evident. No hazardous material, as defined by 42 U.S.C. 9601 (which includes materials regulated under CERCLA, RCRA and the Atomic Energy Act, but does not include petroleum or natural gas), will be used, produced, transported or stored during project implementation. If this project involves some type of oil or fuel transfer and/or storage, an adequate spill kit is required to be onsite. The project proponent will be

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Impact Type</u>	<u>Date Reviewed</u>	<u>Initials</u>	<u>Review Comment</u>
				responsible for adhering to all applicable local, State and Federal regulations in the event of a spill, which includes following the proper notification procedures in BLM's Spill Contingency Plan.
<b><u>Recreation</u></b> <i>Kalem Lenard</i>	NI	2/13/2012	KL	The proposed action would not impact recreation use in the area.
<b><u>Farmlands Prime and Unique</u></b> <i>Jeff Williams, Chris Cloninger, John Lamman</i>	NP	2/29/2012	JW	
<b><u>Lands and Realty</u></b> <i>Debbie Bellew, Vera Matthews</i>	NI	3/21/2012	VM	The proposed action would not impact Lands and Realty in the area.
<b><u>Wilderness, WSAs, ACECs, Wild &amp; Scenic Rivers</u></b> <i>Kalem Lenard</i>	NP	2/13/2012	KL	
<b><u>Wilderness Characteristics</u></b> <i>Kalem Lenard</i>	NP	2/13/2012	KL	
<b><u>Range Management</u></b> <i>Jeff Williams, Chris Cloninger, John Lamman</i>	PI	3/5/2012	JW	
<b><u>Forest Management</u></b> <i>Ken Reed</i>	NP	KR	2/2/2012	The proposed action will have little effect to on-going and future forest management actions.
<b><u>Cadastral Survey</u></b> <i>Tony Mule</i>	NP	AM	2/9/12	
<b><u>Noise</u></b> <i>Martin Weimer</i>	NP	3/6/12	mw	This action will not result in any impacts due to noise or result in any increased noise levels.
<b><u>Fire</u></b> <i>Bob Hurley</i>	NP	2/1/2012	BH	The proposed action will not create or elevate risk factors leading to unwanted wildland fire ignition.
<b><u>Law Enforcement</u></b> <i>Steve Cunningham</i>	NP	3/6/12	mw	There is no law enforcement issues associated with this action.

The affected resources brought forward for analysis include:

- Water Quality
- Invasive Plants
- Vegetation
- Wildlife Terrestrial

- Migratory Birds
- Range Management

## **3.2 PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

### **3.2.1 WATER (SURFACE AND GROUNDWATER, FLOODPLAINS) (includes a finding on standard 5)**

Affected Environment: The Proposed Action involves grazing in the Bernard Creek and Fernleaf Gulch watersheds, tributary to the Arkansas River. Overall, there is very little surface water present on the allotment. One water source to note is the large wetland/spring complex at the lower end of Falls Gulch. Overall, no water quality issues have been identified on the allotments.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:** The Proposed Action contains modifications to the season of use and additional infrastructure over what has historically occurred on these allotments. Sediment production as a result of grazing is the biggest concern from a water quality standpoint from this proposal. Specifically, the biggest issue is grazing in the riparian areas containing surface water that could lead to bank trampling and increased sediment production. In addition, heavy grazing in the uplands can contribute to increased runoff and sediment production. The Proposed Action would leave sufficient ground cover present in the uplands to protect the soils from eroding and increasing sediment delivery to the waterways. The riparian section covers effects on riparian vegetation. The addition of the pipeline, drift fence, and tanks in the Red Gulch Allotment would allow for better distribution of livestock and further help to minimize water quality impacts. Overall, the Proposed Action would have little impact to water quality and would continue meeting Land Health Standards for Water Quality.

**Protective/Mitigation Measures:** A long term agreement with the State Land Board covering the water supplied from the State owned well needs to be in place before building infrastructure on BLM lands or another water source would need to be identified, i.e. hauling. All water rights associated with the well and tank would be in the name of the State land Board.

##### No Action Alternative

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:** The No Action Alternative maintains what has been occurring on the ground in the past; therefore, no new impacts to water quality would occur. Sediment production as a result of grazing is the biggest concern from a water quality standpoint from this alternative. Specifically, the biggest issue is grazing in the riparian areas containing surface water that could lead to bank trampling and increased sediment production. In addition, heavy grazing in the uplands can contribute to increased runoff and sediment production. The No Action Alternative would leave sufficient ground cover present in the uplands to protect the

soils from eroding and increasing sediment delivery to the waterways. The riparian section covers effects on riparian vegetation.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None

#### No Grazing Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Under the No Grazing Alternative, cattle grazing would cease and vegetative growth would not be removed on a yearly basis. This would allow for better vegetative buffers limiting sediment entering the streams and decreasing sediment loads. This would improve the water quality over the current situation/Proposed Action; however, current management is not having much effect on water quality and any improvement would be minor.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None

### **3.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

#### **3.3.1 INVASIVE PLANTS\***

Affected Environment: Invasive plants known to occur within the project boundary include: Canada thistle and Cheat grass. Invasive plants known to occur within a seven mile radius of the project boundary include: Myrtle spurge, Diffuse knapweed, Russian knapweed, Spotted knapweed, Tamarisk, Hounds tongue, Leafy spurge, Scotch thistle, and elongated mustard.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: The impacts from the type of grazing proposed in this alternative would not result in the type of soil disturbance needed to increase the risk of invasive plant invasion. The water pipeline construction has potential to spread and or introduce invasive plants.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Equipment used to implement pipeline construction should be washed prior to entering the project area to remove any plant materials, soil, or grease. Areas disturbed by project implementation should be monitored for the presence of weeds on the Colorado State Noxious Weed list. Identified noxious weeds will be treated.

##### No Grazing Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Removal of livestock grazing from the two allotments in the proposed action could allow some populations of invasive plants to increase in size.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None

\*Invasive plants are plants that are not part of (if exotic), or are a minor component of (if native), the original plant community or communities that have the potential to become a dominant or co-dominant species on the site if their future establishment and growth are not actively controlled by management interventions, or are classified as exotic or noxious plants under state or federal law. Species that become dominant for only one to several years (e.g., short-term response to drought or wildfire) are not invasive plants.

### **3.3.2 VEGETATION (includes a finding on standard 3)**

Affected Environment: The elevation for both allotments ranges from 7,200 up to 9,200 feet. The total annual precipitation for the area is approximately 12 – 16 inches. The growing season for vegetation in the area is typically mid-April through mid-September. Due to the variety of mountain aspect, slope and elevation, there is a wide range of vegetation found on both allotments. The allotments could be summarized as a mixture of open grassland parks, ponderosa pine woodland/grass mix, pinyon-juniper, and Douglas-fir. In general the grasses that make up these sites consist of mountain muhly, needle and thread, blue grama, western wheatgrass, Indian ricegrass, and prairie June grass. As you increase in elevation there are mixtures of Arizona fescue, mountain muhly, June grass, and various forbs. Primary shrubs found in the area consist of Gambel's oak, mountain mahogany, rabbitbrush, and currant. The estimated total production on these sites varies from 300 to 1,500 pounds per acre per year depending on the site and precipitation.

Both allotments were evaluated for Public Land Health Standards in 2002. The assessments indicated that, under current management, livestock grazing does not appear to be preventing public land from meeting applicable land health standards. Through the assessment however, it was determined that a portion of the pinyon-juniper woodland sites and some associated grassland areas was not meeting public land health standards. Pinyon and juniper woodlands are steadily encroaching into naturally open grassland range sites and pinyon/juniper range site canopies have steadily grown increasingly dense. As this continues over time, many areas are characterized by decreasing amounts of herbaceous plant cover and higher amounts of bare ground. As a result, productivity, vigor and diversity of a site decrease. These changes in the plant communities appear not to be directly related to livestock grazing.

In addition to health assessments, there are several trend studies located on both allotments that have not been read for a number of years. Based on the last reading these studies showed an upward trend and current management was allowing condition to improve.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: The action modifies the season of use on the Red Gulch allotment from a complete dormant vegetative period to a period that includes the early initiation of cool season grasses. Grazing during this period could be harmful to the early growing plants especially if grazing use is heavy and re-occurs in the same area year after year. However, the proposed action include mitigation measures (new water sources and fencing) that would help to reduce negative impacts by promoting grazing use to various areas of the allotment that are currently not used and reducing grazing pressure on areas that have a higher concentration of

livestock use. In addition, stricter utilization limits are implemented during the critical early growing period. The proposed action contains a long term vegetation monitoring plan to measure any impacts that may be associated with this change. The range improvements proposed on the Red Gulch Allotment including tank locations, pipeline, and fence will have minor impacts to vegetation, but these impacts will be outweighed by the long term benefits these projects promote. Under current management Standard 3 is meeting land health on both Red Gulch and Mud Gulch Allotments. Renewing the permit for Mud Gulch under current management would not have any negative impacts. Overall the action on both allotments would continue to promote achievement of public land health standards.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

#### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: The alternative basically renews the permit for both allotments with no changes. Even though the Red Gulch Allotment is currently meeting land health standards, poor livestock distribution could lead to a downward trend in land health standards on areas of the allotment in the future.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

#### No Grazing Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Not renewing the current grazing permit as prescribed by this alternative would remove grazing use on vegetation on the public land. This in turn would result in an initial increase in plant vigor and litter production. However, precipitation in this area can be fairly low. Due to these dry conditions, decomposition of litter and “standing dead” plant material is relatively slow and the return of nutrients from these materials to the soil is therefore also slow. Livestock grazing, when managed properly, tends to harvest plant biomass and return a higher portion of the nutrients to the soil (and more quickly) than allowing the plant to decompose without grazing use. Furthermore, harvesting a portion of a plant’s biomass, when done properly, tends to stimulate new growth and improve plant vigor. The effect of livestock hooves also tends to break up soil crusts and improve the soil surface as a seed bed for plant reproduction. Therefore, a lack of periodic grazing use in the Mud Gulch and Red Gulch allotments could result in an eventual decrease in plant vigor, and the amount of vegetative and litter cover. This alternative would initially increase plant vigor and litter production but would eventually result in movement away from applicable standards.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Monitor for livestock trespass.

### **3.3.3 WILDLIFE TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on standard 3)**

Affected Environment: Several habitat types are found within the area covered by these allotments. At lower elevations and/or south facing slopes the habitat types are primarily pinyon pine and juniper. Open areas of mountain grassland are interspersed throughout the area and mountain shrubs such as currant and mountain mahogany are abundant, especially on south slopes. Ponderosa pine, mixed conifer and mountain shrubland habitats are found at higher elevations in the project area. In Fremont County these sites are very dry and warm areas, with

less than 25 inches of precipitation annually. Mature ponderosa pine forests on dry sites are open, with mature trees achieving wide separation as they compete for limited soil moisture. Grassy ground cover is maintained by frequent low-intensity fires. Ponderosa pines are the largest conifers in Colorado and Gambel oak is a common component of the understory, typically in a shrubby form. Other common understory shrubs include mountain mahogany and wax currant. Tree species sometimes found mixed with ponderosa pine are junipers, pinyon pine, aspen, white fir, and Douglas-fir. These sites also include small areas of aspen habitat and mountain grassland habitat.

Mule deer are likely present throughout the year; however, of importance is severe winter range along the eastern edge of allotments. Severe winter range, as stated by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, is that part of the range of a species where 90 percent of the individuals are located when the annual snowpack is at its maximum and/or temperatures are at a minimum in the two worst winters out of ten.

### Environmental Effects

#### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Impacts to terrestrial species from grazing use proposed in this assessment will be minimal. The allotments being assessed in this document are utilized by deer, elk and bighorn sheep as yearlong habitat. All of the allotments in this assessment contain large areas of unsuitable range, those areas where topography restrict use by livestock. Much of the spatially mapped mule deer winter range is unsuitable for livestock grazing. These areas remain as wildlife habitat with no domestic livestock grazing. The proposed scheduled grazing periods will have no effect on vegetation utilized by wildlife. Each allotment was evaluated on an individual basis during land health assessments and no wildlife conflicts were identified.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

#### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Same as proposed action except the riparian areas in Red Gulch will remain in their current state.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None

#### No Grazing Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: This alternative would remove grazing use on the public land which in the short-term may result in an initial increase in plant vigor and litter production benefiting wildlife habitat. The results of several studies debating grazing versus non-grazing impacts to wild ungulates remain contradictory. If grazing is managed correctly, long-term benefits may be an increase in plant species diversity, plant vigor, and reduction of excessive vegetation litter.

Studies have presented evidence that spatial competition between wild ungulate species and cattle may occur. Stewart et al. (2002) found that when cattle were present they would displace both deer and elk, forcing wild ungulates to less preferred feeding grounds. Generally, native ungulates focus on different plant species than cattle; however, when feed is scarce (late winter, early spring) these animals become generalists and compete for a common forage base.

Furthermore, other research notes a positive trend in small mammal populations and diversity when grazing is removed from the landscape (Jones 2000). However, much of the land within and surrounding these allotments is unsuitable for grazing, primarily because of topography. Therefore, the grazing versus no grazing would result in a discountable difference to terrestrial species.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None

Jones, A. 2000. Effects of cattle grazing on North American arid ecosystems: A quantitative review. *Western North American naturalist* 60: 155-164.

Stewart, K. M., R. T. Bowyer, J. G. Kie, N. J. Cimon, and B. K. Johnson. 2002. Temporospatial distributions of elk, mule deer, and cattle: resource partitioning and competitive displacement. *Journal of Mammalogy* 83: 229-244.

### **3.3.4 MIGRATORY BIRDS**

Affected Environment: Several habitat types are found within the area covered by this EA. At lower elevations the habitat types are primarily pinyon pine and juniper. Open areas of mountain grassland are interspersed throughout the area and mountain shrubs such as currant and mountain mahogany are abundant, especially on south slopes. Pinyon-juniper habitat supports the largest nesting bird species list of any upland vegetation type in the West. The richness of the pinyon-juniper vegetation type, however, is important due to its middle elevation. Survey tallies in pinyon-juniper are similar in species diversity to the best riparian. Several species are found in the pinyon-juniper habitat and include: black-chinned hummingbird, gray flycatcher, Cassin's kingbird, gray vireo, pinyon jay, juniper titmouse, black-throated gray warbler, Scott's oriole, ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick's wren, mountain chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, and chipping sparrow.

Ponderosa pine, mixed conifer and mountain shrubland habitats are found at higher elevations in the project area. In Fremont County these sites are very dry and warm areas, with less than 25 inches of precipitation annually. Mature ponderosa pine forests on dry sites are open, with mature trees achieving wide separation as they compete for limited soil moisture. Grassy ground cover is maintained by frequent low-intensity fires. Ponderosa pines are the largest conifers in Colorado and Gambel oak is a common component of the understory, typically in a shrubby form. Other common understory shrubs include mountain mahogany and wax currant. Tree species sometimes found mixed with ponderosa pine are junipers, pinyon pine, aspen, white fir, and Douglas-fir. Birds typical of these habitat types include Merriam's turkey, Williamson's sapsucker, pygmy nuthatch, western bluebird, band-tailed pigeon, Grace's warbler, flammulated owl, red-breasted nuthatch, violet-green swallow, western tanager, and chipping sparrow. These sites also include small areas of aspen habitat and mountain grassland habitat.

### **Environmental Effects**

#### **Proposed Action**

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:** The results of several studies debating grazing versus non-grazing impacts to migratory birds remains mixed. If grazing is managed correctly, long-term

benefits may be an increase in plant species diversity, plant vigor, and reduction of excessive vegetation litter. Bock et al. (1993) suggest very little is known in regards to impacts to migratory birds from grazing in western forests. Historically, these areas were exposed to heavy grazing which correlates with the transformation of these woodlands into denser forests with a decreased understory of herbaceous plants. This transformation diminished the frequency of low intensity fire. Furthermore, historical grazing regimes correlate with the expansion of pinyon-juniper woodland. Over grazing reduced cover of grasses, facilitating establishment of pinyon-juniper seedlings and simultaneously reducing ground fires that otherwise might eliminate woody vegetation. The change in herbaceous structure caused a change in migratory bird species occupancy by negatively affecting species dependent on herbaceous and shrubby cover or species that require open savannahs, but positively affecting species requiring closed canopy systems. Currently, BLM's standards for public land health do not allow for excessive grazing that would alter forest structure in the manner historical grazing regimes may have. These allotments are currently meeting standards 2, 3, and 4 which indicates grazing is having a negligible impact to migratory bird habitat.

The temporary water tanks in Red Gulch are expected to draw cattle away from the riparian areas and produce a more uniform utilization throughout the allotment. The end goal will yield riparian recovery, improving the overall wildlife habitat (however, the construction of well and pipeline may take migratory birds if conducted during the nesting season). The proposed action will minimize livestock concentration areas, reducing regular disruption and abandonment to nesting birds. The probability of cattle crushing nests and burrows will also be reduced. However, many ground and shrub nesting birds have adapted distraction and defense behaviors to lead animals away from the nest sites.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: In order for BLM to be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, requiring that BLM avoid actions that "take" migratory birds, it is recommended that all vegetation disturbances be avoided from May 15 thru July 15. This is the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds. Construction of well and installation of pipeline should be completed outside the primary nesting season of May 15 thru July 15.

#### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Overall, impacts would remain similar to that of the proposed action, except that the well and pipeline and temporary tanks would not be constructed and installed. As a result, the riparian area in Red Gulch would likely remain in its current state.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None

#### No Grazing Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: This alternative would remove grazing use on public land which in the short-term may result in an initial increase in plant vigor and litter production benefiting wildlife habitat. Impacts of grazing on upland sandpipers indicated a reduction in nest density in grazed pastures; however, nesting success between grazed and non-grazed pastures remained unchanged (Bowen and Kruse 1993). Bock et al. (1993) conducted a literature review on avian responses to grazing in a multitude of habitats and found that bird species generally showed a negative response. Reasons for a negative response include, but are not limited to a reduction in nesting cover and disturbance or destruction of nests by cattle. However, some bird

species benefit from grazing such as the BLM sensitive mountain plover. Overall, migratory birds would likely show a net benefit from the no grazing alternative.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

Bock, C. E., V. A. Saab, T. D. Rich, and D. S. Dobkin. 1993. Effects of livestock grazing on neotropical migratory landbirds in western North America. In: Finch, D. M., P. W. Stangel (eds.). Status and management of neotropical migratory birds: September 21-25, 1992, Estes Park, Colorado. Gen. Tech. Rep. RM-229. Fort Collins, Colo.: Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service: 296-309.

Bowen, B. S. and A. D. Kruse. 1993. Effects of grazing on nesting by upland sandpipers in south central North Dakota. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 57: 291-301.

## **3.5 LAND RESOURCES**

### **3.5.1 RANGE MANAGEMENT**

Affected Environment: The Red Gulch Allotment #05188 consists of 3,430 acres of BLM lands of which probably one third of the allotment is not suitable to livestock grazing due to slope and vegetation. There is an unfenced state section within the allotment identified as the Dirty Gulch State Section. The BLM permittee has the grazing lease on the state land. Currently, the allotment is scheduled during the entire dormant season and is not divided into any pastures. Water is the most limiting factor on the allotment and typically results in poor livestock distribution. The permittee usually hauls water to temporary tanks on the state section and cattle will generally not stray far from this water source.

The Mud Gulch Allotment #05192 consists of 1,169 acres of BLM lands of which three quarters of the allotment would be considered limited to poor suitability for livestock use. Cattle use on this allotment is scheduled during the early part of the growing season. The allotment is divided into two pastures consisting of the Upper and Lower pastures. The sequence of use is changed from year to year on the pastures. Based on historic actual use for both allotments, the permittee has not used the full potential of the allotments as far as cattle numbers and season.

### **Environmental Effects**

#### **Proposed Action**

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:** The proposed action as scheduled for both allotments meets the Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing in Colorado. The grazing schedule provides for vegetation deferment during most of the growing season and utilization restrictions that will allow for soil stability and plant health. Implementing the new range improvements on the Red Gulch Allotment will promote even and dispersed livestock use on the allotment and open new areas to grazing that typically are not grazed. Furthermore, including long term monitoring will ensure the new grazing plan is not having a negative impact to resources.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

#### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: This alternative Renews authorization on both allotments as currently scheduled. This use would still meet Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing in Colorado. However, not implementing new range improvements on the Red Gulch Allotment could have long term negative impacts associated with poor livestock distribution. There are no anticipated differences between the proposed action and the no action alternative in the Mud Gulch allotment.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

#### No Grazing Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Under this alternative, grazing use would be cancelled on both allotments. The impacts would occur for both the permittee and the BLM in the long term. First, the permittee would be required to fence out the BLM lands from the state lands within the Red Gulch Allotment and would have to find alternatives for the loss of forage from both allotments. Under this alternative the permittee may be required to fence approximately four miles of new fence to isolate the state section from BLM. The cost to the permittee would be approximately \$30,000 to build this fence. Additional economic impacts would be experienced by the grazing permittee due to the loss of livestock forage under this alternative. Based on the permittees' anticipated need to provide additional pasture to make up for the loss of public land grazing use, the permittee could be expected to experience a \$4,811 cost annually under this alternative. This figure was based on the public land carrying capacity of 283 AUMs for the public land portion of the allotment and the private land lease rate in Colorado of \$17.00 per AUM. Lastly, not renewing the current grazing permit as prescribed by this alternative would remove grazing use on vegetation on the public land. This in turn would result in an initial increase in plant vigor and litter production. However, precipitation in this area can be fairly low. Due to these dry conditions, decomposition of litter and "standing dead" plant material is relatively slow and the return of nutrients from these materials to the soil is therefore also slow. Livestock grazing, when managed properly, tends to harvest plant biomass and return a higher portion of the nutrients to the soil (and more quickly) than allowing the plant to decompose without grazing use. Furthermore, harvesting a portion of a plant's biomass, when done properly, tends to stimulate new growth and improve plant vigor. The effect of livestock hooves also tends to break up soil crusts and improve the soil surface as a seed bed for plant reproduction. Therefore, a lack of periodic grazing use in the Mud Gulch and Red Gulch allotments could result in an eventual decrease in plant vigor, and the amount of vegetative and litter cover. This alternative would initially increase plant vigor and litter production but would eventually result in movement away from applicable standards.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Monitor for livestock trespass.

### **3.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY**

The geographic scope of cumulative impacts is the area described as the Waugh Mountain / Tallahassee Creek Eco-Sub-region in the Royal Gorge Resource Area Resource Management

Plan. Within this area, BLM manages approximately 70,145 acres of public land. The area also consists of approximately 114,341 acres of private and 12,250 acres of state land. Livestock grazing has been a major component in this area since settlement and is integral to the local economy. Grazing management as prescribed on public lands is more intensive than management of the surrounding private and state lands and takes other resource values, such as wildlife, cultural, soils, vegetative and riparian on the public land into account to a greater degree. The proposed action includes protection for vegetative, soils, cultural and riparian values. These standards assure sufficient residual vegetation to protect soil from wind and water erosion and allow adequate seed dissemination and seedling establishment. Therefore, the impacts of the proposed action on the allotments in this assessment, together with those of other similar BLM actions within the sub-region, will be protection and improvement of the diversity and vigor of vegetative resources on public land in the sub-region over time. Other foreseeable impacts include private land development and fragmentation, and local drought conditions. These impacts could have direct and indirect impacts to these public lands.

## **CHAPTER 4 - CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

### **4.1 LIST OF PREPARERS AND PARTICIPANTS**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY</b>
Matt Rustand	Wildlife Biologist	Terrestrial Wildlife, T&E, Migratory Birds
Jeff Williams	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland
Chris Cloninger	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland
John Lamman	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland, Weeds
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife, Riparian/Wetlands
Stephanie Carter	Geologist	Minerals, Wastes
Melissa Smeins	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology
John Smeins	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights, Soils
Ty Webb	Prescribed Fire Specialist	Air Quality
Tony Mule'	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey
Kalem Lenard	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers
Ken Reed	Forester	Forestry
Martin Weimer	NEPA Coordinator	Environmental Justice, Noise, SocioEconomics
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American
Erin Watkins	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American
Vera Matthews	Realty Specialist	Realty
Hugh Wolfe	Realty Specialist	Realty
Steve Cunningham	Law Enforcement Ranger	Law Enforcement

## **4.2 TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED**

Colorado Parks & Wildlife – Bob Carochi  
Colorado Parks & Wildlife – Kim Woodruff  
Colorado State Land Board – David Rodenberg

## **CHAPTER 5 - REFERENCES**

Bureau of Land Management. 1996. Royal Gorge Resource Area Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision. Royal Gorge Resource Area. Canon City, Colorado.

Bureau of Land Management. 2002 & 2010. Public Land Health Assessment.

Bureau of Land Management. 2006. CO-200-2006-0017 EA. Range – Grazing Permit Renewal.

## **Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

### **DOI-BLM-CO-200-2012-0021 EA**

Based on review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project 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 from any alternative assessed or evaluated meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined by 43 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below:

#### RATIONALE:

**Context:** The Proposed Action changes the grazing season of use on the Red Gulch Allotment with design features to mitigate potential impacts. In addition, the permit is renewed for both the Red Gulch and Mud Gulch Allotments.

Both allotments are located in Fremont County and North of Cotopaxi, Colorado. The allotments are located at an elevation between 7,200 and 9,200 feet. For the most part both allotments consist of small open grassland parks intermixed with dense stands of pinyon-juniper woodlands. Efforts have been done to reduce the amount of dense pinyon-juniper through HPP vegetation projects. The allotments are managed together along with the adjacent unfenced state and private lands. These allotments are essential to the permittees' livestock operation and economic wellbeing.

#### **Intensity:**

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the permit renewal project decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

#### **Impacts that may be beneficial and adverse:**

Through the land health assessments and environmental analysis, adverse impacts to the allotment and the environment can be managed and mitigated. The benefits of these analyses that are reflected in the proposed action are better cattle distribution and management. Better cattle distribution prevents vegetation trampling and protects riparian areas which decreases stream sedimentation and provides additional wildlife forage and cover. The allotments proposed for renewal are all meeting BLM Land Health Standards. This proposal acknowledges that and incorporates a utilization level into allotment stipulations to prevent overutilization of forage on these allotments. This more intensive management by the BLM encourages similar management of the adjacent private property and state lands.

**Public health and safety:** The proposed action reflects analyses and management practices that do the most to protect important water supplies by preventing erosion and sediment production. Due to the dry, upland nature of a portion of the allotment being analyzed, sediment production, from a water quality standpoint, is the biggest concern from grazing. The proposed action would leave sufficient ground cover present to protect the soils from eroding and downstream waters would not be affected from grazing on public lands.

**Unique characteristics of the geographic area:** The EA evaluated the area of the proposed action and determined that no unique geographic characteristics such as: wild and scenic rivers, prime or unique farmlands, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern or designated wilderness areas or wilderness study areas were present.

**Degree to which effects are likely to be highly controversial:** Analysis for the renewal of grazing permits is a common action conducted under NEPA. Conditions and impacts will vary and be unique to each allotment. There is no disagreement or controversy among ID team members or reviewers over the nature of the effects of the action on resource values.

**Degree to which effects are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:** BLM has a long history of managing public lands for multiple-use. Grazing is one part of that multiple-use mandate. Given the BLM's institutional knowledge on this subject, all risks were considered in the EA and were found to be neither unique nor unknown.

**Consideration of whether the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts:** The proposed action does establish a standard of precedent for the permit renewal process, in that there is comprehensive review of all resource values and land health standards are either met or exceeded.

**Consideration of whether the action is related to other actions with cumulatively significant impacts:** In general, the allotments in the analysis area are adjacent to private and state lands. The continuation of livestock grazing on public lands will in part help promote or maintain ranching in the area and open space. In addition, the continuation of livestock grazing as described in the proposed action will not create any new cumulative impacts to the existing situation and given BLMs intense management practices, renewing the grazing could contribute to enhancing land health and productivity.

**Scientific, cultural or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:** Pursuant to BLM Instruction Memorandum Number CO-2002-029, RGFO cultural resources staff conducted a literature review of previous inventories conducted and sites recorded on the public land in the allotment area. During a field visit, the areas of new range improvements were evaluated and no historic properties were present. Based on the information collected during the literature review, it was determined that no historic properties would be impacted by the proposed undertaking.

**Threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat:** Impacts to T&E and sensitive species from grazing use proposed in this assessment will be insignificant. Populations of the

two sensitive plants are located along the Arkansas River in rough, rocky areas less suitable for grazing; therefore, the proposed action will have no effect on these populations.

**Any effects that threaten a violation of Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment:** The proposed action conforms with the provisions of NEPA (U.S.C. 4321-4346) and FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) and is compliant with the Clean Water Act and The Clean Air Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Endangered Species Act.

NAME OF PREPARER: Jeff Williams

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: Melissa Garcia

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: /s/ Martin Weimer

DATE: 1/23/13

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

/s/ Keith E. Berger  
Keith E. Berger, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 1/23/13

APPENDICES:

ATTACHMENTS: