United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE
2465 South Townsend
Montrose, CO 81401
www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/ufo.html

In Reply Refer to:
4100 (COS050)

NOV 17 2014

Dear Interested Party,

The Bureau of Land Management, is beginning scoping for renewing 12 grazing permits in the North Delta area. The draft proposed action for "North Delta Permit Renewal" will be analyzed in an environmental assessment. The draft proposed action, including a map, can be viewed on the following web site: http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/nepa/ufo.html (scroll to DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2014-0037 EA).

The BLM scoping period on the proposal will extend to December 5th, 2014. If you have specific concerns, issues or alternatives you would like addressed, please provide written comments to:

North Delta Permit Renewal
BLM, Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 South Townsend Ave.
Montrose, Colorado 81401

Fax: 970.240.5368

E-mail: lbroger@blm.gov

Comments must be submitted in writing by mail, email, or fax. If you have questions, please contact Lynae Rogers at 970-240-5300.

Sincerely,

Barbara Sharrow

Barbara Sharrow
Field Office Manager

BLM

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Environmental Assessment

DOI-BLM-CO-SO50-2014-0037 EA

July, 2014

North Delta Grazing Permit Renewals

Location: BLM Pubic Lands North of Delta, Colorado

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 South Townsend Avenue
Montrose, CO 81401
Phone: (970) 240-5300

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 South Townsend Avenue
Montrose, CO 81401

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2014-0037 EA

PROJECT NAME: North Delta Grazing Permit Renewals

PLANNING UNIT: North Delta Land Health Unit

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:
T4S, R3E, Ute Merdian, several sections.
T15S, R97W; T15S, R96W; T15S, R95W; T14S, R97W; T14S, R98W; T14S, R96W; T14S, R95W; T13S, R95W; T13S, R96W all in the 6th Principal Meridian, many sections.

APPLICANT: Grazing Term Permit Holders

BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

The BLM administers 12 grazing permits authorizing livestock grazing on 9 allotments in the North Delta Land Health Assessment Area (Map 1). A livestock producer (permittee/lessee) must hold a grazing permit/lease to graze livestock on public land. Grazing Permits specify all authorized use including livestock grazing, suspended use, class of animal, total number of AUMs, season of use, percent public land, and the area authorized for grazing use (CFR §1400.0-5).

An initial Land Health Assessment (LHA) was completed for the North Delta Land Health Unit during the 2001/2002 field season. In 2013, the second North Delta LHA was completed including combining utilization and long term vegetation monitoring data. This monitoring allows BLM to evaluate the allotments during the permit renewal process to determine if current grazing management and Terms and Conditions are working, evaluate carrying capacities, and make changes to the permits if necessary.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION

The action needed is for BLM to respond to applications for grazing permits. Additionally, if the fundamentals of rangeland health, as identified in Colorado Land Health Standards amendment to the Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan[1] are not being met for watersheds, riparian areas, and special status species, based on the current Land Health Assessment (2013) changes to the permits will be considered as supported by CFR §4180.1. The assessment found some current livestock management practices do not support the fundamentals of rangeland health in portions of this area. The BLM also needs to ensure livestock management during drought does not adversely impact the range and compromise the ability to meet the fundamentals of rangeland health. National BLM guidance from IM 2013-094 *Resource Management During Drought*[2] specifies that the BLM must "modify authorized uses or management practices when necessary to lessen their impact to drought-stressed public land resources." It also states that BLM should put in place a "proactive mechanism to address potential drought conditions and contingencies".

The purpose of the action is to issue ten-year Term Grazing Permits (CFR §4130.2(d)), implement needed Terms and Conditions, and modify some authorizations where necessary, so progress can be made toward meeting the fundamentals of rangeland health.

Decisions to be made:
The BLM will decide whether or not to reissue livestock grazing permits with the same or modified authorizations and/or Terms and Conditions of the permit.

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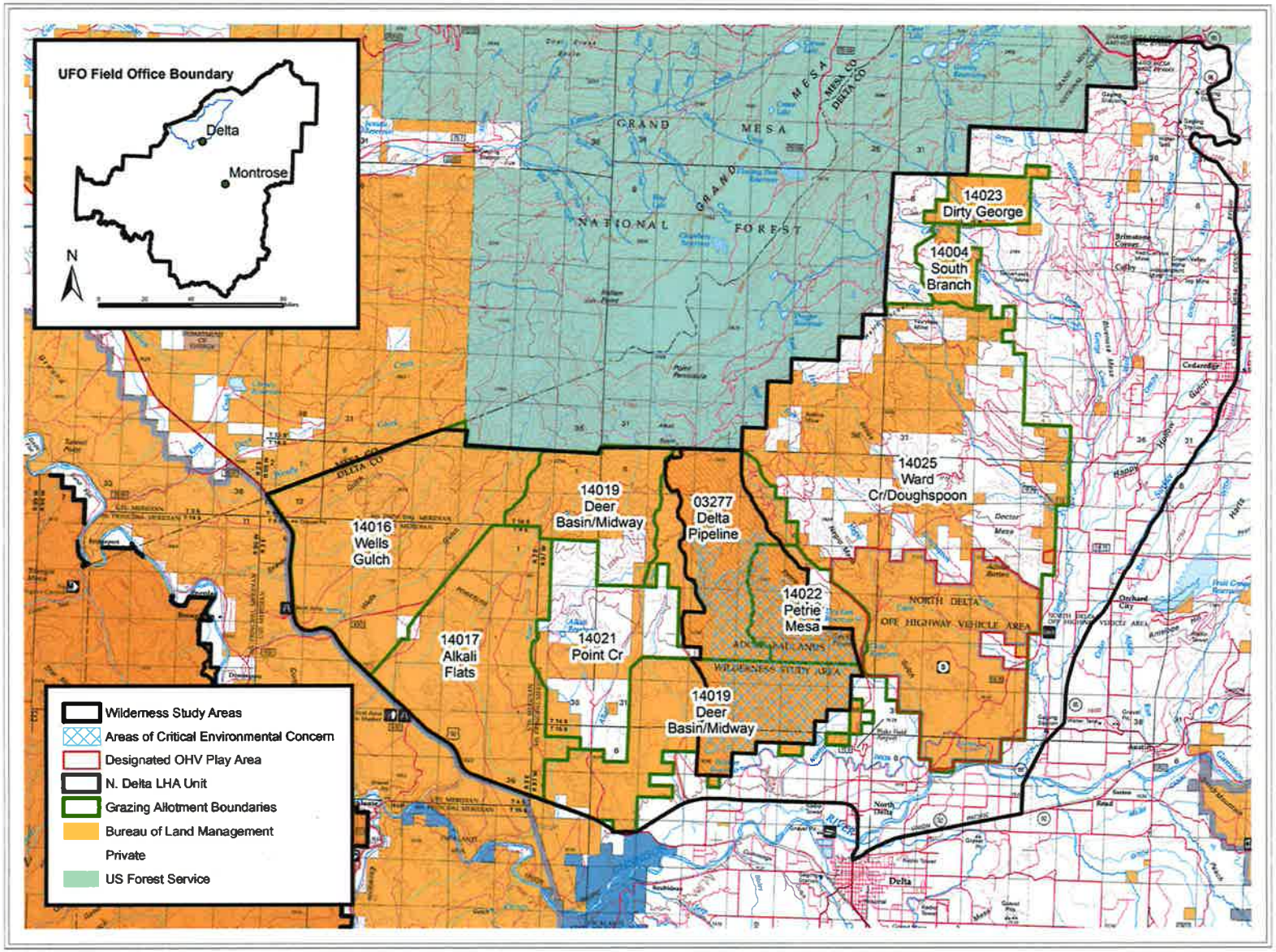
[1] BLM, 1996. Decision Record for Adoption of Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, November 1996
[2] BLM. 2013. Resource Management During Drought. Instruction Memorandum No. 2013-094, Bureau of Land Management, Washington DC.

Figure 1. North Delta LHA Unit



ISSUES AND CONCERNS:

The project area is located North of Delta Colorado within the North Delta LHA Unit (Figure 1) which includes the Adobe Badlands Outstanding Natural Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern. In addition part of the permit renewal area contains habitat and occurrences of Federally Listed species Colorado hookless cactus *(Sclerocactus glaucus*, Threatened), which may have conflicts with livestock management activities.

Portions of the project area are located in proximity to occupied Desert bighorn sheep habitat, which may have conflicts with domestic sheep grazing.

Portions of the project area contain habitat for Pronghorn antelope which are an important game animal on most salt-desert shrub ranges. There are several factors that promote healthy pronghorn herds including adequate water during the summer, desirable shrubs in the winter and forbs in the spring and summer. With large tracts in the project area meeting with problems or not meeting Standard 3 Healthy Vegetative Communities, the rangeland may not be providing adequate, browse, forbs and hiding cover for the sustainability of pronghorn herds.

Segments of the project area either did not meet or met with problems for both land health assessment (2002/2012) for Land Health Standards 1 (Soils), 3 (Healthy Communities) and/or 4 (Special Status Species) and for some allotments one of the causal factors was due to current livestock management. A Land Health Assessment summary by Allotment is listed in Table 1.

Drought has been defined by the Society of Range Management as "A prolonged chronic shortage of water, as compared to the norm, often associated with high temperatures and winds during spring, summer, and fall." The effects of drought are often far reaching, impacting the environment and economy of an area. Specific impacts depend on drought severity but often include decreased plant production and vigor, lack of forage and water, increased wind and water erosion, and associated impacts to wildlife, aquatic species, and livestock. Land health condition during drought often declines because drought reduces the soil's ability to capture and hold moisture, perennial plants die or decline in vigor, and weedy species increase[3]. The effects of drought become more severe on sites in low land health status, while sites in a higher level of land health will endure and recover more quickly after drought[4]. Livestock grazing when not managed properly can compound the damaging effects of drought on vegetation and land health.

Drought conditions are measured by the Drought Mitigation Center and reported by the U.S. Drought Monitor[5], using five key indicators. The indicators provide information on precipitation, soil moisture, streamflows, vegetation stress, and several blended indexes. Maps are produced by analysts showing the severity of drought conditions ranging across 6 categories (nothing, abnormally dry, moderate, severe, extreme, and exceptional.) Since the year 2000, the UFO has experienced periods of intense and impacting drought. In Delta County, the National

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[3] http://drought.unl.edu/ranchplan/DroughtBasics/GrassesDrought.aspx
[4] http://drought.unl.edu/ranchplan/DroughtBasics/GrazingDrought.aspx
[5] http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/

Drought Mitigation Center characterized conditions from abnormally dry to exceptional drought conditions 58% of the last 14 years. This is a little over 8 years out of the last 14. And of the 8 years, approximately 111 weeks (a little over 2 years) were characterized as extreme or exceptional drought conditions. Similar conditions were experienced in Montrose and San Miguel Counties during the same period.

Selenium and salinity are naturally occurring elements found in the marine sediments of the Mancos Shale. It can be easily mobilized by surface disturbing activities and delivered to nearby water ways by overland flow and erosional processes during storm events. Existing selenium levels in the Uncompahgre and Gunnison Rivers exceed State water quality standards.

There are economic and social ties associated with livestock grazing of federal public lands, on both BLM and USFS. Ferriday[6] determined that over 16% of private land in the six counties (Delta, Gunnison, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel) surrounding the Grand Mesa Uncompahgre (GMUG) National Forest may be economically tied to permitted livestock grazing on USFS lands and approximately 24% of the private land is associated with permitted livestock grazing on both BLM and USFS managed lands. With this stated the size of the ranch operations and corresponding fixed costs are often established based on availability of federal AUMs, and reduction in these AUMs implies that in the short term, fixed costs and debt must still be covered as animal units decrease. Net farm income and equity therefore decreases, and there is incentive for owners to consider selling and/or subdividing land for development, particularly given land prices in many areas surrounding national forests (GMUG National Forest[7]). Additionally, agriculture continues to be an important source of employment comprising 10% and 7% of all jobs in Delta and Montrose counties, respectively and 4% in the six county area[8]. With these agricultural jobs almost $30 million was being spent on hired farm and contract labor and $172 million dollars of agricultural product was sold across the six counties surrounding the GMUG and by association the surrounding BLM lands.[9]

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[6] Ferriday, J. 2004. Base Ranch Mapping for the GMUG Region. Perpared for USDA Forest Service. Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests. Delta. CO.

[7] USDA, 2006. Comprehensive Evaluation Report-Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, 2006. USDA-Forest Service. Delta, CO.

[8] BEA, 2003. US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)-Regional Economic Accounts-Local Area Annual Estimates-Interactive Tables (NAICS,2003;SIC,1987-1997)

[9] USDA, 2002. Economics, Statistics, and Market Information System-Agriculture Census-1987-2002. United States Department of Agriculture.

Table 1. Land Health Assessment Summary by Allotment

Allotment Name and Number (Class of Livestock)	*Land Health Assessment*													
	TE Plants[b]	*Bighorn*[c]	*ONA/ ACEC*	*Standard 1 Soils*[d]			*Standard 3 Healthy Communities*[d]			*Standard 4 Special Status Species*[d]			*LHA Issues*	*Weeds* [e]
				Meet	*MWP*	*NM*	*Meet*	*MWP*	*NM*	*Meet*	*MWP*	*NM*		
Alkali Flats 14017 (sheep)	✓	✓	N/A	0	7,923	901	0	3,151	5,673	0	3,151	5,673	Over all the allotment saw a decline in cover for forbs, shrubs [f], and increases in exotics[f].	IA, NW
Deer Basin/ Midway 14019 (sheep)	✓	✓	X (lower portion)	5,898	2,392	3,035	0	8,089	3,035	0	8,089	3,035	Over all exotics increased, decrease in shrubs[f], decrease in natives.	IA, NW
Delta Pipeline 03277 (sheep)	✓	✓	X	5,898	0	0	0	3,095	2,803	1,427	1,668	2,803	Problems with shrub cover, forbs, and increases in exotics	IA, NW
Dirty George 14023 (cattle)	N/A	N/A	N/A	580	677	0	1,257	0	0	1,390	0	0	This is a P/J site and the pooled trasects showed not significant concerns.	IA, NW

Allotment Name and Number (Class of Livestock)	*Land Health Assessment*													
	TE Plants[b]	*Bighorn*[c]	*ONA/ ACEC*	*Standard 1 Soils*[d]			*Standard 3 Healthy Communities*[d]			*Standard 4 Special Status Species*[d]			*LHA Issues*	*Weeds*[e]
				Meet	*MWP*	*NM*	*Meet*	*MWP*	*NM*	*Meet*	*MWP*	*NM*		
Petrie Mesa 14022 (sheep)	✓	✓	✓	2,006	767	0	0	2,006	767	0	2,006	767	Significantly low shrub cover, forb, and cool season grass cover. Sites dominated by exotics.	IA, NW
Point Creek 14021 (sheep)	✓	✓	N/A	1,601	0	0	608	0	993	608	993	0	High amounts of exotics on sites, low shrub and cool season grass cover.	IA, NW
South Branch 14004 (cattle)	N/A	N/A	N/A	402	372	0	774	0	0	774	0	0	Trees and Shrubs appropriate for P/J site	IA, NW
Wells Gulch 14016 (sheep)	✓	✓	N/A	9,890	381	0	2,835	7,436	0	3,325	6,950	0	Exotic weeds scattered, drought, Major ROW shrubs ok, some soil issues due to large storm event.	IA, NW

Allotment Name and Number (Class of Livestock)	Land Health Assessment													
	TE Plants[b]	Bighorn[c]	ONA/ ACEC	Standard 1 Soils[d]			Standard 3 Healthy Communities[d]			Standard 4 Special Status Species[d]			LHA Issues	Weeds[e]
				Meet	MWP	NM	Meet	MWP	NM	Meet	MWP	NM		
Ward Creek/ Dough Spoon 14025 (cattle)	✓	N/A		6,249	10,107	0	3,505	12,851	0	3,974	12,382	0	Overall the there is a lack of cool season grasses on the allotment, low forbs. Noxious and exotics are a problem.	IA, NW

[b] TE Plants—Allotments considered to be within the potential habitat or has occurrences of Colorado Hookless Cactus, (*Sclerocactus glaucus*) .
[c] Bighorn High—Allotments considered to be a high probability of interaction between domestic sheep and wild bighorn sheep; Bighorn Medium—Allotments considered to be a medium probability of interaction between domestic sheep and wild bighorn sheep; Bighorn Low—Allotments considered to be a low probability of interaction between domestic sheep and wild bighorn sheep
[d] Number of sample locations in category/Total number of samples for Allotment; Meet—Meets Land Health Standard; MWP—Meets Land Health Standard, but with Problems; NM—Does not meet Land Health Standard; Summarized from BLM 2012b.
[e] IA – Invasive Annuals; NW – Noxious Weeds
[f] statistically significant

Table 2. Land Health Acreage by Allotment for Standard 3 Vegetation "Not Meeting" or "Meeting with Problems with a Downward Trend" with Livestock Management a Contributing Factor.

Allotment	Public Land Acres	Not Meeting (NM) for LHS (Acres/[%])		Meeting with Problems (MP) for LHS		Problem Acres and Percent of Allotment	
		Total Acres NM	Acres NM with Livestock Mgt. Contributing	Total Acres MP	Total Acres MP Trend Down Livestock Mgt. Contributing	Acres Livestock Mgt. Contributing	Allotment % of Acres Livestock Mgt. Contributing
Alkali Flats, #14017	8,900	5,675	4,773	3,151	2,260	7,033	78%
Deer Basin/Midway, #14019	11,701	3,047	3,047	8,586	1,573	4,620	40%
Delta Pipeline # 03277	6,029	2,803	2,803	3,099	0	2,803	47%
Petrie Mesa #14022	2,841	767	767	2,006	0	767	27%
Point Creek #14021	1,586	995	995	0	0	995	62%
Wells Gulch # 14016	10,412	0	0	7,436	0	0	0

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action:

The BLM would issue livestock grazing permits with allotment specific terms and conditions within the North Delta LHA Unit. Under this alternative, grazing permit authorization(s)/ allocation(s) and terms and conditions may be modified so progress can be made towards meeting the fundamentals of rangeland health. Modifications may include reductions in AUMs, adjustments in season of use, more intensive livestock management, changes in percent public land, utilization, class of livestock or timing, intensity, or duration of grazing, or the use of other grazing seasons not stated on the permit etc. Additionally, modifications to the permit may be made in response to environmental events such as drought, heavy snow fall, and flooding etc. During times of drought, modifications will include advance planning and communication, field-level data collection and use of a variety of standard range management practices. The practices (hereafter referred to as Drought Response Tools or DRTs; will be applied during drought situations where and when necessary in grazing allotments.

Currently, there are allotments which are over allocated as supported by past and current Land Health Assessments, long term cover data, ecological site descriptions, and current utilization data. These allotments will have allocations (AUMs) adjusted to more closely represent forage availability and to allow the allotment to move towards meeting land health standards as supported by CFR §4110.3-2 and §4110.3-3. Where it is suggested AUMs be adjusted to better reflect sustainable rangeland grazing use in salt desert shrub communities AUMs could be permanently removed from the permit or a portion of AUMs could be placed in suspended use until vegetation treatments can be implemented, deemed successful, and forage availability returned to a sustainable level for salt desert shrub communities. Adjustments in AUMs will be phased in over a 3 year period. Grazing season utilization will be used as one of the tools to aid in determining if appropriate permit allocation levels are achieved (AUMs/carrying capacity). In addition, science-based utilization guidelines are included in permits as a starting point for appropriate range management, and 2 years of documented unapproved use above the guidelines will result in mandatory rest during the next grazing season. Utilization guidelines are for a given grazing season, within individual key areas, for key forage species. If long term utilization levels are consistently achieved and long term study data (cover and point intercept) indicate the allotment is still deteriorating, due to livestock management, a carrying capacity study will be initiated and allocation levels may be adjusted accordingly to better reflect forage availability on the allotment.

In the previous permit renewal the Alkali Flats and Wells Gulch allotments consisted of approximately 12,433 and 16,879 acres, respectively. During this process 3,464 acres will be removed from the Alkali Flats allotment to create the Huff Allotment #04294 and 6,536 acres will be removed from the Wells Gulch allotment to create the Dominguez Rims allotment #04293 both will be located within the Dominguez Escalante National Conservation Area. Design features, and Terms and Conditions for grazing permits are described below, and for each individual allotment in Table 4. Allotment Descriptions, Evaluations, and Modifications are

located in the Range analysis section of this EA. All permits will be analyzed with a two week variable window on each side of the on/off date (not to exceed AUMs) to account for seasonal variations in range condition and to promote cooperation and management of grazing permits administered by the United States Forest Service. Modifications to pemits and/or Terms and Conditions are subject to change as determined by the authorized officer and with consultation with the permittee.

Table 4. Proposed Allotment Permits including Terms and Conditions

Allotment # and Name	*Livestock Number/Kind*	*Grazing Period (MM/DD)* Begin	End	*%PL*	*Type Use*	*Current AUMs*	*Proposed AUMs*	*Suspended AUMs*	*Retired AUMs*	*Terms and Conditions*[1]
Alkali Flats #14017	1000/Sheep	12/01	02/28	100	Active	1,001	528	0	473	All Std's, BH-S, BH-M, All PTE, LE1,
Deer Basin/Midway #14019	1567/Sheep	12/01	02/12	96	Active	900	580	152	168	All Std's, BH-S, BH-M, All PTE, LE1,
Delta Pipeline #03277	1000/Sheep	12/01	03/01	100	Active	563	350	0	213	All Std's, BH-S, BH-M, All PTE, LE1,
Dirty George #14023	200/Cattle	10/15	10/20	100	Active	39	39	0	0	All Std's, R1-2
	205/Cattle	06/02	06/15	100	Active	94	94	0	0	All Std's, R1-2
Petrie Mesa #14022	1000/Sheep	12/09	03/01	100	Active	104	104	0	0	All Std's, BH-S, BH-M, All PTE, LE1,
Point Creek #14021	1000/Sheep	04/16	05/31	24	Active	29	29	0	0	All Std's, BH-S, BH-M, All PTE, LE1,
		OR								
		11/16	03/1	24	Active	73	73	0	0	All Std's, BH-S, BH-M, All PTE, LE1,
South Branch #14004	111/Cattle	10/15	10/29	65	Active	36	36	0	0	All Std's, R1-2
	112/Cattle	06/04	06/30	65	Active	65	65	0	0	All Std's, R1-2
Ward Creek/Dough Spoon #14025	25/Cattle	10/16	11/01	63	Active	9	9	0	0	All Std's, All PTE, LE1
	226/Cattle	05/27	06/15	64	Active	95	95	0	0	All Std's, All PTE, LE1
	226/Cattle	10/16	10/18	64	Active	14	14	0	0	All Std's, All PTE, LE1
	26/Cattle	10/16	10/27	100	Active	10	10	0	0	All Std's, All PTE, LE1
	58/Cattle	05/02	06/16	100	Active	88	88	0	0	All Std's, All PTE, LE1
	21/Cattle	05/02	06/16	100	Active	32	32	0	0	All Std's, All PTE, LE1
	11/Cattle	10/16	10/27	100	Active	4	4	0	0	All Std's, All PTE, LE1
	90/Cattle	10/16	11/02	100	Active	53	53	0	0	All Std's, All PTE, LE1
	142/Cattle	05/17	06/15	100	Active	140	140	0	0	All Std's, All PTE, LE1
Wells Gulch #14016	3245/Sheep	12/01	03/10	100	Active	1,449	1,449	0	0	All Std's, BH-S, BH-M, All PTE, LE1,

[1]Details of Terms and Conditions are listed above in the Grazing Terms and Conditions section.

Design Features (DF)

In addition to Terms and Conditions of the grazing permit described later in this document, the following are design features for this alternative.

Standard Design Features

- After collaboration with the permittee, modifications to the permit may be made in response to abnormal environmental events such as drought, heavy snow fall, and flooding etc. Modification may include timing, intensity, or duration of grazing, or the use of other grazing seasons not stated on the permit.
- During times of drought, the following design features will be implemented. Trigger points and drought monitoring processes are described in the Drought Detection and Monitoring Plan Appendix B.

Table 3. Drought

Trigger Point*	***Drought Management Objectives***
Moderate Drought	Assess conditions January 15 prior to spring turnout, and June 15 prior to fall or winter turnout. Send a drought notification letter informing permittees of the moderate drought conditions, reduced forage production, and the concern that if moisture doesn't come in the next few months to expect changes in management.
Severe Drought	If drought conditions are severe at March 15th or Aug 15th, schedule drought monitoring field visits to be conducted 2-4 weeks prior to turn out to assess field conditions. Permitees will be invited to assist in monitoring. Make conclusions and notify permittees if actions are needed. If field verified severe drought: • defer grazing past active growth; or • limit utilization to no less than 2-2.5 inch stubble height on rhizomatous species (not sod bound), 2.5-4 inches on bunchgrasses (depending upon key species), and shrub utilization to <15% of the leaders browsed (Holechek and Galt 2000, 2004)
Extreme Drought	If field verified extreme drought, manage for minimal use i.e.: • trailing only (active movement of livestock), • permit use of pastures meeting land health standards that have been rested prior years: limit utilization to no less than 2.5 inch stubble

*Trigger Point**	*Drought Management Objectives*
	height on rhizomatous species (not sod bound), 2.5-4 inches on bunchgrasses (depending upon key species), and shrub utilization to <15% of the leaders browsed (Holechek and Galt 2000, 2004) • During multi year drought implement complete rest
Post Drought Recovery (1-2 years following a severe or extreme drought episode)	Based on site specific field verification • Complete rest; or • defer grazing past active growth; and • limit utilization to no less than 2.5 inch stubble height on rhizomatous species (not sod bound), 2.5-4 inches on bunchgrasses (depending upon species), and shrub utilization to <15% of the leaders browsed (Holechek and Galt 2000, 2004)

* The Trigger Points used to initiate DRTs are Moderate, Severe, and Extreme Drought severity categories. These categories are established by the United States Drought Monitor (http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/). They describe different levels of drought in terms of regional impacts to water availability and crops as follows:

- Moderate Drought: Some damage to crops, pastures; streams, reservoirs, or wells, some water shortages developing or imminent; voluntary water-use restrictions requested
- Severe Drought: soil moisture and weekly streamflows estimated in the 6-10th percentile of normal, and impacts of crop or pasture losses likely; water shortages common; water restrictions imposed
- Extreme Drought: soil moisture and weekly streamflows estimated in the 3-5th percentile of normal, and impacts of major crop/pasture losses; widespread water shortages or restrictions

Bighorn Sheep Design Features

- Prohibit the changing of cattle to sheep in allotments with High probability levels of interaction with bighorn sheep until current science mitigates risk.
- Where possible shorten the time period spent close to known bighorn use areas.
- When opportunities arise, consider changing class of livestock in allotments to reduce the probability of interaction between domestic and wild sheep. These allotments would be evaluated on basis of site specific domestic/bighorn sheep information and probability levels.
- When opportunities arise, change sheep to cattle in allotments with High probability.

Terms and Conditions

Standard Terms and Conditions Common to All Permits (Std).

- Grazing will be limited to 18 days or less in each pasture or use area during the growing season to prevent grazing of plant re-growth. This limitation does not apply to dormant season grazing periods, as determined by the authorized officer.
- Grazing will be deferred on new vegetation treatments and rehabilitated burned areas to the extent necessary to comply with BLM Colorado Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (BLM 1997).
- Periodic authorization of grazing outside the time period (15 days pre and post grazing dates) specified in the grazing permit may be allowed with prior approval.
- Spring and fall grazing of BLM pastures or use areas occurring in the same year will usually not be authorized. Exceptions to accommodate grazing deferments associated with fire stabilization and rehabilitation, or vegetation treatments. This kind of authorization would be granted only after notification and consultation with the authorized officer.
- The BLM authorized officer must be contacted prior to any range project maintenance activity, e.g. cleaning of ponds or reservoirs with heavy equipment, which would involve soil surface disturbance. All heavy equipment will be washed and free of debris before entering BLM lands.
- The grazing permit authorizes motorized access off existing public routes for administrative and maintenance purposes of range improvement projects only. In areas where there is a concern for T&E plants see PTE3.
- Grazing will be managed in a way that does not encourage the establishment or spread of weeds or other invasive plants and does not conflict with efforts to treat such weeds and invasive plants.
- Salting, protein, energy, and mineral supplement sites must be at least ¼ mile (or as far as practical) from permanent water sources. The exception to this is placing salt in the bottom of reservoirs for sealing purposes. All energy sources (corn) will be fed on a harded surface such as a road and at least 200 meters (656 feet) ft of occupied Threatened and Endangered Plant habitat.
- 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 uncovered during any Allotment activities and grazing activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

  - whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;

- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the identified area can be used for grazing activities again and,

- Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, 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.

- 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 (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

- The Authorized Officer may approve higher level utilization when plant health will not be compromised and rapid plant re-growth is anticipated.

Riparian Terms and Conditions (R1-2)

R1. In riparian areas dormant and growing season utilization will be 10% lower than the utilization stated on the permit for native woody riparian species.

R2. Manage grazing in riparian or wet meadow habitat areas to maintain or move towards Properly Functioning Condition (PFC) and the desired riparian vegetation.

Big Horn Sheep Terms and Conditions

Terms and Conditions are additive from Some through High probability.

Some probability of Interaction (BH-S)

BH1. All ewes must be bred before turn out onto BLM.

BH2. Mandatory use of at least 2 guard dogs per band to deter co-mingling.

BH3. Only healthy domestic sheep shall be turned out onto BLM.

BH4. No scheduled lambing of domestic sheep shall occur on BLM.

BH5. Sweep allotments within 24 hours of moving off to capture any strays.

BH6. Use of marker sheep within bands; at least 1/100hd.

BH7. Remove sick, physically disabled or dead domestic sheep from the band and BLM lands as soon as possible after discovery.

BH8. Use only highly gregarious breeds of domestic sheep.

BH9. Maintain a band of no greater than 2000 head based on manageability by herder.

Moderate Probability of Interaction (BH-M)

BH10. Mandatory use of at least 3 guard dogs per band to deter co-mingling in Moderate Probability allotments

BH11. During spring use, limit band size for ewes with lambs. Numbers would be determined on a permit by permit basis based on site specific information.

BH12. Require a submission of dead report to be turned in at the end of the grazing season.

BH13. No yearling ewes will be turned out during the Desert bighorn sheep breeding season (Aug1.- September 30).

BH14. Decrease probability of interaction between bighorn and domestic sheep by creating barriers to movement (fences, herding, hazing, etc.) utilizing available topographic and natural barriers where feasible.

High Probability of Interaction (BH-H)

BH15. Prohibit the changing of cattle to sheep in allotments with High probability levels until current science mitigates risk.

BH16. When opportunities arise, exchange sheep with cattle in allotments with High probability.

BH17. Maintain a band of no greater than 2000 head based on manageability by herder, and shorten the time period spent close to known bighorn use areas.

BH18. Mandatory use of at least 4 guard dogs per band to deter co-mingling

Plant T&E Terms and Conditions (PTE)

(ES/GJ-6-CO-12-F-006, TAILS 06E24100-2012-F-0020)

PTE1. No concentrations of livestock activities including but not limited to herding, routine trailing, bedding (except dispersed), salt or supplement, portable watering and new range improvements will be allowed within 200 meters (656 feet) of plant populations.

PTE2. To minimize sheep grazing impacts in allotments containing Colorado hookless cactus, limit sheep grazing within 200 meters (656 feet) of occupied habitat to 5 nights per use area.

PTE3. Within 200 meters (656 ft) of listed plants, motorized access for livestock grazing operations will be limited to existing roads and routes. The exception is retrieval of sick, down, or dead animals.

PTE4. No concentrations of livestock activities including but not limited to herding, routine trailing, bedding(except dispersed), salt or supplement, portable watering, will be allowed within 200 meters (656') of known endangered plant populations, exceptions are provided in the BO pg. 15 for this T&C.

PTE5. As a standard permit term and condition within occupied habitat of threaten and endangered plant species, grazing season utilization levels of palatable perennial forage will be limited to approximately 35% except around congregation areas for example ponds, watering areas, fences, bedgrounds, and cattle guards.

PTE6. The permittee will be required to notify the BLM authorized officer at least 48 hours in advance of trailing activities.

Salt Desert Shrub

LE1. Allotments meeting with problems trend downward or not meeting for Land Health Standards in salt desert shrub communities will have seasonal utilization levels on palatable perennial forage species limited to 35%.

Alternative 1

This alternative develops a reduced-grazing strategy proportionate to the percent of the allotment not meeting or meeting with problems with a downward trend, with livestock management as one of the significant causal factors, for LHS 3 Vegetation. All other allotments remain the same as the proposed alternative. All Terms and Conditions remain the same as under the proposed alternative (See Terms and Conditions section for Proposed Alternative).

Table 5. Alternative 1 Proposed Allotment Permits

Allotment Name and Number	Livestock Number/ Kind	Public Land Allotment Acres	Grazing period (MM/DD)		% PL	Type Use	Current AUMs (Percent Reduction*)	Proposed Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Retired AUMs
			Begin	End						
Alkali Flats # 14017	1920 Sheep	8,900	12/1	3/1	100	Active	1387(78%)	305	223	859
Deer Basin/ Midway #14019	1567 Sheep	11,701	12/1	3/1	100	Active	900(40%)	540	192	168
Delta Pipeline # 03277	1200 Sheep	6,029	12/1	3/1	100	Active	563(47%)	298	52	213
Petrie Mesa #14022	1000 Sheep	2,841	12/1	3/1	100	Active	104(27%)	76	28	0
Point Creek #14021	1000 Sheep	1,586	4/16 or 11/16	5/31 or 3/1	24	Active	102(62%)	39	63	0

Alternative 2 (No Grazing)

Livestock grazing permits would not be renewed. The no grazing alternative would deny all applications for grazing permit renewal. Permits would be expire at the end of their current ten-year authorization, and no further grazing would take place on any allotment within the project area.

Alternative 3 (No Action)

The no-action alternative would re-issue all the livestock grazing permits with the same Authorizations, and Terms and Conditions that are on the existing permit. This alternative does not take into account "making significant progress toward or maintaining watersheds as stated in §4180.1 Fundamentals of Rangeland Health". Terms and Conditions are found in Appendix C.

Table 6. No Action (Current) Grazing Allotments and Authorization

Allotment Name and Number	*Public Land Acres*[1]	*Class of Livestock*	*Season of Use*	*Active AUM's*	*% Public Land*[1]	*Existing Allotment Category*[2]
Alkali Flats #14017	12,433	Sheep	Winter/Early Spring	1,387	100	I
Deer Basin/Midway #14019	11,701	Sheep	Winter/Early Spring	900	96	I
Delta Pipeline #03277	6,029	Sheep	Winter/Early Spring	563	100	I
Dirty George #14023	1,389	Cattle	Summer/Fall	133	100	M
Petrie Mesa #14022	2,841	Sheep	Winter/Early Spring	104	100	M
Point Creek #14021	1,586	Sheep	Winter/ Spring	102	24	C
South Branch #14004	825	Cattle	Summer/Fall	101	65	M
Ward Creek/Dough Spoon #14025	17,190	Cattle	Spring/Fall	445	63-100	I
Wells Gulch #14016	16,879	Sheep	Winter/Early Spring	2,366	100	I

[1] Dependant on the permitees private land acres unfenced in an allotment.

[2] C—least intensive management; M—less intensive management with an objective of maintaining resource condition; I— most intensive management with objective of improving resource condition

Table 7. Summary of Alternatives

Allotments	Changes	No Action (*Current Management*)	Proposed Action	Alternative 1	Alternative 2 (*No Grazing*)
Alkali Flats # 14017	AUMs	1,387	528	305	N/A
	Upland Utilization	50% on higher elevation 35% on stoney saltdesert where basal ground cover is <10%	35%	Same as Proposed	
	Grazing Strategy	none	Use areas will be delineated with periodic rest incorporated	Same as Proposed	
	Terms &Conditions, Design Features	See Appendix "C" for individual permit T&C	Std's, BH-M, All PTE, LE1, R1, R2	Same as Proposed	
	Acres	12,433	8,900	Same as Proposed	
	Allotment Category	I	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
Deer Basin/Midway #14019	AUMs	900	732	540	N/A
	Upland Utilization	50%	35%	Same as Proposed	
	Grazing Strategy	none	none	Same as Proposed	
	Terms &Conditions, Design Features	See Appendix "C" for individual permit T&C	Std's, BH-M, All PTE, LE1	Same as Proposed	
	Acres	11,701	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
	Allotment Category	I	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
Delta Pipeline #03277	AUMs	563	350	298	N/A
	Upland Utilization	50% on high country 35% on stoney saltdesert where basal ground cover is <10%	35%	Same as Proposed	
	Grazing Strategy	none	Use areas will be delineated with periodic rest incorporated	Same as Proposed	
	Terms &Conditions, Design Features	See Appendix "C" for individual permit T&C	Std's, BH-M, All PTE, LE1	Same as Proposed	
	Acres	6,029	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
	Allotment Category	I	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	

Allotments	Changes	No Action (*Current Management*)	Proposed Action	Alternative 1	Alternative 2 (*No Grazing*)
Dirty George #14023	AUMs	100	133	N/A	N/A
	Upland Utilization	50%	50%	Same as Proposed	
	Grazing Strategy	none	none	Same as Proposed	
	Terms &Conditions, Design Features	See Appendix "C" for individual permit T&C	Std's	Same as Proposed	
	Acres	1,389	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
	Allotment Category	"M"	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
Petrie Mesa #14022	AUMs	104	104	76	N/A
	Utilization	50%	35%	Same as Proposed	
	Grazing Strategy	none	Use areas will be delineated and a grazing strategy developed.	Same as Proposed	
	Terms &Conditions, Design Features	See Appendix "C" for individual permit T&C	Std's, BH-M, All PTE, LE1	Same as Proposed	
	Acres	2,841	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
	Allotment Category	"M"	"I"	Same as Proposed	
Point Creek #14021	AUMs	102	29	39	N/A
	Upland Utilization	N/A	35%	Same as Proposed	
	Grazing Strategy	none	none	Same as Proposed	
	Terms &Conditions, Design Features	See Appendix "C" for individual permit T&C	Std's, BH-M, All PTE, LE1	Same as Proposed	
	Acres	1,586	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
	Allotment Category	"M"	"I"	Same as Proposed	
South Branch #14004	AUMs	101	101	N/A	N/A
	Upland Utilization	50%	50%	Same as Proposed	
	Grazing Strategy	none	none	Same as Proposed	
	Terms &Conditions, Design Features	See Appendix "C" for individual permit T&C	Std's	Same as Proposed	
	Acres	825	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
	Allotment Category	"M"	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	

Allotments	Changes	No Action (*Current Management*)	Proposed Action	Alternative 1	Alternative 2 *(No Grazing)*
Ward Creek/Dough Spoon #14025	AUMs	445	445	N/A	N/A
	Upland Utilization	50%	35% low elevation 50% high elevation	Same as Proposed	
	Grazing Strategy	none	none	Same as Proposed	
	Terms &Conditions, Design Features	See Appendix "C" for individual permit T&C	Std's, PTE, LE1,R2	Same as Proposed	
	Acres	17,190	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
	Allotment Category	"I"	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
Wells Gulch #14016	AUMs	2,366	1,433	N/A	N/A
	Upland Utilization	50%	35%	Same as Proposed	
	Grazing Strategy	Has delineated use areas and manages deferred grazing rotation system	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	
	Terms &Conditions, Design Features	See Appendix "C" for individual permit T&C	Std's, BH-M, All PTE, LE1	Same as Proposed	
	Acres	16,879	10,343	Same as Proposed	
	Allotment Category	"I"	Same as No Action	Same as No Action	

DESCRIBE THE SCOPING PROCESS USED FOR THE LHA PROCESS

The LHA scoping consisted of sending informational letters out to the permittee's , local counties, and interested publics. The information was also available on the UFO web page for public viewing.

DESCRIBE ADDITIONAL SCOPING TO BE DONE FOR THIS EA

The EA will go out for public review and comment for 30 days. Letters will be sent to permittee's, local counties, and interested parties along with the posting displayed on the UFO NEPA web page.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW

The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5-3, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: Uncompahgre Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision
Date Approved: 1989
Decision Number/Page: 11
Decision Language: Suitable public lands will be available for livestock grazing use.

Other Authorities:

Taylor Grazing Act (43 U.S.C. §§ 315-316o, June 28, 1934, as amended 1936, 1938, 1939, 1942, 1947, 1948, 1954 and 1976) was the first federal effort to regulate grazing on federal public lands. It establishes grazing districts and uses a permitting system to manage livestock grazing in the districts.

§ 315b. Grazing Permits. The Secretary is authorized to issue permits to graze livestock in grazing districts to settlers, residents and other stock owners upon the annual payment of reasonable fees. Permits must be for a period of not more than ten years, with renewal subject to the discretion of the Secretary, who shall specify numbers of stock and seasons of use. During periods of range depletion due to severe drought or other natural causes, or during epidemics, the Secretary may remit, reduce, refund in whole or part, or postpone payment of grazing fees for the time the emergency exists. Grazing privileges must be safeguarded adequately but must not create any right, title, interest or estate in or to the lands.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 U.S.C.1752) states that Public lands will be managed on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield.

§ 402. Grazing leases and permits. Permits and leases for domestic livestock grazing on public lands issued by the Secretary... shall be for a term of ten years subject to such Terms and Conditions the Secretary concerned deems appropriate.

Standards for Public Land Health: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. A finding for each standard will be made in the environmental analysis (next section).

Standard	Definition/Statement
#1 Upland Soils	Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes. Adequate soil infiltration and permeability allows for the accumulation of soil moisture necessary for optimal plant growth and vigor, and minimizes surface runoff.
#2 Riparian Systems	Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water, function properly and have the ability to recover from major surface disturbances such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods. Riparian vegetation captures sediment, and provides forage, habitat and bio-diversity. Water quality is improved or maintained. Stable soils store and release water slowly.
#3 Plant and Animal Communities	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. Plants and animals at both the community and population level are productive, resilient, diverse, vigorous, and able to reproduce and sustain natural fluctuations, and ecological processes.
#4 Threatened and Endangered Species	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.
#5 Water Quality	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. Water Quality Standards for surface and ground waters include the designated beneficial uses, numeric criteria, narrative criteria, and anti-degradation requirements set forth under State law as found in (5 CCR 1002-8), as required by Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act.

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