U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-110-2012-0058-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: 0501422

PROJECT NAME: Fawn Creek RBC 69 Stock Water Trough and Storage Tank

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T2S R97W Sec 32 SE

APPLICANT: LOV Ranch

PURPOSE & NEED FOR THE ACTION: The purpose of the action is to provide adequate water on the Fawn Creek grazing allotment #06024 to improve livestock distribution. The need for the action is established by the BLM's responsibility under the Federal Lands Policy Management Act (FLPMA) and the Taylor Grazing Act to respond to permittee requests for range improvements to enhance livestock management on public lands.

Decision to be Made: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) White River Field Office (WRFO) will decide whether or not to issue a range improvement permit authorizing the placement of a stock water trough and storage tank, and if so, with what terms and conditions.

SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AND ISSUES:

Scoping: Scoping was the primary mechanism used by the BLM to initially identify issues. Internal scoping was initiated when the project was presented to the WRFO interdisciplinary team on 02/28/2012. External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 03/13/2012. As of 09/14/2012, no comments or inquiries have been received.

Issues: No issues were identified.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: The Fawn Creek allotment #06024 is a 21,000 acre allotment located in the Piceance Basin in Rio Blanco County (Exhibit A). The north edge of the allotment borders Piceance Creek Road (Rio Blanco County (RBC) road 5) and RBC road 26 and the allotment extends approximately 18 miles to the southwest. The allotment is divided into several

pastures. Elevation in the allotment ranges from 6,200 feet along Piceance Creek to 8,400 feet on the ridges of the summer pasture.

Park Reservoir, range improvement project #0201123, is approximately ¼ mile east of the proposed water trough and tank site and is divided between the Fawn Creek and Slash EV allotments. This pond, built in the 1950s, is in good condition but rarely holds water anymore. The proposed water trough and tank site is in the lower 1/3 of the Dry Gulches pasture of the Fawn Creek allotment. This is a spring use area in the lower, northern portion of the allotment. The water tank would provide a reliable water source in this area to allow livestock to make better use of the forage in this area before they graze toward the upper portions of this pasture. Without this water source livestock move through the area quickly making little use of the forage available and spend an extended timeframe further south in the higher elevation end of this pasture.

Proposed Action: The livestock operator has requested to place a 5,000 gallon water storage tank and an 8 foot round water trough near the intersection of RBC 69 and BLM road 1013 in existing disturbance. The livestock operator has had a truck mounted tank at this location for the past two years but would like to be permitted for a more permanent, less obtrusive set-up at this site. The proposed tank will replace the truck which will be removed.

Design Features: Water would be hauled from a well on private base property to the site by truck using existing roads. Water would only be hauled to the site for the timeframe livestock are in this area (early-May to mid-June). The new storage tank would be placed on blocks beside the existing water trough and on existing surface disturbance adjacent to the road. The water trough would be filled by gravity flow from the new storage tank. Pipe fence panels would be placed to prevent livestock from rubbing on the storage tank or fill pipe or from walking in the water trough.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, no storage tank or water trough would be placed on BLM land for livestock watering, and no water would be hauled to this site. The existing truck mounted storage tank and water trough would be removed. There would be no reliable water source in the lower, northern portion of the Dry Gulches pasture. Due to lack of water in this area livestock would move through this end of the pasture quickly. Forage in this area would be under-utilized and forage higher up in the southern end of the pasture would be grazed for a longer period of time.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:

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: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (White River ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: 2-23

Decision Language: *"With minor exceptions, livestock grazing will be managed as described in the 1981 Rangeland Program Summary (RPS). That document is the Record of Decision for the 1981 White River Grazing Management Final Environmental Impact Statement (Grazing EIS). These documents along with the RPS updates issued in 1981 and 1984, address five major actions."* including *"5) identification of range improvements to enhance rangeland productivity and management."*

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Standards for Public Land Health: In January 1997, the Colorado BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, special status species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis (EA). These findings are located in specific elements listed below.

Cumulative Effects Analysis Assumptions: Cumulative effects are defined in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1508.7) as "...the impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions." Table 1 lists the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the area that might be affected by the Proposed Action: for this project the area considered was the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) 5th Level Watershed. However, the geographic scope used for analysis may vary for each cumulative effects issue and is described in the Affected Environment section for each resource.

Table 1. Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

Action Description	STATUS		
	Past	Present	Future
Livestock Grazing	X	X	X
Wild Horse Gathers	No	No	No
Recreation	X	X	X
Invasive Weed Inventory and Treatments	X	X	X
Range Improvement Projects : Water Developments Fences & Cattleguards	X	X	X
Wildfire and Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation	X	X	X
Wind Energy Met Towers	No	No	X
Oil and Gas Development: Well Pads Access Roads	X	X	X

Action Description	STATUS		
	Past	Present	Future
Pipelines Gas Plants Facilities			
Power Lines	X	X	X
Oil Shale	X	X	X
Seismic	X	X	X
Vegetation Treatments	X	X	X

Affected Resources:

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

Table 2. Resources and Determination of Need for Further Analysis

Determination[1]	Resource	Rationale for Determination
Physical Resources		
NI	Air Quality	Emissions from the trucks used to fill the tank would be minor and consistent with casual use.
NI	Geology and Minerals	The proposed water storage tank and stock water trough would not affect mineral or geologic resources associated the allotment.
NI	Soil Resources*	Soils at the location have been disturbed by the current truck mounted tank, additional compaction or disturbance is negligible.
NI	Surface and Ground Water Quality*	Since no new surface disturbance is expected and the tank is filled by truck no impacts are expected to surface or groundwater.
Biological Resources		
NP	Wetlands and Riparian Zones*	There are no riparian areas in the vicinity that could conceivably be affected by this project.
PI	Vegetation*	See discussion below.
PI	Invasive, Non-native Species	See discussion below.
PI	Special Status Animal Species*	See discussion below.
NP	Special Status Plant Species*	There are no known populations of special status plant species within the allotment. Special status plant species will not be affected by the Proposed Action.
NI	Migratory Birds	The project proposed represents the continuation of an existing livestock watering practice that helps moderate overall reductions of herbaceous ground cover across a portion (about 20%) of a 21,000 acre pasture during the late spring and early summer months. Increasing the duration of spring livestock use in lower elevation sagebrush shrublands during the earliest portions of the migratory

Determination[1]	Resource	Rationale for Determination
		bird nest season does not detract substantially from nest habitat conditions afforded it's avian community (primarily Brewer's and vesper sparrow, green-tailed and spotted towhee) and allows for the redevelopment of residual ground cover through the June brooding period. Alternately, the progressive decline in herbaceous height and density attributable to livestock use in the pasture's higher elevation shrublands would be deferred slightly and the ultimate degree of ground cover attrition during the nesting season would decline commensurate with the abbreviated duration of use. These modest benefits would apply to the same avian community.
NI	Aquatic Wildlife*	The portion of the pasture influenced by this project does not involve any perennial system that is capable of supporting an aquatic community.
NI	Terrestrial Wildlife*	The project proposed represents the continuation of an existing livestock watering practice that helps moderate overall reductions of herbaceous ground cover across a portion (about 20%) of a 21,000 acre pasture during the late spring and early summer months. Increasing the duration of spring livestock use at lower elevations of the pasture does not detract from the big game seasonal forage base and would allow sufficient time for the redevelopment of residual ground cover for later summer, fall, winter, and early spring use by big game and non-game species. Reductions in herbaceous ground cover on upper elevation ranges along the eastern edge of this pasture would be deferred slightly and the ultimate degree of ground cover attrition would decline commensurate with the abbreviated duration of use.
NP	Wild Horses	The project is not located near the Piceance East Douglas Herd Management Area, the North Piceance Herd Area, or the West Douglas Herd Area. No wild horses are known to be in the area.
Heritage Resources and the Human Environment		
NI	Cultural Resources	The Proposed Action will be located in an area of prior ground disturbance, and has been covered by various cultural surveys. This action is not anticipated to have any impacts to cultural resources.
NI	Paleontological Resources	Project is in area mapped as Uinta Formation (Tweto 1979) a Potential Fossil Yield Classification 4/5 however no excavations into subsurface are proposed; therefore no impacts to fossil are anticipated.
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	There are no known concerns, and the Ute Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation has expressed the desire to not be consulted with on small range projects such as this.
PI	Visual Resources	See discussion below.
NI	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	There is potential for minor spills of vehicle fluids such as oil and anti-freeze when the truck hauls water to this site. All minor spills that might occur should be contained immediately using absorbent materials and removed from the site with other trash to a Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) approved disposal facility.
NI	Fire Management	There are no anticipated impacts to the ability to follow the fire management plan.
NI	Social and Economic Conditions	There would not be any substantial changes to local social or economic conditions.

Determination[1]	Resource	Rationale for Determination
NP	Environmental Justice	According to recent Census Bureau statistics (2000), there are no minority or low income populations within the WRFO.
	Resource Uses	
NI	Forest Management	Grazing has not been shown to impact pinyon-juniper woodlands. Any potential affect would be to the understory species which is analyzed in the *Vegetation* Section below.
PI	Rangeland Management	See discussion below.
NI	Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights	There are no floodplains impacted by the project and the Proposed Action will not modify surface hydrology at the site beyond compaction from the tank and cattle use, which is already occurring. Water rights will not be impacted if the identified water source is used to fill the tank.
NI	Realty Authorizations	Rights-of-ways are present, however, no impacts would be expected.
NI	Recreation	The Proposed Action is not anticipated to impact recreation in the area.
NI	Access and Transportation	The Proposed Action is not anticipated to impact access or transportation in or around the project area.
NP	Prime and Unique Farmlands	There are no Prime and Unique Farmlands within the project area.
	Special Designations	
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	There are no ACECs within the project area.
NP	Wilderness	There are no WSAs in the project area.
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	There are no Wild and Scenic Rivers in the WRFO.
NP	Scenic Byways	There are no Scenic Byways within the project area.

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

VEGETATION

Affected Environment: The proposed project would occur in an open grass/shrub rolling loam range site. Predominant vegetation includes Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata, wyomingensis)*, winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata)*, low rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), horsebrush (*Tetradymia canescens*), antelope bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), western wheat (*Pascopyrum smithii)*, Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), squirreltail (*Sitanion hystrix*), Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides)*, Junegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides)* and cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum)*.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Placement of the proposed water storage tank and trough would result in annual trampling disturbance of approximately 0.25 acre of vegetation in the

immediate area around the project. Vegetation in this immediate area would be subjected to short-term but intense trampling caused when livestock congregate around the water. Trampling of vegetation would result in increased soil exposure and reduced plant vigor and diversity in the affected area. Indirect impacts include the increased potential for non-native/noxious plant introduction and establishment, accelerated wind and water erosion, and changes in visual aesthetics. Impacts would occur annually during the period livestock are present. There would be minor long-term impacts as the disturbed area would be revegetated if the tank and trough are removed in the future.

Cumulative Effects: The proposed tank and trough placement when added to other projects and developments in the general project area as well as within the Piceance Basin as a whole would result in an increase in short-term trampling of existing vegetation. Of the total potential vegetation trampling near the project area, the proposed project would not result in a noteworthy increase in vegetation disturbance or long-term changes in plant community. Improving livestock use in the lower northern end of this pasture will benefit vegetation in the upper southern portion of the pasture by helping balance the overall utilization in the Dry Gulches pasture.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Denial of the project would result in there being no water source at this location so livestock would continue making minimal grazing use in this general area. Most grazing use would occur in the upper, southern end of the pasture. Livestock distribution in this pasture would be diminished resulting in less even utilization of available forage. The continued heavier grazing use in the upper end of this pasture could result in negative effects to the cover and composition of the plant communities in that area and put those areas at higher risk of noxious weed establishment.

Cumulative Effects: Denial of the proposed project would have a minor impact on the cumulative effect of grazing on the vegetative community in the Dry Gulches pasture of this allotment. Impacts would be related to reduced livestock distribution due to lack of water in the northern end of this pasture.

Mitigation: Upon future removal of this tank and trough the livestock operator will promptly, at the first appropriate seeding window, seed the trampled area with the following seed mix:

Cultivar	Common Name	Scientific Name	Application Rate (lbs PLS/acre)
Arriba	Western Wheatgrass	*Pascopyrum smithii*	4
Rimrock	Indian Ricegrass	*Achnatherum hymenoides*	3.5
Whitmar	Bluebunch Wheatgrass	*Pseudoroegneria spicata ssp. inermis*	4
Lodorm	Green Needlegrass	*Nassella viridula*	2.5
Timp	Northern Sweetvetch	*Hedysarum boreale*	3
	Sulphur Flower Buckwheat	*Eriogonum umbellatum*	1.5
	Scarlet Globemallow	*Sphaeralcea coccinea*	0.5

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard #3 for Plant and Animal Communities: With successful re-vegetation, the Proposed Action would have no effect on the status of Land Health Standard 3 in the project area or at a landscape scale.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: There are no known weeds presently at the project site. Colorado State Listed weeds known to occur in the general area are: cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum),* common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officianale),* musk thistle *(Carduus acanthoides)* and bull thistle *(Cirsium vulgare)*. Other common weeds present in the general area include kochia (*Kochia scoparia*) and Russian thistle (*Salsola australis*).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Placement of the proposed tank and trough will result in a relatively small trampled area around the water source. This site would be vulnerable to the establishment of noxious weeds. Cheatgrass occurrences are scattered throughout the general area along roadsides and in disturbed areas so it would be likely to establish in the area immediately surrounding the tank and trough. Establishment of noxious or invasive weeds on the disturbed soils around the tank and trough could provide additional seed sources that would help to expand the occurrence of these species into adjacent plant communities. Better balancing the grazing use throughout the Dry Gulches pasture would reduce the grazing pressure in the upper southern end of the pasture allowing these plant communities to be more resistant to establishment of noxious and invasive plant species.

Cumulative Effects: The proposed project could contribute to the noxious and invasive plant species present in the immediate and adjacent areas. However, existing disturbances in the general area are common sources of invasive and noxious weeds, so elimination of these species from the general area may be unlikely.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Without a reliable water source in the lower northern end of this pasture livestock grazing use in this pasture would remain unbalanced with more grazing pressure at the upper southern end. Plant communities in the upper end of the pasture would be more vulnerable to establishment and spread of noxious weeds. Noxious and invasive plants would continue to be present within the vicinity of the project and, depending on the aggressiveness of weed treatment activities, may continue to spread.

Cumulative Effects: Cumulative effects would be similar to those from the Proposed Action.

Mitigation: The livestock operator will monitor the tank and trough location for the duration of its placement to detect the presence of noxious and invasive species. The livestock operator will eliminate any noxious weeds before seed production has occurred. Application of pesticides and herbicides on public lands will conform to BLM Manual 9015 and Appendix B of the BLM White River RMP, Management of Noxious Weeds (BLM 1997). Eradication would make use of materials and methods approved in advance by the Authorized Officer.

SPECIAL STATUS ANIMAL SPECIES

Affected Environment: Two special status animals, the Endangered Species Act candidate greater sage-grouse and BLM-sensitive Brewer's sparrow, are the only species that would have any reasonable likelihood of being influenced by the Proposed Action. The upper end of the pasture encompasses about 550 acres of general greater sage-grouse habitat. Based on BLM's experience and a limited amount of telemetry data generated by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, current use of these ranges by grouse is spare, however, the ridgeline habitats encompassed by the pasture remain suited for year-round occupation and are important in the context of habitat available for expansion and eventual recovery of the Parachute-Piceance-Roan (PPR) sage-grouse population. Brewer's sparrows are common and distributed widely in all sagebrush shrubland habitats in the pasture. Discussions concerning this migratory bird are integral with that presented in Table 2 above.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:
Direct and Indirect Effects: Water made available at lower elevation portions of the pasture would increase the duration and intensity of livestock use on shrublands that are about 4 miles removed from the accepted extent of ridgeline shrublands that have potential to serve as sage-grouse habitat. Water made available in this park would help stall movement of cattle to higher elevation portions of the pasture that are capable of supporting grouse, reducing both the intensity and duration of livestock grazing influences on the density and height of herbaceous ground cover that are important constituents of nesting and early brood cover for sage-grouse. Regardless of the degree of change effected by the Proposed Action, the net result would undoubtedly be positive. The Proposed Action would thereby meet the BLM's sage-grouse interim management policy (IM 2012-043) for grazing management actions, i.e., plan and authorize range improvement projects in a way that maintains and/or improves greater sage-grouse habitat.

Cumulative Effects: The Proposed Action would allow for incremental improvement in the condition of sage-grouse nest and brood-rearing ranges and would complement efforts being made by private entities, the State, and the BLM (e.g., clustered/deferred fluid mineral development, woodland encroachment removal) in maintaining the integrity of sage-grouse habitats in the PPR.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:
Direct and Indirect Effects: Failure to authorize water development would necessitate cattle moving rapidly through the lower end of the pasture and making exaggerated use of herbaceous ground cover available in the pasture's higher-elevation general sage-grouse habitats.

Cumulative Effects: Failure to take advantage of an opportunity to improve grazing management in this allotment would essentially constitute a detrimental action that would add incrementally to those land uses and processes that adversely influence sage-grouse and their habitat (e.g., oil and gas development, excessive grazing use, modified successional advance).

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard #4 for Special Status Species: There is an insufficient understanding of sage-grouse habitat preferences on which to base definitive cause and effect relationships regarding the continued range-wide decline of sage-grouse populations. However, it is inevitable that the Proposed Action, by deferring use and reducing overall grazing effects on herbaceous ground cover, would provide at least modest benefits to sage-grouse nesting and brood-rearing conditions on a minimum of 200 and up to 550 acres of general sage-grouse habitat within the eastern portion of the pasture. The Proposed Action would, therefore, remain consistent with the land health standard. The No Action Alternative, in contrast, may aggravate grazing effects on ground cover conditions and would not be considered consistent with the intent of the standard.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The Project Area is located in an area classified as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class III. The objective for Class III areas is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate, and any changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Proposed Action would likely not be visible to a casual observer traveling along paved routes in the area. Most people traveling along unpaved roads in the area are energy-related personnel, local ranchers, and seasonal big game hunters. The water storage tank would be visible to those travelling on County Road 69, BLM Road 1013 (Hunter Creek Cut), and other un-numbered BLM roads in the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Action. All above-ground facilities would be painted to mimic and blend with the surrounding vegetation. Therefore, the level of change to the characteristic landscape would be less than moderate and the objectives of the VRM III classification would be retained.

Cumulative Effects: None have been identified.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: As the Proposed Action would not occur, there would be no impacts to visual resources.

Cumulative Effects: None have been identified.

Mitigation: The 5,000 gallon storage tank will be painted Juniper Green from the BLM Standard Environmental Color Chart CC-001: June 2008.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed storage tank and water trough would be in the Dry Gulches pasture of the Fawn Creek allotment #06024. The Dry Gulches pasture is approximately 11 miles long on the eastern side where the proposed tank and trough would be installed. There are several earthen ponds throughout this pasture but they don't provide a reliable source of water, especially on dry years. This pasture is generally grazed in the spring from May 1 through June 20. The Fawn Creek allotment is permitted for livestock use as follows:

Allotment		Permit	Livestock		Period of	Percent	Public	Authorized Use
Nr.	Name	Nr.	Nr.	Kind	Use	Public Land	Acres	(AUM)
06024	Fawn Creek	0501422	906	C	5/1 – 11/15	70	19,239	1,749

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Currently due to limited water availability livestock are not able to make much grazing use in the lower northern end of the Dry Gulches pasture. They tend to trail toward the upper southern portion of the pasture where water is more reliable and stay there for most of the timeframe they are in this pasture. Providing a reliable water source toward the northern end of the Dry Gulches pasture would allow for improved livestock distribution.

Cumulative Effects: Other development activities including agriculture, road development, and oil and gas development which have the potential to impact rangeland management would continue to occur. The Proposed Action would allow for improved livestock management in the Fawn Creek allotment, especially in the Dry Gulches pasture. Grass/forb communities in the northern end of this pasture would benefit from better livestock distribution.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Lack of reliable water in this area would continue to limit the ability of livestock to utilize forage here. Cattle would continue to move quickly through this area and make heavier use in the upper elevation portion of the Dry Gulches pasture.

Cumulative Effects: Other development activities associated including agriculture, road development, and oil and gas development would continue to occur in the area, which has the potential to impact rangeland management by removal of forage, impacts to range improvements, etc.

Mitigation: See Vegetation section of this document for additional mitigation.

REFERENCES CITED: None.

TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED: None.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Signed
Bob Lange	Hydrologist	Air Quality; Surface and Ground Water Quality; Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights; Soils	08/20/2012
Amber Shanklin	Biological Technician – Plants	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; Special Status Plant Species; Forest Management	08/20/2012
Kristin Bowen	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources; Native American Religious Concerns	07/18/2012
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Paleontological Resources	06/18/2012
Mary Taylor	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species; Vegetation; Rangeland Management; Wetlands and Riparian Zones Hazardous or Solid Wastes	06/21/2012
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds; Special Status Animal Species; Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife	08/13/2012
Chad Schneckenburger	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness; Visual Resources; Access and Transportation; Recreation,	07/11/2012
Jim Michels	Fire Management Specialist	Fire Management	07/15/2012
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals	07/13/2012
Janet Doll	Realty Specialist	Realty	07/19/2012
Melissa J. Kindall	Range Technician	Wild Horse Management	07/25/2012
Mary Taylor	Rangeland Management Specialist	Project Lead – Document Preparer	08/22/2012
Heather Sauls	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	NEPA Compliance	09/14/2012

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A: Map of the tank and trough site

Fawn Creek allotment 06024
T2S R97W Sec 32 SE

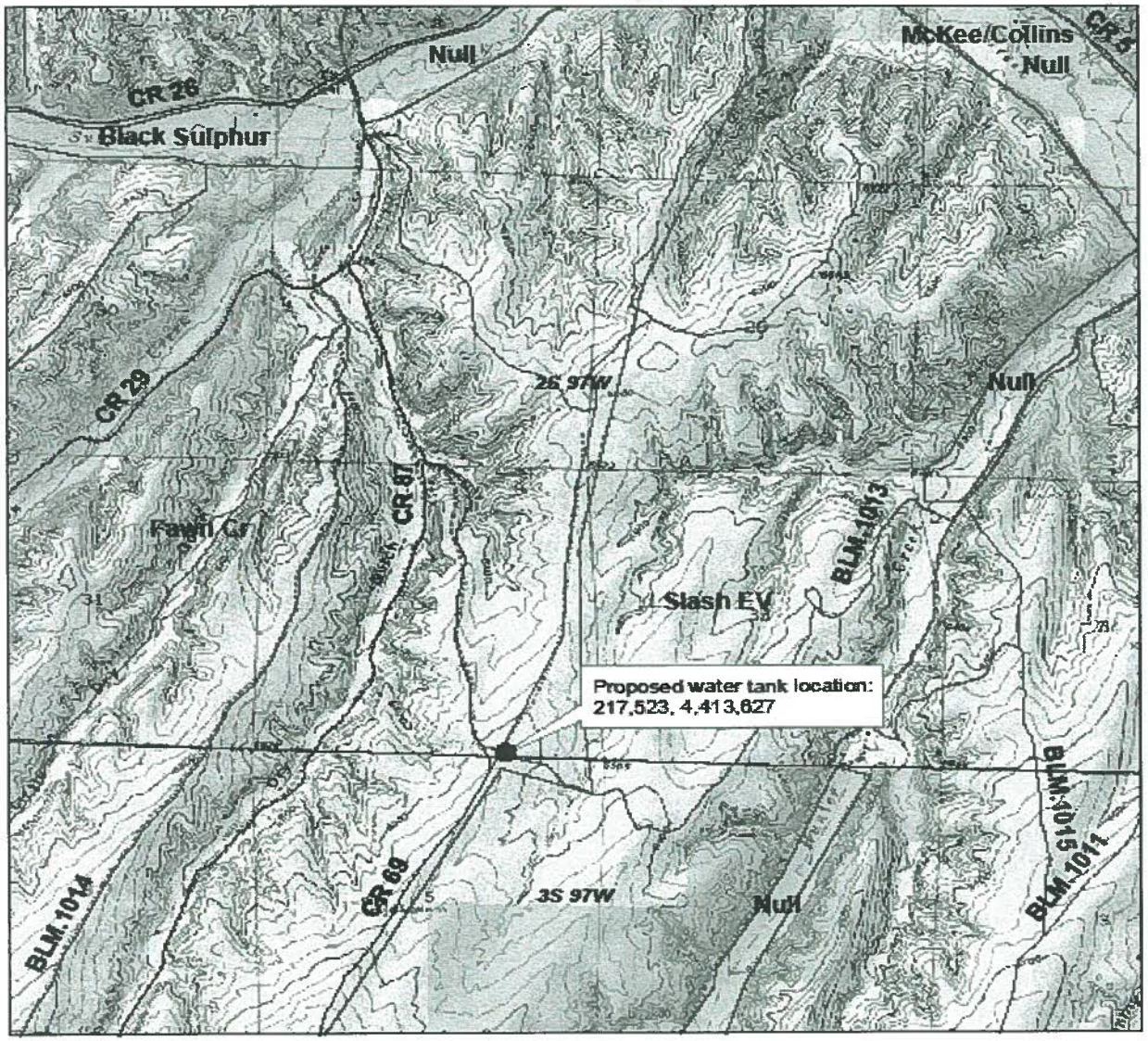


EXHIBIT A

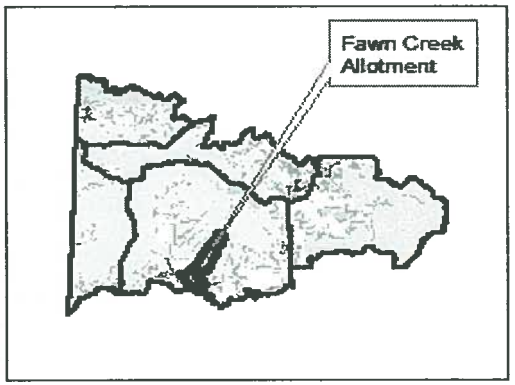
N

AllotmentBoundaries
GrazingPastures
BLM
PRI
County
BLM

0 0.2 0.4 0.8 Miles

Map Disclaimer: Although the data presented within this map, and the map itself, have been processed successfully on computers of BLM, no warranty, expressed or implied, is made by BLM regarding the use of this map or the data represented, nor does the fact of distribution constitute or imply any such warranty.

Feb 2012 M Taylor



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
DOI-BLM-CO-110-2012-0058-EA

BACKGROUND
The Fawn Creek allotment #06024 is a 19,000 acre allotment located in the Piceance Basin in Rio Blanco County. The allotment is divided into several pastures and extends approximately 18 miles from north to south. Elevation in the allotment ranges from 6,200 feet along Piceance Creek to 8,400 feet on the ridges of the summer pasture.

The livestock operator has requested to place a 5,000 gallon water storage tank and an 8 foot round water trough near in the lower 1/3 of the Dry Gulches pasture of the Fawn Creek allotment. This is a spring use area in the lower, northern portion of the allotment. The new storage tank would be placed on blocks beside the existing water trough and on existing surface disturbance adjacent to the road. The water tank would provide a reliable water source in this area to allow livestock to make better use of the forage in this area before they graze toward the upper portions of this pasture. Water would only be hauled to the site for the timeframe livestock are in this area (early-May to mid-June). Without this water source livestock move through the area quickly making little use of the forage available and spend an extended timeframe further south in the higher elevation end of this pasture.

FINDING OF NO SIGNFICANT IMPACT
Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

Context
The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public lands that do not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. The context of this project is to improve livestock grazing management in one pasture of the Fawn Creek allotment, thus benefitting associated plant communities and resources.

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

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. For example, there may be localized impacts associated with vegetation trampling and soil disturbance. Conversely the project is anticipated to benefit forage resources (improvements in vegetative character) throughout the 21,000 acre pasture. Analysis indicated no substantial impacts to physical, biological, or archaeological/paleontological resources.

2. The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety.
There would be no impact to public health and safety. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. The project area does not contain prime or unique farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, or wild and scenic rivers. There were no cultural resources identified within the project area.

4. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. There will be no highly controversial effects on the human environment.

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

6. Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.
The Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. Similar rangeland improvement projects are commonly evaluated as part of the grazing permit renewal process or as stand-along projects and are called for in the White River ROD/RMP at page 2-23, 5) identification of range improvement to enhance rangeland productivity and management.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
Surveys have been conducted for other projects adjacent to and including this project site and no cultural or historical concerns were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973.
There would be no impacts to endangered or threatened species or their habitat as a result of this project.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.
Neither the Proposed Action nor impacts associated with it violate any laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: _____
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 09/18/12

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641

PROPOSED DECISION

PROJECT NAME: Fawn Creek RBC 69 Stock Water Trough and Storage Tank

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-2012-0058-EA

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action (Alternative A), as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-2012-0058-EA, authorizing the placement of a water storage tank and stock watering trough near the intersection of RBC Road 69 and BLM Road 1013.

Mitigation Measures:

1. Upon future removal of this tank and trough the livestock operator will promptly, at the first appropriate seeding window, seed the trampled area with the following seed mix:

Cultivar	Common Name	Scientific Name	Application Rate (lbs PLS/acre)
Arriba	Western Wheatgrass	*Pascopyrum smithii*	4
Rimrock	Indian Ricegrass	*Achnatherum hymenoides*	3.5
Whitmar	Bluebunch Wheatgrass	*Pseudoroegneria spicata ssp. inermis*	4
Lodorm	Green Needlegrass	*Nassella viridula*	2.5
Timp	Northern Sweetvetch	*Hedysarum boreale*	3
	Sulphur Flower Buckwheat	*Eriogonum umbellatum*	1.5
	Scarlet Globemallow	*Sphaeralcea coccinea*	0.5

2. The livestock operator will monitor the tank and trough location for the duration of its placement to detect the presence of noxious and invasive species. The livestock operator will eliminate any noxious weeds before seed production has occurred. Application of pesticides and herbicides on public lands will conform to BLM Manual 9015 and Appendix B of the BLM White River RMP, Management of Noxious Weeds (BLM 1997). Eradication would make use of materials and methods approved in advance by the AO.

3. The 5,000 gallon storage tank will be painted Juniper Green from the BLM Standard Environmental Color Chart CC-001: June 2008.

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS & CONFORMANCE WITH THE LAND USE PLAN

This decision is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. It is also in conformance with the 1997 White River Record of Decision/Approved Resource Management Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Proposed Action was analyzed in DOI-BLM-CO-2012-0058-EA and it was found to have no significant impacts, thus an EIS is not required.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 03/13/2012. As of 09/14/2012, no comments or inquiries have been received.

RATIONALE

Analysis of the Proposed Action has concluded that there are no significant negative impacts and that it meets Colorado Standards for Public Land Health.

RIGHT OF PROTEST AND/OR APPEAL

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other interested publics may protest a proposed decision under Sec. 43 CFR 4160.1 and 4160.2, in person or in writing to Kent Walter, Field Manager White River Field Office, 220 E. Market Street, Meeker, CO 81641 within 15 days after receipt of such decision. The protest, if filed, should clearly and concisely state the reason(s) why the *proposed decision* is in error.

In accordance with 43 CFR 4160.3 (a), in the absence of a protest, the proposed decision will become the final decision of the authorized officer without further notice unless otherwise provided in the proposed decision.

In accordance with 43 CFR 4160.3 (b) upon a timely filing of a protest, after a review of protests received and other information pertinent to the case, the authorized officer shall issue a final decision.

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other person whose interest is adversely affected by the final decision may file an appeal *(in writing)* in accordance with 43 CFR 4.470 and 43 CFR 4160.4. The appeal must be filed within 30 days following receipt of the final decision or within 30 days after the date the proposed decision becomes final. The appeal may be accompanied by a petition for a stay of the decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4.471 pending final determination on appeal. The appeal and petition for a stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer, as noted above. The person/party must also serve a copy of the appeal on the Office of the Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, Denver Field Office, U.S. Department of the Interior, 755 Parfet Street, Room 151, Lakewood, CO 80215.

The appeal shall state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why the appellant thinks the final decision is in error and otherwise complies with the provisions of 43 CFR 4.470.

Should you wish to file a petition for a stay, see 43 CFR 4.471 (a) and (b). In accordance with 43 CFR 4.471(c), a petition for a stay must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

(1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
(2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
(3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
(4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer and served in accordance with 43 CFR 4.471.

Any person named in the decision who receives a copy of a petition for a stay and/or an appeal, see 43 CFR 4.472(b) for procedures to follow if you wish to respond.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Kurt E. Walk
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 09/19/12