

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-110-2011-0125-EA

PROJECT NAME: Red Wash Ranch Drift Fence and Waterline

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Township 4N, Range 102W NW1/4 35

APPLICANT: Red Wash Ranch LLC

PURPOSE & NEED FOR THE ACTION: The purpose of the action is to provide adequate water and fencing for livestock management on the Upper Red Wash (03777) grazing allotment. 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 permittees requests for range improvements to enhance grazing management on public lands.

Decision to be Made: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) White River Field Office (WRFO) will decide whether to issue a range improvement permit authorizing the construction of a barbed wire fence and waterline 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 White River Field Office (WRFO) interdisciplinary team on 05/26/2011. External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 05/31/2011.

Issues: No issues were identified during public scoping.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action: Red Wash Ranch LLC., made application to install 8,176 feet of buried waterline along with 5,631 feet of 4-strand barbed wire fence (Figure 1). The waterline will aid in watering the western portion of the Highway Pasture of the Cooper Allotment, and the fence will act as a drift fence to prevent livestock from drifting north into the Red Wash and Moosehead Pastures. The waterline will start at a well drilled on private land in Township 3

North, Range 102 West, Section 2, and go along an existing two-track to a stock tank on private lands in Section 3. The waterline will consist of 1.5 inch high density poly-pipe (HDPE) and a 10 foot bull tuff stock tank with a molded in bird/rodent escape ramp. The line will be ripped into a depth of 12-18 inches below the surface with a small dozer with a ripper. The trench will then be back-filled and compacted for continued use of the two-track.

The fence will start by connecting to a private fence in Section 2 and will follow the base of a slope to the southwest 4,600 feet then will turn north for approximately 1,000 feet and terminate at a rock formation (Figure 1). An 8 foot wide corridor will be constructed where brush will be removed to aid in construction and maintenance of the fence. The fence will be constructed using wood braced corners and t-posts. Wire spacing will meet BLM standards (Type D) and is designed to accommodate wildlife in the area. Wire spacing on a Type D fence from the ground up is 16, 6, 8, and 12 inches.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, no fence or waterline would be constructed to aid in livestock management on the Upper Red Wash Allotment.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: : In May of 2011, BLM received an application from Red Wash Ranch LLC to install approximately 2,389 feet of fence and a 2,074 foot waterline and stock tank to aid in livestock distribution on the newly formed Upper Red Wash (03777) allotment. The initial application was for range improvements that would be constructed entirely within Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's). After consulting with the permittee, a new proposal was developed and is outlined in the Proposed Action.

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." This document summarizes five major actions for rangeland management including the "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
Oil and Gas Development: Well Pads Access Roads Pipelines Gas Plants Facilities	No	No	X
Power Lines	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	Construction of the fence and installation of the pipeline will be short-term, less than a month and confined to localized areas. Dust and emissions would be similar to what could be expected from casual use.
NI	Geology and Minerals	Construction of a fence and a buried water line for grazing purposes would have no effect on the geologic or mineral resources in the project area.
PI	Soils	See discussion below.
NI	Surface and Ground Water Quality*	The surface disturbance will be minor and short-term mostly related installing the pipelines and fence, and therefore is unlikely to impact surface water quality.
Biological Resources		
NP	Wetlands and Riparian Zones*	There are no wetland or riparian zones in the vicinity of the Proposed Action.
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 special status plant species concerns associated with the Proposed Action. There are no neighboring special status plant species that will be impacted by the Proposed Action.
PI	Migratory Birds	See discussion below.
NP	Aquatic Wildlife*	There are no systems that support aquatic wildlife in the vicinity of the project area. The nearest system that is known to support higher order aquatic vertebrate species is the White River which is over 11 miles from the project area.
PI	Terrestrial Wildlife*	See discussion below.
NP	Wild Horses	The project is not located within the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area or either of the Herd Areas.
Heritage Resources and the Human Environment		
NP	Cultural Resources	A Class III cultural resource inventory was performed for this undertaking (Wolfe 2012). No cultural resources are documented within the present project area.
PI	Paleontological Resources	See discussion below.
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	No Native American religious concerns are known in the area, 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 fences and water lines.
NI	Visual Resources	The Proposed Action occurs in a VRM Class II area, however the project elements being proposed are consistent with the surrounding visual landscape and would meet the objectives of a Class II area.
NP	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	No hazardous or solid wastes are expected to be produced as a result of the Proposed Action.

Determination ¹	Resource	Rationale for Determination
NI	Fire Management	Proposed Action would have minimal impact on the management of naturally ignited fires; point protection during suppression operations would likely be implemented.
NI	Social and Economic Conditions	There would not be any substantial changes to local social or economic conditions.
NP	Environmental Justice	According recent Census Bureau statistics (2000), there are no minority or low income populations within the WRFO.
NP	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	No identified Lands with Wilderness Characteristics parcels fall within the project area.
Resource Uses		
PI	Forest Management	See discussion below.
PI	Rangeland Management	See discussion below.
NI	Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights	There are no floodplains in the project area. The surface hydrology should not be impacted by the construction and the well that will be used is on private lands.
NP	Realty Authorizations	There are no rights-of-way within the project area.
NI	Recreation	The Proposed Action is not expected to have any negative effects to dispersed recreation in the general project vicinity.
NI	Access and Transportation	The Proposed Action is not expected to negatively affect access or transportation in the project vicinity.
NP	Prime and Unique Farmlands	There are no Prime and Unique Farmlands within the project area.
Special Designations		
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	The closest Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is over 2 miles to the northwest of the Proposed Action. The project will not impact the ACEC.
NP	Wilderness	The Proposed Action is adjacent to, but does not fall within the Wilson Creek WSA.
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

SOILS

Affected Environment: The classifications of soils that are within 30 meters of the proposed disturbance for the well and the pipeline and may be impacted by the project are shown in Table 2. There are no fragile soils or lands prone to landslides on Federal lands within the proposed disturbance.

Table 3: Soil Classifications within 30 Meters of the Project

Soil Classification	Range Site Description	Potentially Impacted
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		Acres
Eghelm loamy fine sand, 0-3% slopes	Salt-desert Overflow	57
Deaver-Chipeta complex, 3-35% slopes	Clayey Salt-desert	5

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The majority of the pipeline and fence will be in Eghelm loamy fine sand crossing ephemeral draws.

Construction equipment used to install the pipeline will disturb soils, compact soils and damage vegetation. Soil impacts are likely to be direct and isolated to the project area. The pipeline will be installed 12-18 inches below the soil surface and disturbance will be minimized. Vegetation recovery is likely to be longer but on the order of 5-10 years due to the narrow area of surface disturbance.

Periodic repairs can be expected in the years to come to repair section of the pipeline exposed through scour. Repairs will require construction equipment access on the two-track and will re-disturb sections of the pipeline that need repair.

Concentrated use of the area around the trough by cattle is likely to lead to annual disturbance from trampling. Soils along the drainage are likely to be disturbed due to cattle trailing to the trough location. Whether there would be more or less trailing and trampling as compared to the No Action Alternative it is difficult to determine. However, since the proposed water source is closer to forage and cover for cattle impacts will likely be less than what may be expected under the no-action alternative. Impacts from cattle use are likely to be short-term due to the relatively short period grazing is approved for this area and most areas are expected to recover annually.

Small disturbances to soil will occur along the fence right-of way during clearing, and during maintenance checks. The soil disturbance for these activities will primarily be compaction by heavy equipment.

Disturbance to soil will also occur while setting fence posts. A hydraulic auger will be used to drill holes for wooden posts displacing soil. This disturbance will be small-scale, and most of the soil will be used to back-fill the hole once the post is placed. Steel t-posts will be pounded into soil used a post-pounder causing a small amount of soil to be displaced. All of this disturbance will be small-scale, and are expected to have minimal impacts on soil structures in the vicinity.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The pipeline and fence will not be constructed. Livestock use on the allotment may be compromised especially from not building the drift fence and soils could have more impacts from grazing under this alternative.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: This action is unlikely to reduce the productivity of soils impacted by surface disturbing activities.

VEGETATION

Affected Environment: The proposed fence and waterline are located on a Clayey Salt desert ecological site. The potential vegetation located in this area is saltbush, salina wildrye, mat saltbush, Indian ricegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, shadscale saltbush, and western wheatgrass.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Placement of the fence will require the clearing of brush along an 8 ft. wide corridor for fence construction and maintenance. Understory vegetation will be impacted by trampling from foot and vehicular travel during construction and annually for the life of the fence for maintenance and inspection purposes. Small areas where wood posts are set will be completely devoid of vegetation during the construction process.

Ripping in the waterline will require the complete removal of vegetation of an area approximately 3 feet wide for the entire length of the waterline. The waterline will be placed on an existing two-track where there is already limited vegetation in the tire tracks due to severe compaction from vehicle travel. Ripping in the pipeline would require the removal of very little vegetation along the proposed route due to the already existing two-track.

Placement of the stock tank on private lands at the end of the pipeline will create an area of livestock congregation for an area approximately 100 feet around the tank. These areas generally have little or no vegetation present due to heavy livestock grazing and trampling. Creating these congregation areas that are devoid of vegetation does create a pathway for potential weed establishment on the site and decreased soil stability.

Development of these range improvements will create an overall improvement for vegetation management on the allotment. Improved dispersal of livestock around the entire allotment will alleviate areas currently receiving high grazing pressure by making more lands available for grazing use. This will allow more adequate rest and recovery for grazed vegetation and improve long-term productivity of the rangelands.

Cumulative Effects: Historic grazing practices along with current human development have impacted vegetation within the Upper Red Wash Allotment in the past. There are areas where cheatgrass is the dominant vegetation and these areas are currently not meeting land health standards. Placement of the water line and stock tank will increase use of vegetation by livestock on the western portion of the highway pasture, but will alleviate grazing use on other areas of the allotment where use is currently very high. Placement of the stock tank will create an area of heavy livestock use, but the overall benefit to the entire allotment outweighs the impacts that will be created from the placement of a stock tank.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The No Action Alternative will result in no new waterline or fence being constructed on the Upper Red Wash allotment. This will result in continued limited use of vegetation on the western half of the highway pasture, but continued heavy grazing use on

the eastern half of the pasture. The lack of a fence will result in livestock drifting into the Red Wash pasture of the allotment making it more labor intensive for the permittee to adhere to the prescribed grazing schedule.

Cumulative Effects: Cumulative effects on the eastern half of the Highway Pasture with the No Action Alternative would be a potential shift of vegetative communities from diverse healthy plant communities to a state of complete annual plant domination. Invasive annual species provide little forage value to wildlife and livestock, and have limited root structures that often can't adequately stabilize soils.

Use on the western half of the pasture will continue to be minimal and should continue to meet land health standards. However placement of the proposed stock tank will more evenly distribute livestock across the entire allotment benefiting vegetation in the entire area.

Mitigation: The BLM will provide seed for the permittee and following construction of the pipeline, seed will be spread onto the pipeline by the permittee.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard #3 for Plant and Animal Communities: Most of Highway Pasture of the Upper Red Wash Allotment is meeting land health standards for vegetative communities. Portions of the pasture are dominated by annual invasive species such as mustards, Russian thistle, and cheatgrass. These areas are generally on the eastern half of the pasture and on private land that are currently not meeting land health standards.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The proposed fence and waterline are located entirely on Clayey Salt-desert ecological sites. There are no known invasive/non-native species known to occur within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Action; however there are four Colorado List B species and three List C species known to occur within the vicinity. Salt cedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*), hoary cress (*Cardaria draba*), bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), and Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), occur in the area around the Red Wash drainages. There is also spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*) that is present in the Wolf Creek drainage approximately 5 miles from the project.

Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*), and common mullein (*Verbascum Thapsus*) are List C species that occur in the area. Cheatgrass is an annual invasive species that can form monocultures on rangelands and drastically reduce rangeland health and production. Cheatgrass is scattered throughout the Upper Red Wash Allotment particularly on private lands east of the Proposed Action. Halogeton and common mullein is present in very small amounts on the allotment mainly in areas of heavy past livestock use or on raw shale hillsides.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Construction of the fence and pipeline will create areas of vegetation and soil disturbance. Disturbance of soils and vegetation will create a potential pathway for weed establishment on the construction area which could later spread into adjacent rangelands. Equipment used for construction and livestock in the area could act as a vector for seeds and weed propagules to be brought into the area.

Cumulative Effects: Historic livestock use along with some human development in the area has disturbed vegetation and transported weeds onto the area surrounding the Proposed Action. Authorization of the range improvements does create an opportunity for more weeds to potentially be brought on site, or establish in the area. With proper weed management, impacts from noxious weeds are expected to be minimal.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The No Action Alternative results in no range improvements being constructed. This will result in no new disturbance to vegetation and soils that could create a pathway for weed establishment. However, not constructing the range improvements limits the ability of the permittee to manage livestock on the allotment, which could lead to increased impacts and disturbance to soils and vegetation on other areas on the Upper Red Wash Allotment. These increased impacts could result in weed establishment on other parts of the allotment due to heavy livestock use. Livestock in the area will still potentially act as a vector for weed seeds and propagules to be brought into the area.

Cumulative Effects: Invasive and non-native weeds are present in the area from past livestock grazing and some human development in the area. The No Action Alternative will minimize the risk of further weeds establishment in the grazing allotment.

Mitigation:

1. All equipment used for construction of the project will be washed and prior to being brought onto the project area to prevent seeds from being transported on site from other areas.
2. The applicant will be responsible for monitoring and managing weeds that establish in the area as a result of the Proposed Action.
3. If the applicant uses herbicide to manage weeds, a Pesticide Use Proposal (PUP) must be submitted and approved by the White River Field Office before application can occur.

SPECIAL STATUS ANIMAL SPECIES

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered animal species that are known to inhabit or derive important use from the project area. The proposed water line skirts the boundary of general habitat (as mapped by Colorado Parks and Wildlife) of the greater sage-grouse. The greater sage-grouse is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act and considered a BLM sensitive species. Additionally, the water line passes along the edge of white-

tailed prairie dog colonies, also a BLM sensitive species. Brewer's sparrows (BLM sensitive) are likely common throughout the sagebrush habitats in and around the project area (see discussion on Brewer's sparrow in the Migratory Bird Section below).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The removal of approximately 1.5 acres of sagebrush shrubland habitat (associated with water line installation) is not expected to have any measurable influence on white-tailed prairie dog populations nor would it reduce habitat quality. The water line skirts the edge of occupied habitat. Any involvement with active burrows/mounds would be extremely isolated. Similarly, water line installation would have no conceivable influence on local sage-grouse populations nor would it have any influence on habitat quality. This narrow band of habitat immediately north of Highway 40 is not known to support grouse consistently. The nearest known active lek is over eight miles from the project area.

Cumulative Effects: The Proposed Action is not expected to add substantially to existing or proposed disturbances in the area. Currently, there is very little oil and gas-related disturbance in or around the project area. The loss of approximately three acres of habitat largely adjacent to an existing two track is not expected to have any measurable influence on local special status animal species or associated habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: There would be no direct or indirect influence on special status animal species or important habitats under the No Action Alternative.

Cumulative Effects: There would be no contribution to previous or existing disturbances under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard #4 for Special Status Species: The project is area is generally meeting the Land Health Standards for special status species at a landscape scale. Neither the Proposed nor No Action Alternative is expected to detract from the continued meeting of these standards.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The proposed water line, which parallels an existing two-track for its entire length, is located in a big sagebrush and salt desert shrub community (shadscale, Wyoming big sagebrush, saltbush). The proposed fence line, which is located roughly 120 meters north of the water line is tucked up against the base of a ridge (located about 200 feet below ridge top) with extremely low density pinyon-juniper cover.

There are several species of migratory birds that fulfill nesting functions in the sagebrush and salt desert communities during the nesting season (typically May 15 – July 15) including but not limited to Vesper sparrow, sage thrasher, meadowlark, northern shrike and sage sparrow. The

BLM lends increased management attention to migratory birds listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC). These are bird populations that monitoring suggests are undergoing range-wide declining trends and are considered at risk for becoming candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) if not given due consideration in land use decisions. The only BCC bird species that has potential to occur in the project area is the Brewer's sparrow, a sagebrush associate. This species is common in sagebrush habitats throughout the Resource Area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Water line construction would result in the short-term removal of approximately 1.5 acres of sagebrush shrublands adjacent to an existing two-track road. Following water line installation, the entire right-of-way will be reclaimed with a BLM-approved seed mix (see Vegetation Section). This would likely benefit ground nesting bird species or grassland associates in the short-term. Similarly, fence line construction would result in the removal/disturbance of about 1.5 acres of sagebrush shrublands. Because of the short-term nature of this project, it is unlikely this would have any measurable influence on local bird populations.

Construction of both the fence and water line will take place outside of the migratory bird nesting season (late-September or early-October) and will have virtually no influence on migratory bird nesting activities.

Cumulative Effects: The Proposed Action is not expected to add substantially to existing or proposed disturbances. Currently, there is very little oil and gas-related disturbance in or around the project area. The loss of approximately three acres of habitat largely adjacent to an existing two track is not expected to have any measurable influence on local bird population as there is considerable suitable habitat adjacent to the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: There would be no direct or indirect influence on migratory birds or associated habitats under the No Action Alternative.

Cumulative Effects: There would be no contribution to previous or existing disturbances under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: Mitigation regarding migratory birds has been incorporated into the Proposed Action.

TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE

Affected Environment: The lower elevation big sagebrush and salt desert shrublands surrounding the project area are categorized by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as mule deer concentration/severe winter range, a specialized component of winter range that supports virtually an entire herd during the most severe winters (temperature, snowfall). These ranges typically receive the most concentrated use from January through April.

Pinyon-juniper woodlands located on the ridge immediately above the proposed fence are extremely open-canopied (low density) and likely do not support nesting raptors. There are no known nests in the vicinity of the project area.

The distribution and abundance of small mammal populations are poorly documented within the Resource Area. There are no small mammal species that are narrowly endemic or highly specialized species known to inhabit the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Fence and water line construction would involve less than three acres of disturbance on BLM-administered lands. This is not expected to have any substantial influence on big game and nongame species populations nor would it detract from the continued support of these species in the vicinity of the project area. Project construction is scheduled to occur in late-September or early November and would avoid the big game critical winter period.

Cumulative Effects: The Proposed Action is not expected to add substantially to existing or proposed disturbances. Currently, there is very little oil and gas-related disturbance in or around the project area. The loss of approximately three acres of is not expected to have any measurable influence on local big game and nongame species populations as there is considerable suitable habitat adjacent to the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: There would be no direct or indirect influence on terrestrial wildlife or important habitats under the No Action Alternative.

Cumulative Effects: There would be no contribution to previous or existing disturbances under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: Mitigation regarding wildlife-friendly fencing is incorporated into the Proposed Action.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard #3 for Plant and Animal Communities: The project area is generally considered to be meeting the Land Health Standards. Neither the Proposed nor No Action Alternatives are expected to detract from the continued meeting of these standards.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: No cultural resources were located within the project area during the inventory. However there always remains the possibility that cultural resources may be discovered during range improvement construction. Therefore standard cultural resources shall apply if any cultural resources are discovered.

Mitigation:

1. The permittee is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the allotment that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts. If archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the permittee must immediately contact the appropriate BLM representative.
2. If any archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, activity in the vicinity of the discovery will cease, and the BLM WRFO Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The permittee will make every effort to protect the site from further impacts including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage until BLM determines a treatment approach, and the treatment is completed. Unless previously determined in treatment plans or agreements, BLM will evaluate the cultural resources and, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), select the appropriate mitigation option within 48 hours of the discovery.
3. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the permittee must notify the AO, by telephone and 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), the permittee must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the AO.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed range improvement projects are located on one Jurassic Age formation, the Morrison (Tweto 1979). The BLM, WRFO has classified the Morrison formation as a Potential Fossil Yield (PFYC) 5 formation. A PFYC 5 formation is well known for producing scientifically noteworthy fossil resources (cf Armstrong and Wolny 1989).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects:

Any excavations into the underlying sedimentary rock have a high potential to impact scientifically noteworthy fossil resources. The placement of "T" posts represents a minimal threat of impacts however, should it be necessary to install larger posts at the ends of the fence there is an increased potential to impact fossil resources.

Should trailing or concentrations occur, particularly on any exposed outcrops of the Morrison formation there is a potential for crushing, erosion of smaller fossils and damage to the larger fossils. Trailing and concentration on exposures of the Glen Canyon Formation have an unknown potential to impact fossil resources.

If the Morrison is a surface exposure where the stock tank is placed there will be a very high potential to impact scientifically noteworthy fossil resources that would be in or on the exposed formation.

Burial of the pipeline has the potential to impact scientifically noteworthy fossil resources (c. f. Armstrong and Wolny 1989). Any impact to scientifically noteworthy fossil from the Morrison Formation represents a serious loss of scientific data from the regions paleontological database.

Cumulative Effects: Any impacts that may have occurred from the trespass installation of range improvements or construction of the new, approved range improvements, along with livestock trailing and concentrating have the potential to cause a permanent, irreversible, irretrievable loss of scientific paleontological data. The results of the impacts are a net loss in data for the regional paleontological database.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: There would be no new impacts to paleontological resources under the No Action since there would be no new disturbances to the underlying Morrison formation sedimentary rock formation. The naturally occurring erosional process would continue as it has for centuries slowly eroding the steeper slopes, potentially exposing new fossils and slowly burying areas where the sediments eroded from the steeper slopes are deposited. Burial of the resources prevents loss but hinders discovery of important fossil resources.

Cumulative Effects: There would be a very slow, naturally occurring loss of fossil resources, especially the smaller ones that might be present in the formation. This loss is much less severe than would occur during construction under the Proposed Action.

Mitigation:

1. The operator/holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for disturbing or collecting vertebrate fossils, collecting large amounts of petrified wood (over 25lbs./day, up to 250lbs./year), or collecting fossils for commercial purposes on public lands.
2. If any paleontological resources are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the operator/holder or any of his agents must stop work immediately at that site, immediately contact the BLM Paleontology Coordinator, and make every effort to protect the site from further impacts, including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The BLM or designated paleontologist will evaluate the discovery and take action to protect or remove the resource within 10 working days. Within 10 days, the operator will be allowed to continue construction through the site, or will be given the choice of either (a) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for stabilizing the fossil resource in place and avoiding further disturbance to the fossil resource, or (b) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for mitigating impacts to the fossil resource prior to continuing construction through the project area.

3. Any excavations into the underlying native sedimentary stone must be monitored by a permitted paleontologist. The monitoring paleontologist must be present before the start of excavations that may impact bedrock.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The Proposed Action would partially traverse juniper stands that are mature and on productive exposure sites as defined by a survey performed by WRFO personnel from 2003-2005. Productive exposure types occur on primarily lower gradient slopes and north and east aspects. Growth rates are higher in these areas due to soil features which allow for effective use of precipitation. Mature pinyon-juniper trees on productive exposures establish themselves as the dominant plant community on the site. The Proposed Action occurs within the Blue Mountain/Moosehead Geographic Reference Area (GRA). The White River Resource Management Plan (RMP) (1997) specifies this as an area within the WRFO where no permits for tree removal are issued, neither commercial nor private.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Pinyon and juniper trees typically take 50-70 years to reestablish themselves in a disturbed area and would not develop into a mature stand until 250-350 years later. Under the Proposed Action, approximately 100 meters of drift fence will be constructed within the Juniper Woodlands. The waterline and remaining 1,600 meters of drift fence are not within the woodlands. The loss of pinyon/juniper woodland would adversely affect wildlife and nesting habitat. Impacts would be long-term until woodlands regenerate successfully. However, since the Proposed Action occurs within the Blue Mountain/Moosehead GRA, no trees are allowed to be removed.

Cumulative Effects: No cumulative impacts are expected with the Proposed Action.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Since no trees are to be removed, the No Alternative Action is no different than the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Effects: No cumulative impacts are expected with the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: In accordance with the White River RMP, no trees shall be removed during construction. Fence construction should navigate the trees rather than removing the trees.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The Proposed Action is located on the Upper Red Wash grazing allotment. The grazing schedule for the allotment is a two year schedule that is outlined in tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Even Year Grazing Schedule

ALLOTMENT			LIVESTOCK		GRAZING PERIOD					
Number	Name	Pasture	Number	Kind	Begin	End	%PL	Type Use	Total AUMs	BLM AUMs
03777	Cooper	Highway	200	Cattle	4/1	4/17	60	Active	112	67
03777	Cooper	Moosehead	200	Cattle	4/18	5/2	64	Active	99	63
03777	Cooper	State	200	Cattle	5/3	5/12	12	Active	63	8
03777	Cooper	Red Wash	200	Cattle	5/13	5/19	85	Active	46	39

Table 5: Odd Year Grazing Schedule

ALLOTMENT			LIVESTOCK		GRAZING PERIOD					
Number	Name	Pasture	Number	Kind	Begin	End	%PL	Type Use	Total AUMs	BLM AUMs
03777	Cooper	State	200	Cattle	4/1	4/10	12	Active	63	8
03777	Cooper	Highway	200	Cattle	4/11	4/27	60	Active	112	67
03777	Cooper	Mooshead	200	Cattle	4/28	5/12	64	Active	99	63
03777	Cooper	Red Wash	200	Cattle	5/13	5/19	85	Active	46	39

This project is proposed to be constructed in the Highway Pasture of the Upper Red Wash Allotment. The Highway Pasture is on the south part of the allotment and currently the only reliable water is on the eastern portion of the pasture on private lands.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Installation of the drift fence will aid in managing livestock making it easier for the permittee to follow the grazing schedule above. Currently, livestock tends to drift north into the Moosehead and Red Wash pastures from the Highway Pasture.

Installation of the pipeline across BLM land and the stock tank on private land will aid in distributing livestock use across the entire Highway Pasture. Currently, livestock use is primarily concentrated on the east half of the pasture where there is heavy use with light use on the west half of the pasture. Continued heavy use will create a situation where that part of the pasture becomes dominated by annual invasive plants and will no longer meet land health standards. Distributing use across the entire pasture will create moderate use across the entire area allowing the pasture to continue to meet land health standards.

Cumulative Effects: Past grazing use has led to the introduction of annual invasive plants to some areas of the Highway Pasture and these areas are generally not meeting land health standards for vegetation. Current grazing use is primarily on the east part of the pasture and continued heavy use will lead to more areas not meeting land health standards. Construction of the range improvements will aid in improving management of livestock on the pasture, and will not create any excess cumulative impacts to the area from livestock grazing.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The No Action Alternative will result in none of the range improvements being constructed. These range improvement are aimed at aiding the permittee in

managing livestock on the allotment so the area will continue to meet land health standards. Without the water and fence, management will be much more labor intensive for the permittee, and will increase the likelihood of over-grazing on portions of the allotment which could result in degraded rangelands that do not meet land health standards.

Cumulative Effects: Past grazing use has led to the introduction of annual invasive plants to some areas of the Highway Pasture and these areas are generally not meeting land health standards for vegetation. Current grazing use is primarily on the east part of the pasture and continued heavy use will likely continue to occur if the range improvements are not constructed leading to more areas not meeting land health standards.

Mitigation: None.

REFERENCES CITED:

Armstrong, Harley J., and David G. Wolny
 1989 Paleontological Resources of Northwest Colorado: A Regional Analysis. Museum of Western Colorado, Grand Junction, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden
 1979 Geological Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

Wolfe, Michael
 2012 Class III Cultural Resource Inventory for the Upper Red Wash Pipeline and Fence Project, in Moffat County, Co. SHPO # MF.LM.NR1246 (WRFO #12-10-02). Manuscript on file at BLM-White River Field Office, Meeker, Colorado.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

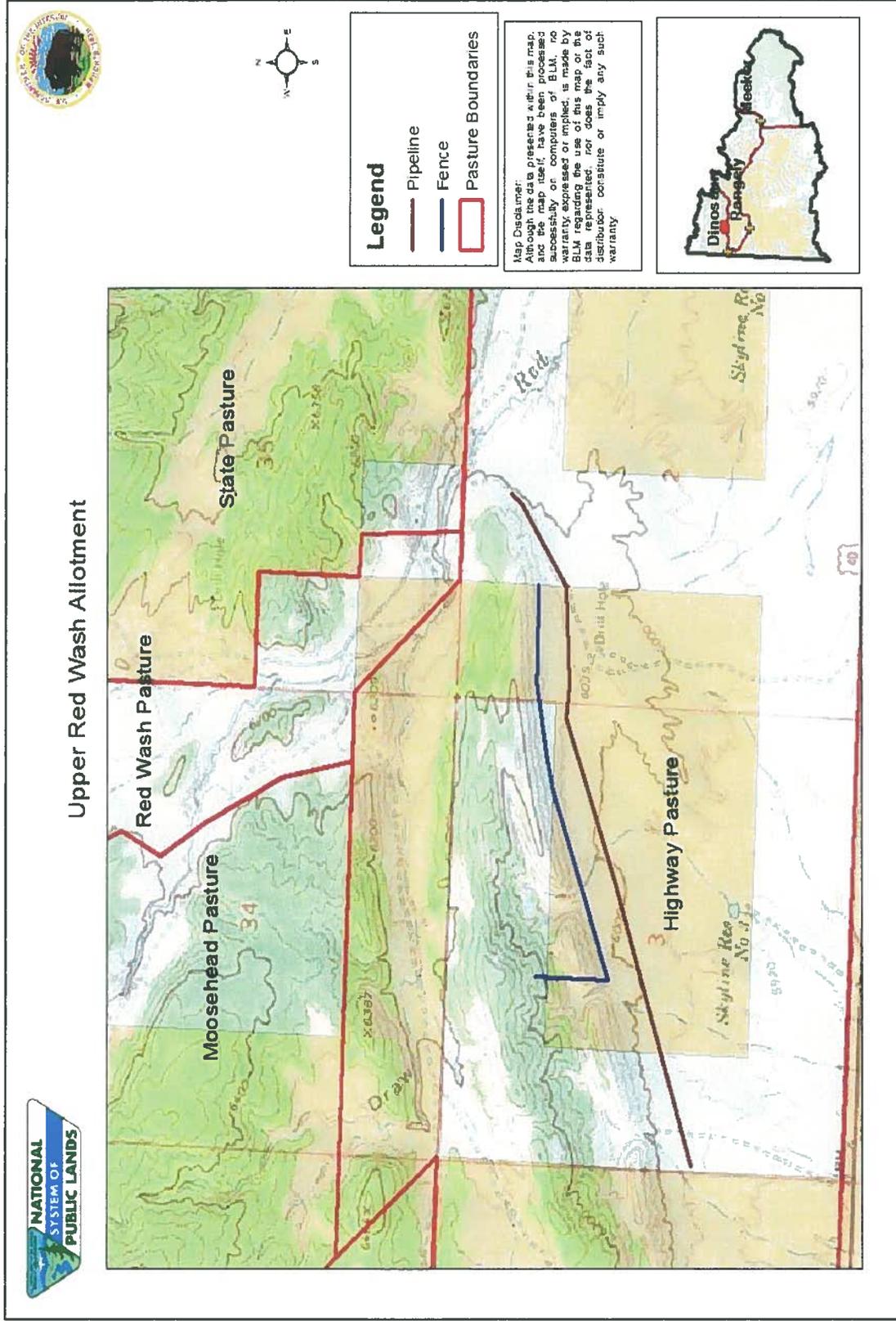
Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Signed
Bob Lange	Hydrologist	Air Quality; Surface and Ground Water Quality; Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights; Soils	08/27/2012
Zoe Miller	Ecologist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; Special Status Plant Species	08/28/2012
Michael Wolfe	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources; Native American Religious Concerns	06/13/2012
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Paleontological Resources	8/30/2012
Matthew Dupire	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species; Vegetation; Rangeland Management	09/10/2012
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds; Special Status Animal Species; Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife; Wetlands and Riparian Zones	09/14/2012

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Signed
Matthew Dupire	Rangeland Management Specialist	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	09/10/2012
Chad Schneckenburger	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness; Visual Resources; Access and Transportation; Recreation,	09/18/2012
Zoe Miller	Supervisory NRS	Forest Management	08/28/2012
Jim Michels	Zone Fire Management Officer	Fire Management	06/04/2012
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals	08/22/2012
Stacey Burke	Realty Specialist	Realty	8/22/2012
Melissa J. Kindall	Range Technician	Wild Horse Management	08/29/2011 & 09/05/2012
Matthew Dupire	Rangeland Management Specialist	Project Lead – Document Preparer	09/26/2012
Heather Sauls	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	NEPA Compliance	10/10/2012

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1: Map of the project area

Figure 1: Map of the project area



**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-110-2011-0125-EA**

BACKGROUND

The Proposed Action is for the installation of 8,176 ft of waterline with a stock tank and 5,637 ft of 4-strand barbed wire fence on the Upper Red Wash (03777) Allotment. The installation of the range improvements are aimed at improving livestock management on the Highway Pasture of the allotment. Currently, water is limited to the eastern portion of the pasture, and livestock tend to drift north into other pastures from the Highway Pasture.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (1997). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

Context

The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public lands that do not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity

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

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Placement of the waterline and fence will create a small-scale disturbance to soils and vegetation. The fence will also create a barrier to wildlife movement across the area and the stock tank will create an area of heavy livestock congregation. These range improvements will improve livestock management in the area by improving livestock distribution, and preventing livestock from drifting into adjacent pastures outside the permit window.

2. The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety.

There would be no impact to public health and safety.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There are no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas in the area of Proposed Action. There are also no historic or cultural resources present.

4. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

There are no highly controversial effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to occur.

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. The 1997 White River ROD/RMP discusses the identification, and construction of necessary range improvements to improve livestock management.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

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

8. 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.

There are no NRHP eligible sites that will be affected by the Proposed Action.

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.

Neither the Proposed Action nor impacts associated with it adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat.

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: 10/16/12

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

DECISION RECORD

PROJECT NAME: Red Wash Ranch Drift Fence and Waterline

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-2011-0125-EA

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action (Alternative A), as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-2011-0125-EA, authorizing the construction and placement of a waterline with a stock tank and a four-strand barbed wire fence.

Mitigation Measures

1. BLM will provide seed for the permittee and following construction of the pipeline, seed will be spread onto the pipeline by the permittee.
2. All equipment used for construction of the project will be washed and prior to being brought onto the project area to prevent seeds from being transported on site from other areas.
3. The applicant will be responsible for monitoring and managing weeds that establish in the area as a result of the Proposed Action.
4. If the applicant uses herbicide to manage weeds, a Pesticide Use Proposal (PUP) must be submitted and approved by the White River Field Office before application can occur.
5. The permittee is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the allotment that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts. If archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the permittee must immediately contact the appropriate BLM representative.
6. If any archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, activity in the vicinity of the discovery will cease, and the BLM WRFO Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The permittee will make every effort to protect the site from further impacts including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage until BLM determines a treatment approach, and the treatment is completed. Unless previously determined in treatment plans or agreements, BLM will evaluate the cultural resources and, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office

(SHPO), select the appropriate mitigation option within 48 hours of the discovery.

7. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the permittee must notify the AO, by telephone and 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), the permittee must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the AO.
8. The operator/holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for disturbing or collecting vertebrate fossils, collecting large amounts of petrified wood (over 25lbs./day, up to 250lbs./year), or collecting fossils for commercial purposes on public lands.
9. If any paleontological resources are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the operator/holder or any of his agents must stop work immediately at that site, immediately contact the BLM Paleontology Coordinator, and make every effort to protect the site from further impacts, including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The BLM or designated paleontologist will evaluate the discovery and take action to protect or remove the resource within 10 working days. Within 10 days, the operator will be allowed to continue construction through the site, or will be given the choice of either (a) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for stabilizing the fossil resource in place and avoiding further disturbance to the fossil resource, or (b) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for mitigating impacts to the fossil resource prior to continuing construction through the project area.
10. Any excavations into the underlying native sedimentary stone must be monitored by a permitted paleontologist. The monitoring paleontologist must be present before the start of excavations that may impact bedrock.
11. : In accordance with the White River RMP, no trees shall be removed during construction. Fence construction should navigate the trees rather than removing the trees.

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-2011-0125-EA and it was found to have no significant impacts, thus an EIS is not required.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Scoping was the primary mechanism used by the BLM to initially identify issues. Internal scoping was initiated when the project was presented to the White River Field Office (WRFO) interdisciplinary team on 05/26/2011. External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 05/31/2011.

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. Installation of the range improvements will improve livestock distribution and improve overall management on the Upper Red Wash Allotment.

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:



Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

10/16/12