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

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2007-099-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: Authorization #0501478

PROJECT NAME: Grazing Permit Renewal on the Willow Springs allotment (#06624)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Willow Springs allotment Legal Description					
Allotment		BLM			Section(s)/Lots
Name	No.	Acres	Township	Range	or Portions Of
Willow Springs	06624	743	2N	94W	15, 16, 20-22, 27-30, 32, 33

APPLICANT: Barry Sepic (Authorization #0501478)

ISSUES AND CONCERNS: This permit was renewed under the appropriations rider in 2005 and needs to be fully processed before 2009. Noxious weeds on private lands are a concern on this allotment.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: The Willow Springs allotment is located approximately six miles north of Meeker on the east side of Rio Blanco County (RBC) road 7. The current permitted season of use is from May 15 through November 12 but in order to meet the management objectives, the landowner has grazed at a lower than permitted number of livestock in the allotment from mid June until mid September. Several spring fed ponds on the private land serve as the primary sources of water for livestock. There are two ponds on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands that provide short term water sources in association with precipitation events. Precipitation in this area averages from 12-16 inches in the lower western part of the allotment up to 16-20 inches in the higher eastern area. The growing season, and more than 50 percent of the annual precipitation, occurs between April 1 and September 30. Elevation in this allotment ranges from 6,400 feet on the west up to the highest areas at 8,000 feet. Vegetation communities include big sage and grassy swales, and pinyon-juniper, gamble oak slopes.

The White River Field Office (WRFO) has categorized all grazing allotments into three management categories that define management intensity: (1) Improve, (2) Custodial, and (3) Maintain. The categories define rangeland management objectives broadly in response to analysis of each allotment's resource characteristics, potential, opportunities, and needs. The Willow Springs allotment has been categorized as Maintain, having no significant problems, issues and/or resource conflicts. The table below is a breakdown of acreages by land status within the allotment.

Breakdown of Total Acres within the Willow Springs Allotment (06624)					
Allotment					
Name	No.	BLM Acres	State Acres	Private Acres	Total Acres
Willow Springs	06624	743	0	2,938	3,681

Proposed Action: Renew the grazing permit for authorization #0501478 for a ten year period as outlined in the proposed grazing permit below. Season of use and active animal unit months (AUMs) have been adjusted to meet rest requirements outlined in the 1997 White River Field Office Record of Decision Resource Management Plan (White River ROD/RMP) and more accurately reflect the carrying capacity of the rangelands. Both changes will help assure that the Standards for Public Land Health continue to be met on public lands within this allotment.

The proposed grazing schedule was discussed with, agreed to, and applied for by the grazing permittee (Barry Sepic). This grazing schedule meets the requirements established by the White River ROD/RMP. Objectives of this grazing schedule are to:

- Maintain or enhance a healthy rangeland vegetation composition and species diversity capable of supplying forage at a sustained yield to meet the current and future forage demands for livestock and wildlife.

- Provide for adequate forage plant growth and or re-growth opportunities necessary to replenish plants' food reserves and produce sufficient seed to meet the reproduction needs necessary to maintain an ecological presence in the plant community.

- Establish a grazing permit where the permittee can graze livestock in this allotment with a strategy that provides for plant growth requirements and provides for the most economical use of all forage resources available to the ranch operation.

Proposed Grazing Permit (0501478) for Barry Sepic - Willow Springs Allotment								
Allotment No. 06624	Livestock		Date		% PL	BLM AUMs scheduled	Suspended AUMs	Total AUMs
Pasture Name	#	Kind	On	Off				
Willow Springs	112	C	06/15	10/15	18	82	0	82

The percent public land (%PL), which is the percentage of BLM AUMs in relation to total AUMs (BLM, and private AUMs combined), was recalculated for the allotment. Advances in technology (e.g. computer calculations using ArcMap and Excel spreadsheets) produced more accurate forage allocation based on land ownership, allowed the adjustment in percent public

land (See Range section of this document). Previously the %PL had been 10% but has been recalculated to 18%. Based on more accurate ecological site and forage allocation analysis, calculated livestock carrying capacity has also been reduced to reflect a more accurate and sustainable stocking rate.

Plan of Operation: Each year, thirty days prior to turnout in the Willow Spring allotment, the permittee shall submit a plan of operation (grazing application) for the grazing year to the BLM for approval. The plan of operation shall include the anticipated turnout dates and numbers of animals.

Rangeland Improvements Necessary to Implement the Grazing System: No rangeland improvements (RI) are proposed. Future evaluations of allotment conditions may identify improvements that may aid in achieving objectives. In which case, a separate Environmental Assessment (EA) would be compiled to approve any such new RI on a site specific basis. Maintenance of existing RI's (e.g., removal of excess sediment from ponds and repair of allotment boundary fences) would continue as a term of the grazing permit.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Previously there weren't any long term trend monitoring sites within the Willow Springs allotment. A repeatable Daubenmire transect and photo plot to measure ground composition, cover and frequency was established in 2005. The study site was located in a key area to monitor livestock grazing use and was established under protocol developed in the *Grazing Allotment Monitoring Plan for the White River Resource Area*. This trend plot will be re-read in 4-5 years (2009, 2010), and/or in 9-10 years (2014, 2015), prior to the future renewal of the grazing permit in 2015. Reading trend studies, though a priority of BLM staff, in the future will be partially dependent on workload capabilities and priorities.

Grazing Permit Terms and Conditions: The following terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 4130.3 would be included in the grazing permit issued under this alternative:

1. The permittee or lessee must provide reasonable administrative access across private and leased lands to the BLM for the orderly management and protection of the public lands, as outlined in 43 CFR 4130.3-2(h).

2. It is unlawful for the permittee, agents or employees to knowingly disturb or collect cultural, historical or paleontological materials on public lands. If cultural, historical or paleontological materials are found, including human remains, funerary items or objects of cultural patrimony. The permittee is to stop activities that might disturb such materials, and notify the authorized officer immediately.

3. In order to improve livestock distribution on the public lands, no salt blocks and/or mineral supplements will be placed within a 1/4 mile of any riparian area, wet meadow, or watering facility (either permanent or temporary) unless stipulated though a written agreement or decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.3-2(c).

4. The permittee shall submit an Actual Use form within 15 days after completing their annual grazing use as outlined in 43 CFR 4130.3-2(d).

5. Livestock use will occur as outlined in the Grazing Schedule in the Proposed Action portion of the Environmental Assessment document CO-110-2007-099-EA that analyzes grazing on the Willow Springs Allotment in accordance with 43 CFR 4120.2(d).

6. In accordance with 43 CFR 4130.8-1(f): Failure to pay grazing bills within 15 days of the due date specified in the bill shall result in a late fee assessment. Payment made later than 15 days after the due date, shall include the appropriate late fee assessment. Failure to make payment within 30 days may be a violation of 43 CFR Sec. 4140.1(b)(i) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR Sec. 4150.

These terms and conditions are in conformance with 43 CFR 4100.0-2, 4130.3, 4130.3-1, 4130.3-2 and 4130.3-3.

No Action Alternative: The grazing permit would not be renewed and there would be no livestock grazing on public lands within this allotment where it is currently permitted. This alternative would not be in compliance with the RMP decision to provide for livestock grazing as one of the acceptable multiple uses.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: The continuation of current management alternative was considered but not carried forward for further analysis. The proposed action results in management similar to recent livestock use, meets rest requirements from the White River RMP/ROD, and more closely matches current estimated carrying capacity to promote sustainable grazing. The permittee is in agreement with reduced livestock numbers and shortened season of use outlined in the proposed action. The current (expiring) grazing schedule was as follows:

Current (expiring) Grazing Permit to Authorization #0501478 - Willow Springs Allotment								
Allotment No. 06624	**Livestock**		**Date**		**% PL**	**BLM AUMs scheduled**	**Suspended AUMs**	**Total AUMs**
Pasture Name	**#**	**Kind**	**On**	**Off**				
Willow Springs	180	C	05/01	10/31	10	109	0	109

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The grazing permit (0501478) for the Willow Springs allotment #06624 expired on February 28, 2005. A permit was issued under the appropriations rider and will remain in effect until 2009 by which time the BLM must fully process the permit renewal as required by NEPA. The permit is subject to renewal or transfer at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior for a period of up to 10 years. The BLM has the authority to renew the livestock grazing permit/lease consistent with the provision of the *Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan* (RMP*)*. This Plan has been amended by the *Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado.*

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 (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-22 through 2-26

Decision Language: 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).

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered 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. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH							
	Current Situation			With Proposed Action		With No Grazing	
Standard	Acres Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Acres Not Achieving	Causative Factors	Acres Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Acres Not Achieving	Acres Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Acres Not Achieving
#1-Upland Soils							
Willow Springs	743	0		743	0	743	0
#2-Riparian Systems							
Willow Springs	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
#3-Plant Communities							
Willow Springs	743	0		743	0	743	0
#3-Animal Communities							
Willow Springs	743	0		743	0	743	0
#4-Special Status, T&E Species							
Willow Springs	743	0		743	0	743	0
#5-Water Quality (stream miles)							
Willow Springs	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The entire White River Resource area has been classified as either attainment or unclassified for all air pollutants, and most of the area has been designated for the prevention of significant deterioration (PSD) class II. Unfortunately, no air quality monitoring data is available for this area. However, air quality conditions near the proposed location (Grand Junction, CO) indicate generally good air quality.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The type of potential environmental consequences to air quality from the proposed action would be similar to potential consequences of the current grazing operation.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts from the no-action alternative would be similar to the proposed action alternative.

Mitigation: None

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The 1998 BLM/Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Protocol agreement requires the BLM to identify all historic properties, prehistoric sites and sacred sites on all lands within Colorado that are within the area of project effect (APE) of a BLM undertaking (1998 Protocol VII (A) p. 4), which is defined as the geographic area(s) within which an undertaking may cause changes in the character or use of historic properties (36 CFR 800.2). According to a cultural resources literature review, there are currently 7 identified cultural resources within the allotment. Two of these sites are identified as 'need data' and should be monitored for impacts. Two cultural inventories have been completed which represents approximately 11 percent of the total BLM acreage within the allotment.

Sites could be found in all eco-zones with concentrations characterized by availability of water, location of suitable agricultural land and availability of game. Sites may represent a range from Paleo-Indian (8,000-10,000 years ago) to historic Ute occupation (to 1880). National Register or otherwise eligible cultural properties are not currently known to be situated in this allotment. Subsequent cultural resource inventories and evaluations will be conducted in areas where livestock concentrations coincide with high potential for vulnerable sites.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Direct impacts that may occur where livestock concentrate include trampling, chiseling and churning of site soils, cultural features and artifacts, artifact breakage and impacts from standing, leaning and rubbing against above ground features and rock art. Indirect impacts may include soil erosion, gullying and potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. In areas where cultural site presence coincides with areas of livestock concentration, continued grazing may contribute to substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to sites. Current

monitoring and inventory data for this allotment does not provide adequate data to identify those areas of impacts to sites from grazing. Reduction of the current of livestock grazing as outlined in the proposed action, including reduced duration of grazing and reduced intensity of grazing should have the effect of reducing potential damage to cultural resources by decreasing the time frame for impacts on any given site and decreasing soil erosion.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, the grazing permit would not be renewed. This alternative would result in the highest level of protection for cultural resource as there would be no livestock related impacts to these resource sites.

Mitigation: The permit holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the allotment operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within 5 working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary).
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

Inventory data for the BLM acres of the allotment is needed to further assess potential impacts to cultural resources, specifically in areas where site presence may overlap with high livestock congregation. Inventory of the BLM acres should be completed within the next fiscal year to assess resource presence and any impacts.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: There is minimal presence of noxious weeds on public land within the Willow Springs allotment. Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is a non-native invasive annual grass species present to some extent in most plant communities throughout the area surrounding and including this allotment. The presence of cheatgrass is generally a result of historic grazing practices such as continuous season long use at heavy stocking rates. Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale)* and poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) are present on the private lands in the north east portion of the allotment and thus public lands are threatened by the potential spread of these weeds, especially the houndstongue which is readily transported in the hair of livestock. Currently other than a presence of cheatgrass there are no known infestations of Colorado listed noxious weeds located on BLM administered lands within this allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Implementation of the proposed grazing schedule will improve vigor and reproductive potential of the native grass component on the ecological sites throughout this allotment. While livestock grazing at the proposed level will not promote or accelerate the rate or extent of cheatgrass invasion, regardless of livestock grazing cheatgrass is expected to persist in the plant community. Implementation of the proposed action will provide complete rest from livestock grazing during the rest period as outlined in the White River ROD/RMP. Livestock grazing at the proposed numbers should result in moderate utilization levels of key forage species and allow plants to meet physiological requirements for maintenance and reproduction. A healthy vigorous native plant community is more resistant to invasion by noxious weeds or invasive plant species. The permittee is aware of the noxious weeds present and continues to treat them. To prevent noxious weeds present on private lands from spreading onto public lands within this allotment it is imperative that the land owner commit fully to control or eradication measures on private lands.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under the no grazing by livestock alternative there would be an increased growth potential of perennial grasses resulting in a more robust plant community resistant to invasion of invasive, noxious or non-native species. However without the grazing permittee actively monitoring for presence of noxious weeds there is greater potential for undesirable plant populations to be undetected and spread further. To prevent noxious weeds present on private lands from spreading onto public lands within this allotment it is imperative that the land owner commit fully to control or eradication measures on private lands.

Mitigation: None

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: About 40% of the permit area is composed of mixed shrub communities dominated by heavy stands of deciduous mountain shrub (i.e., serviceberry, oakbrush) with a predominately perennial grass understory. These higher elevation habitats support an assemblage of migratory birds typical of well-developed mountain shrub

communities. Birds of higher conservation interest, including: Virginia's warbler, green-tailed towhee and broad-tailed hummingbird are well distributed and occur at appropriate densities in these habitats. The sagebrush habitats (approximately 15% of the allotment) are generally occupied by a normal contingent of breeding birds (e.g., Brewer's sparrow, green-tailed towhee), but the pinyon-juniper stands, owing to their naturally fragmented and somewhat isolated character, support rather depauperate (i.e., abundance and richness lower than expected) avian communities.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed grazing schedule coincides with a portion of the breeding season (6/15-7/15) however; it is unlikely this action would reduce the extent or quality of habitat available for migratory bird breeding functions. Currently, vegetation communities within the allotment meet the land health standards, allowing for sufficient composition, vigor, and density of herbaceous ground cover that is used as nesting substrate or provides a direct or indirect source of forage.

In general, livestock use on public lands tends to be light and dispersed, with more concentrated use occurring on private lands (due to proximity of water) and those areas that are easily accessible to livestock. It is likely that this level of livestock grazing use would have little inhibitory effect (i.e., strong reductions in herbaceous ground cover as forage, forage substrate, or cover) on migratory bird nest establishment or production performance.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Livestock removal is not expected to differ markedly from current grazing practices. All BLM-administered lands within the allotment are currently meeting public land health standards with regards to vegetative communities. Improvements in perennial ground cover (i.e., composition, vigor, and density) would be most pronounced in those mid-seral communities and areas that currently experience more concentrated livestock use (e.g., near water sources and valley bottoms). Improved ground cover expression attributable to livestock removal may enhance, albeit nominally, local populations of higher conservation species such as Brewer's sparrow, and green-tailed towhee.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered animal species that are known to inhabit or derive important use from the allotment. Much of the pinyon-juniper woodlands associated with the allotment are patchy and/or heavily entrenched in mountain shrub habitats and as such do not provide adequate nesting or roosting habitat for northern goshawk or BLM-sensitive bat species.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on special status species or associated habitat.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to influence special status species or associated habitats.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed and no-action alternatives would have no influence on populations or habitats of animals associated with the Endangered Species Act or BLM sensitive species and, as such, would have no influence on the status of applicable land health standards.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no plant species listed, proposed, or candidate to the Endangered Species Act, nor plants considered sensitive by the BLM, that are known to inhabit the Willow Springs allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on special status species or associated habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to influence special status species or associated habitats.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed and no-action alternatives would have no influence on populations or habitats of plants associated with the Endangered Species Act or BLM sensitive species and, as such, would have no influence on the status of applicable land health standards.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area. There are no known solid waste dump sites within the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be disposed of properly. All applications of pesticides would be in compliance with BLM requirements.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions. If any hazardous chemicals, fuels, oils, lubricants, and/or noxious fluids are spilled during field activities, they shall be cleaned up immediately and disposed of at an approved waste disposal facility.

A release of any chemical, oil, petroleum product, or sewage, etc, (regardless of quantity) must be reported to the Bureau of Land Management – WRFO Hazardous Materials Coordinator at (970) 878-3800. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) should be notified, if applicable, through the 24-hour spill reporting line at 1 (877) 518-5608.

The permittee is requested to notify BLM of any historical or recent trash dumping sites on the allotment, so that BLM can identify, prioritize, and perform cleanup activities at these locations.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The AUMs for the original allotment have been reduced. Most of the allotment drains into non-named tributaries to Strawberry Creek to the west and there is a small portion of the allotment that drains to Sulfur Creek to the east. Both Strawberry Creek and Sulfur Creek drain into the White River. There are no 303d listed stream segments in the allotment or directly downstream of the allotment. There are two reservoirs in the headwaters of the one of the tributaries to Strawberry Creek that provides water sources for livestock and there are cultivated fields near where the tributaries feed into Strawberry Creek.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Impacts for BLM lands and water resources are considered only for the BLM land within the allotment, since the majority of the land being considered is private. AUMs have been reduced for the allotment and the season of use has been shortened. Changing the beginning data from May to June is likely to improve riparian conditions due to less use during the growing season. Therefore, impacts are not expected from this action to water resources other than slight improvements due to less livestock use.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No grazing in this allotment would probably lead to the fencing of private lands and continued grazing in this area. Since BLM is a relatively small portion of these lands impacts would not likely be very different from the proposed action since most of the water resources are on private lands in this allotment.

Mitigation: None recommended

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: Not likely to cause or contribute to exceedances of State water quality standards.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no wetlands or riparian areas on public lands in this allotment but there are several springs and ponds with associated wetland vegetation on private lands. The springs and ponds on private land serve as the primary sources of water for livestock on this allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Implementation of the proposed action would have no conceivable effect on riparian resources on public lands.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Implementation of the no action alternative would have no conceivable effect on riparian resources.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: n/a

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACECs, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers exist within the area affected by the proposed action. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: Soils analyzed in this document are presented in the Soil Survey of Rio Blanco County, published by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The table below is derived from the Rio Blanco County Soil Survey and is a breakdown of the individual soil units and associated ecological sites on BLM administered lands.

Soil Unit Name	Ecological Site	Acres
Abor Clay Loam,5-30%slopes	Clayey Foothills	8
Blazon, moist-Rentsac Complex,6-65%slopes	Pinyon-Juniper woodland	123
Forelle loam, 8-15%slopes	Rolling Loam	10
Jerry-Thornburgh-Rhone complex,8-65%slopes	Brushy Loam/Brushy Loam	326
Mergel-Redthayne-Dollard complex,8-65%slopes	Loamy Slopes/ Loamy Slopes/Clayey Foothills	6

Soil Unit Name	Ecological Site	Acres
Patent loam,3-8%slopes	Rolling Loam	17
Rentsac-Moyerson-RockOutcrop,complex,5-65%slps	PJ Woodlands/Clayey Slopes	90
Rock Outcrop	None	54
Shawa loam,3-8%slopes	Deep Loam	17
Work Loam, 3-8%slope	Deep Loam	10
Zoltay clay loam, 8-15%slope	Deep Loam	82
	Total Public Land Acres	**743**

Soils with plant communities rated as a mid-seral, late-seral, or PNC (Potential Natural Community) have sufficient cover of desirable plant species to produce adequate litter and ground cover to minimize runoff and provide for soil protection (refer to the Vegetation section below). These soils are meeting the Colorado Public Land Health Standard for upland soils. In the Willow Allotment all BLM acres are achieving or moving toward achieving the Standards (refer to Vegetation section below). These acres currently meet the requirements to maintain soil integrity and structure through adequate vegetative ground cover.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Ground cover of native perennial plant species and litter accumulation are central to the protection and stabilization of soils. Livestock management under the proposed action would allow critical growing season rest and re-growth opportunities resulting in adequate surface litter accumulation, plant canopy cover, and ground cover. Areas currently meeting land health standards will not be appreciably influenced by implementation of the proposed action. Soils with late-seral or PNC plant communities (630 acres), little change from the current status is expected. Though present on soils with mid-seral plant communities (59 acres), cheatgrass is not expected to increase appreciably under the proposed grazing schedule. This grazing schedule is expected to result in improvement in mid-seral plant communities as native perennial grasses continue to increase and surface litter accumulates. The Colorado Standards for upland soils would be met under this alternative.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: With no livestock grazing, most of the areas currently being grazed by cattle would experience an increase in soil surface litter and an increase in perennial vegetation cover in the short term. Any increase in perennial vegetation cover will most likely occur on ecological sites rated as mid seral. On most late seral and PNC rangelands in the allotment, vegetation cover is not expected to change from the current situation. The Colorado Standards for upland soils would be met under the no livestock grazing scenario.

Mitigation: none

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: Land Health Assessments conducted in 2005 indicate that standards for soils are being met for public lands within the Willow Springs allotment. Soils of mid-seral, late-seral, and PNC communities comprise all public land acreage included in this allotment and they currently meet Standards.

Implementation of the proposed action will enhance the ability of the rangelands to meet the Standards in the future.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: A long term Daubenmire rangeland monitoring transect was established in 2005 and will continue to be read approximately every four to five years. Land Health Assessments were conducted on primary ecological sites throughout the allotment at the same time. Public lands within the allotment were rated as meeting Public Land Health Standards. Cheatgrass *(Bromus tectorum)* is present to a minor degree in otherwise healthy native perennial grass communities. It is anticipated that regardless of livestock grazing, cheatgrass will continue to be present though under proper grazing management it will remain as a minor component. The table below lists the plant community appearance for each of the ecological sites or woodland types on the allotment along with the predominant plant species comprising the composition of each community. Forb species, though important to the diversity of a community and comprising up to 25 to 30% of the composition of several of the plant communities listed, are not presented in the following table because they generally are not significant contributors to the general appearance of the community. Predominant ecological sites on BLM lands within the Willow Springs allotment are Brushy Loam (326 acres), Pinyon/Juniper woodland/clayey slopes (213 acres), and Deep/Rolling Loam (136 acres). The following table lists plant communities and the dominant plant species for the ecological sites or woodland types throughout the allotment as associated with the proposed action.

Ecological Site / Woodland Type	Plant Community Appearance	Predominant Plant Species in the Plant Community
Brushy Loam	Deciduous Shrub / Grass Shrubland	Serviceberry, oakbrush, snowberry, mountain brome, slender wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, Letterman and Columbia needle grasses
Clayey Foothills	Grass / Open Shrub Shrubland	Western wheatgrass, mutton grass, Indian rice grass, squirreltail, June grass, Wyoming big sagebrush, black sagebrush
Clayey Slopes	Grassland	Salina wildrye, mutton grass, western wheatgrass, June grass, squirreltail, shadscale
Deep Loam	Grassland	Bluebunch wheatgrass, muttongrass, needle-and-thread, western wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass, big sagebrush, serviceberry, snowberry.
Loamy Slopes	Mix Shrub / Grass Shrubland	Mountain mahogany, bitterbrush, serviceberry, mountain big sagebrush, beardless bluebunch wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, June grass, Indian rice grass
Rolling Loam	Sagebrush / Grass Shrubland	Wyoming big sagebrush, winterfat, low rabbitbrush, horsebrush, bitterbrush, western wheat grass, Indian rice grass, squirreltail, June grass, Nevada and Sandberg bluegrass
Pinyon/Juniper	Pinyon/Juniper Woodland	Pinyon pine, Utah juniper, mountain mahogany, bitterbrush, serviceberry, Wyoming big sagebrush, beardless bluebunch wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, June grass, Indian rice grass, mutton grass

The following table shows the seral rating system used by BLM to rate rangeland plant communities in comparison to the potential natural plant community for a particular rangeland site.

ECOLOGICAL SITE SIMILARITY RATINGS	
Seral Rating	**% Similarity to the Potential Natural Plant Community (PNC)**
Potential Natural community (PNC)	76-100% composition of species in the PNC
Late-Seral	51-75% composition of species in the PNC
Mid-Seral	26-50% composition of species in the PNC
Early-Seral	0-25% composition of species in the PNC

The following table shows an estimate of the public land acreage falling within each seral class for the ecological sites on the allotment. These estimates are based upon professional judgments of the Rangeland Management Specialist trained in the use of the rating system. Key ecological sites were visited during the 2005 field seasons for plant community assessments of the Colorado Public Land Health Standards.

Willow Springs Allotment (06624) Ecological Site Similarity Rating						
Ecological Site	**Total BLM ACRES**	**PNC**	**Late Seral**	**Mid Seral**	**Early Seral**	**BLM Acres Classified**
Clayey Foothills	8	5	3	0	0	**8**
Pinyon-Juniper woodland	123	82	22	19	0	**123**
Rolling Loam	27	16	8	3	0	**27**
Brushy Loam/Brushy Loam	326	276	42	8	0	**326**
Loamy Slopes/Loamy Slopes/Clayey Foothills	6	3	2	1	0	**6**
Rolling Loam	17	9	7	1	0	**17**
PJ Woodlands/Clayey Slopes	90	78	3	9	0	**90**
None	54	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	**0**
Deep Loam	109	68	22	20	0	**109**
Total:	**760**	**537**	**109**	**61**	**0**	**706**
% BLM Acres Classified:		**76%**	**15%**	**9%**	**0%**	**100%**

As indicated in the table above, all public land acres within the Willow Springs allotment have plant communities within acceptable thresholds for healthy plant communities and within acceptable limits of a desired plant community as defined in the White River ROD/RMP. Vegetation production and species composition on these acres provide adequate cover for soil protection and sufficient forage production to meet forage demands and provide for sustainability.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Under the proposed action grazing will be within the current estimated rangeland livestock carrying capacity (AUMs) for

long term sustainable livestock grazing, and to meet Standards and goals set forth in the RMP (see Rangeland Management Section). PNC and late-seral stage ecological sites that are currently meeting vegetation requirements should continue to provide healthy rangeland vegetative composition and species diversity capable of producing a sustainable supply of forage to meet the demand for livestock grazing. Under the proposed grazing schedule vegetation communities on BLM administered lands will also have the opportunity to meet their physiological needs provide sufficient ground cover and maintain a favorable ecological presence in the plant community.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under a no grazing by livestock scenario, late-seral and PNC ecological sites would continue to meet standards and experience minimal changes in plant species composition and diversity. There would most likely be a short-term increase in both perennial plant cover and soil surface litter accumulation. Mid-seral ecological sites would likely experience the greatest benefit of increased soil surface litter accumulation and perennial plant cover.

Mitigation: none

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial)*:* Land Health Assessments conducted in 2005 indicate that standards for plant communities are being met for public lands within the Willow Springs allotment. Implementation of the proposed grazing schedule will improve the ability of these rangelands to continue meeting land health standards in the future.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There are no BLM-administered aquatic communities within the allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on aquatic wildlife or associated habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have any direct or indirect influence on aquatic communities.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): There are no BLM-administered aquatic habitats within the allotment and therefore, the proposed action would have no potential for influencing aquatic attributes addressed in the Standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Public lands within the Willow Springs allotment are categorized by the Colorado Division of Wildlife as general winter range for both deer and elk, with the lower elevation shrub habitats considered severe winter range for elk. These sagebrush parks and mountain shrub communities are occupied as early as September with most use occurring during the winter and early spring months (December through April).

The allotment is lacking mature components of pinyon-juniper woodlands which in general are favored nest habitat for red-tailed and the accipitrine hawks. While there is potential for nesting in more intact stands of pinyon-juniper, particularly for sharp-shinned or Cooper's hawk, the likelihood is extremely low.

Nongame mammals and birds using this area are typical and widely distributed in extensive like habitats across the Resource Area and northwest Colorado; there are no narrowly endemic or highly specialized species known to inhabit those lands potentially influenced by this action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is unlikely that continued grazing would negatively impact the extent or quality of habitat available for terrestrial wildlife within the allotment. There is no evidence to suggest that current levels of cumulative use by livestock and big game are causing inappropriate or potentially damaging levels of use on plant vigor, composition or regeneration. For the most part, livestock and big game use is not concurrent and based on allotment inspections; there is no apparent influence on the availability or production of woody forage for big game winter use.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Response of vegetative communities is not expected to differ markedly in the absence of cattle grazing. Public lands within the allotment currently meet land health standards with regards to vegetative composition. Increases in height and density of herbaceous cover would be most prominent in those areas favored by livestock and the roughly 60 acres of mid-seral communities. It is suspected that non-hibernating small mammals (e.g., voles) and early ground nesting birds (e.g., horned larks) would benefit most from livestock removal, namely due to increasing cover and forage bases. Although likely to be small and discountable, any positive response of small mammal or non-game bird populations to enhanced habitat conditions may yield a more consistently abundant and available prey base for raptors which may forage in the area.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The allotment presently meets the Land Health Standard at the landscape level for healthy, productive animal communities and it is expected that the area will continue to meet those standards under the proposed action. There is no evidence to suggest that current grazing practices are aggravating deficiencies in the utility or available extent of wildlife habitat.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management		X	
Forest Management			X
Geology and Minerals		X	
Hydrology/Water Rights		X	
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise	X		
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources		X	
Wild Horses	X		

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: There is approximately 213 acres of pinyon juniper woodlands within the Willow Springs Allotment on BLM lands. Approximately 10-20% of these woodlands are sagebrush disclimax with most of the trees present within these woodlands < 150 years in age. Within the current land use plan all of the pinyon juniper (PJ) woodlands in the Danforth/Jensen Geographic Reference Area (GRA) are classified as non-commercial based on productivity and harvest suitability. These woodlands are not considered in the decadal harvest for the WRFO, and will not be managed for commercial firewood production. Woodlands in this GRA are available for harvest by private individuals. The majority of harvesting is for fuel wood and fence posts. These woodlands are available for manipulation to enhance other resource values.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Livestock grazing in general has not been shown to adversely impact existing PJ woodlands. Livestock grazing may play some role in increasing invasion of PJ woodlands on sagebrush sites by decreasing the competitive nature of native plant communities. Grazing also decreases fine fuel loading decreasing the intensity and frequency of fires which would kill seedling and sapling trees. Under this alternative there would be an increase in the cover and composition of desired forage species which would compete with PJ seedlings, decreasing the rate of invasion of sagebrush sites. There would be an increase in the litter and fine fuels increasing the frequency of fires which would limit the encroachment of PJ woodlands into sagebrush types.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be a steady increase in fine fuel loadings in the sagebrush types and to a lesser degree the PJ type. Fire frequencies would be expected to increase with sagebrush communities being susceptible to more frequent burning. These fires would be expected to carry into the PJ associations creating stand-replacing fires. Over the long term PJ woodlands would be relegated to those areas that are fire resistant such as bluffs and areas containing rim-rock. The distribution of PJ woodlands would over time more closely represent the distribution and extend as before European influence.

Mitigation: None

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The allotment is located in an area generally mapped as the Wasatch, Fort Union and Williams Fork Formations (Tweto 1979) which the BLM, WRFO has classified as a PFYC 4/5 formations meaning they are known to produce scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: In those areas where the formation outcrops, horizontally or vertically, there is the potential to impact scientifically important fossils. On horizontal surfaces impacts occur where livestock concentrate or trail causing crushing and both horizontal and vertical displacement of elements. Soil chiseling and erosion in those areas could also result in loss of fossil elements particularly the smaller items such as small mammal and reptile bones. On vertical surfaces impacts occur where animals may shelter and rub against the exposures to dislodge fossil elements particularly smaller ones then the impacts become similar to those for horizontal exposures where elements are crushed, displaced horizontally and vertically by trampling or lost due to erosion.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: cancellation of grazing on BLM administered lands would eliminate impacts to fossil resources on BLM lands.

Mitigation: Any future range improvement projects should be inventoried for fossil resources. Surface exposures of the formation should be examined as opportunities to do so become available.

The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the range allotment operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological sites, or for collecting fossils. If fossil materials are uncovered during any range allotment activities on BLM land, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within 5 working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear to be of noteworthy scientific interest
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not feasible)

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: Livestock grazing on the Willow Springs allotment (06624) is currently permitted to authorization #0501478. Information from the Forage Production tables below show the current calculated livestock carrying capacity (AUMs) for the allotment by surface ownership. An AUM is the amount of forage necessary to sustain one cow for a one month period.

Acres & AUM Breakdown for Willow Springs Allotment:										
Livestock Grazing Capacity										
Willow Springs	Est. BLM AUMs	Est. BLM Acres/AUM	Est. Pvt AUMs	Est. Pvt Acres/AUM	Tot AUMs: (BLM & Pvt)	% PL	BLM Acres	Pvt Acres	Total Acres	% BLM Acres
	82	9.06	381	7.71	463	18%	743	2,938	3,681	20%

The table below is a break down by acreage, ownership, soil type and associated ecological site and estimated forage production in terms of acres per AUM. Figures in these tables are calculated to produce moderate stocking levels and account for such factors as slope, distance to water and current site production levels. The permittee has agreed to operate at a moderate stocking level in relation to rangeland carrying capacity and current rangeland conditions in order to assure that the Standards for Public Land Health continue to be met.

Willow Springs Allotment (06624) Livestock Grazing Capacity for BLM Lands				
Soil Unit	**Ecological Site**	**BLM Acres**	**Acres / AUM**	**BLM AUMs**
Abor Clay Loam,5-30%slopes	Clayey Foothills	8	10	1
Blazon, moist-Rentsac Complex,6-65%slopes	Pinyon-Juniper woodland	123	0	0
Forelle loam, 8-15%slopes	Rolling Loam	10	8	1
Jerry-Thornburgh-Rhone complex,8-65%slopes	Brushy Loam/Brushy Loam	326	6	54
Mergel-Redthayne-Dollard complex,8-65%slopes	Loamy Slopes/Loamy Slopes/ Clayey Foothills	6	9	1
Patent loam,3-8%slopes	Rolling Loam	17	8	2
Rentsac-Moyerson-RockOutcrop,complex,5-65%slps	PJ Woodlands/Clayey Slopes	90	20	4
Rock Outcrop	None	54	0	0
Shawa loam,3-8%slopes	Deep Loam	17	6	3
Work Loam, 3-8%slope	Deep Loam	10	6	2
Zoltay clay loam, 8-15%slope	Deep Loam	82	6	14
	Totals:	**743**		**82**
	Average Acres/AUM		**9.06**	

Willow Springs Allotment (06624) Livestock Grazing Capacity for Private Lands				
Soil Unit	**Ecological Site**	**Pvt Acres**	**Acres / AUM**	**Pvt AUMs**
Abor Clay Loam,5-30%slopes	Clayey Foothills	90	9	10
Absher loam,3-8%slopes	Alkaline Slopes	132	15	9
Blazon, moist-Rentsac Complex,6-65%slopes	Pinyon-Juniper woodland	110	0	0
Forelle loam, 8-15%slopes	Rolling Loam	137	7	20
Jerry-Thornburgh-Rhone complex,8-65%slopes	Brushy Loam/Brushy Loam	1190	6	198
Mergel-Redthayne-Dollard complex,8-65%slopes	Loamy Slopes/Loamy Slopes/Clayey Foothills	108	8	13
Patent loam,3-8%slopes	Rolling Loam	105	7	15
Rentsac-Moyerson-RockOutcrop,complex,5-65%slps	PJ Woodlands/Clayey Slopes	541	20	27
Rentsac-Piceance complex,2-30%slopes	PJ woodland/Rolling Loam	43	20	2
Rock Outcrop	None	74	20	4
Shawa loam,3-8%slopes	Deep Loam	163	5	33
Work Loam, 3-8%slope	Deep Loam	9	5	2
Zoltay clay loam, 8-15%slope	Deep Loam	238	5	48
	Totals:	**2938**		**381**
			Average Acres/AUM	**7.71**	

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Refer to the Vegetation and Soils sections of this document for the analyses of rangeland vegetation and soils impacts. Those sections detail how implementation of the grazing schedule presented in the proposed action will provide improved opportunities for plant rest and re-growth. The Proposed Grazing Permit table below outlines the active BLM AUMs (82 AUMs). If the permittee fully exercised the authorized AUMs within this allotment the new permit would result in use 2.4 times less than previously permitted (453 total AUMs on the proposed permit versus 1080 total AUMs on the current permit). However, it should be noted that the permittee has been stocking well below the current permitted level in order to achieve his management goals, which have also resulted in utilization levels consistent with BLM objectives. The proposed stocking rate is within the current calculated livestock grazing capacity and will allow rangelands to support this level of livestock use in a sustainable manner while continuing to meet Standards. Under the proposed grazing schedule vegetation should have an adequate opportunity to produce seed, propagate, replenish root reserves, and accumulate biomass for site preservation and plant health. The ability to utilize forage both on BLM and private lands within this allotment is vital for the permittee to continue his livestock operation as he has in the past.

Proposed Grazing Permit (0501478) for Barry Sepic - Willow Springs Allotment:								
Allotment No. 06624	**Livestock**		**Date**		**%**	**BLM AUMs**	**Suspended**	**Total**
Pasture Name	**#**	**Kind**	**On**	**Off**	**PL**	**scheduled**	**AUMs**	**AUMs**
Willow Springs	112	C	06/15	10/15	18	82	0	82

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, the permittee would not be authorized to graze livestock on BLM lands within the Willow Springs allotment. Private lands within the allotment produce an average of 82 percent of the forage and it is not feasible to fence these lands separate from BLM lands. Without availability of public land forage, it is unlikely that a viable livestock operation could continue.

Mitigation: none

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: A majority (80%) of the allotment is private surface. The only recorded linear ROW is COC23562, a Public Service Company/Tri-State electrical transmission line that crossed the private land and 2 parcels of public lands. Three parcels of public lands within the allotment have been designated as Category 1, Disposal Lands: T1.S., R92W., sec 16, SWSE; T.2S., R.92W., sec. 20, NWNE and NENW; and sec. 29, NENE. WRFO has received inquiries to purchase these parcels, but no sales are expected in the foreseeable future.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would have no additional impacts to the existing conditions.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative would have no additional impacts to the existing conditions.

Mitigation: none

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Cumulative impacts from the proposed action would not exceed those discussed in the White River Resource Area RMP and/or White River Resource Area Grazing Management Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

REFERENCES CITED:

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

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: Permittee

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Bob Lange	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights, Soils, Wastes- Hazardous or Solid
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Threatened and Endangered Plant Species, Forest Management
Sharilee Counce	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources
Mary Taylor	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species, Vegetation, Soils, Rangeland Management, Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife, Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness, Access and Transportation, Recreation, Visual Resources
Jim Michels	Fire/Fuels Technician	Fire Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Linda Jones	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Melissa J. Kindall	Range Technician	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2007-099-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to offer a proposed decision to implement the grazing schedule outlined in the proposed action.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

Cultural: The permit holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the allotment operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary).
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you

must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

Inventory data for the BLM acres of the allotment is needed to further assess potential impacts to cultural resources, specifically in areas where site presence may overlap with high livestock congregation. Inventory of the BLM acres should be completed within the next fiscal year to assess resource presence and any impacts.

Wastes Hazardous or Solid: The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions. If any hazardous chemicals, fuels, oils, lubricants, and/or noxious fluids are spilled during field activities, they shall be cleaned up immediately and disposed of at an approved waste disposal facility.

A release of any chemical, oil, petroleum product, or sewage, etc, (regardless of quantity) must be reported to the Bureau of Land Management – WRFO Hazardous Materials Coordinator at (970) 878-3800. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) should be notified, if applicable, through the 24-hour spill reporting line at 1 (877) 518-5608.

The permittee is requested to notify BLM of any historical or recent trash dumping sites on the allotment, so that BLM can identify, prioritize, and perform cleanup activities at these locations.

Paleontology: Any future range improvement projects should be inventoried for fossil resources. Surface exposures of the formation should be examined as opportunities to do so become available.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Refer to Monitoring and Evaluation section on page 3.

NAME OF PREPARER: Mary Taylor

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Barbara J. Blackstone
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 03/05/08

ATTACHMENTS: Figure 1, Map of Allotment

Figure 1

Willow Springs allotment (#06624)
T2N R94W