

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Royal Gorge Field Office
3170 E. Main Street
Canon City, CO 81212**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-200-2008-0033- EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT NAME: Recreation- Elk Glade Guiding and Outfitting Special Recreation Permit

PLANNING UNIT: Gold Belt Subregion #5

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Fremont and Teller County; 6th Principal Meridian
West and East Fork Turkey Creek T16S, R67W, Sections 5, 6, 7, 8, 18, 19, 30
T16S, R68W, Sections 12, 13, 14, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27

APPLICANT: James Johnson, owner of Elk Glade Outfitters

ISSUES AND CONCERNS:

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: James Johnson dba Elk Glade Outfitters owns 1900 acres of land along South Beaver Creek located in Teller County Colorado and has been guiding hunters on this land since 2005. Elk Glade Outfitters is proposing to conduct big game hunting under a Special Recreation Permit on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Royal Gorge Field Office. The public lands they propose to use include portions of Blue Mountain, East Fork of Turkey Creek, and West Fork of Turkey Creek within Game Management Unit 59 (see map page 3). Access to public lands will be through their private ground on T16S, R68W Section 15 and by a Forest Service road near T15S, R68W Section 36.

Proposed Action:

Authority to issue Special Recreation Permits is found in 43 CFR Part 2930 and BLM Handbook H-2930-1. The proposed action is to issue a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) to Elk Glade Outfitters, LLC. The SRP will authorize commercial Outfitter and Guide use of BLM lands for the purpose of providing the public with guided big game hunting (Elk, Deer, Bear, Turkey, and Fowl).

All travel on BLM lands authorized by the SRP will be foot and/or horse. No motorized travel would be authorized by the SRP. No camping or permanent structures will be authorized.

Season of use will be from April 1st to December 1st (Spring Turkey to last Rifle Season). All hunting will be in accordance with the Colorado Division of Wildlife hunting regulations. Outfitter and guides authorized by the SRP must be licensed by the State of Colorado. Colorado State Law and SRP stipulations require that guides have a valid First Aid and CPR Card and requires all outfitters to pass a hunter safety course.

Elk Glade Outfitters expects that their estimated use will be approximately 80 client days per year. No overnight camping has been requested by the applicant. This Special Recreation Permit application is for day use only.

No Action Alternative: Deny the application.

NEED FOR THE ACTION: We have received a Special Recreation Permit request, and we need to respond.

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

Name of Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 05/13/96

Decision Number: 5-86, 5-90

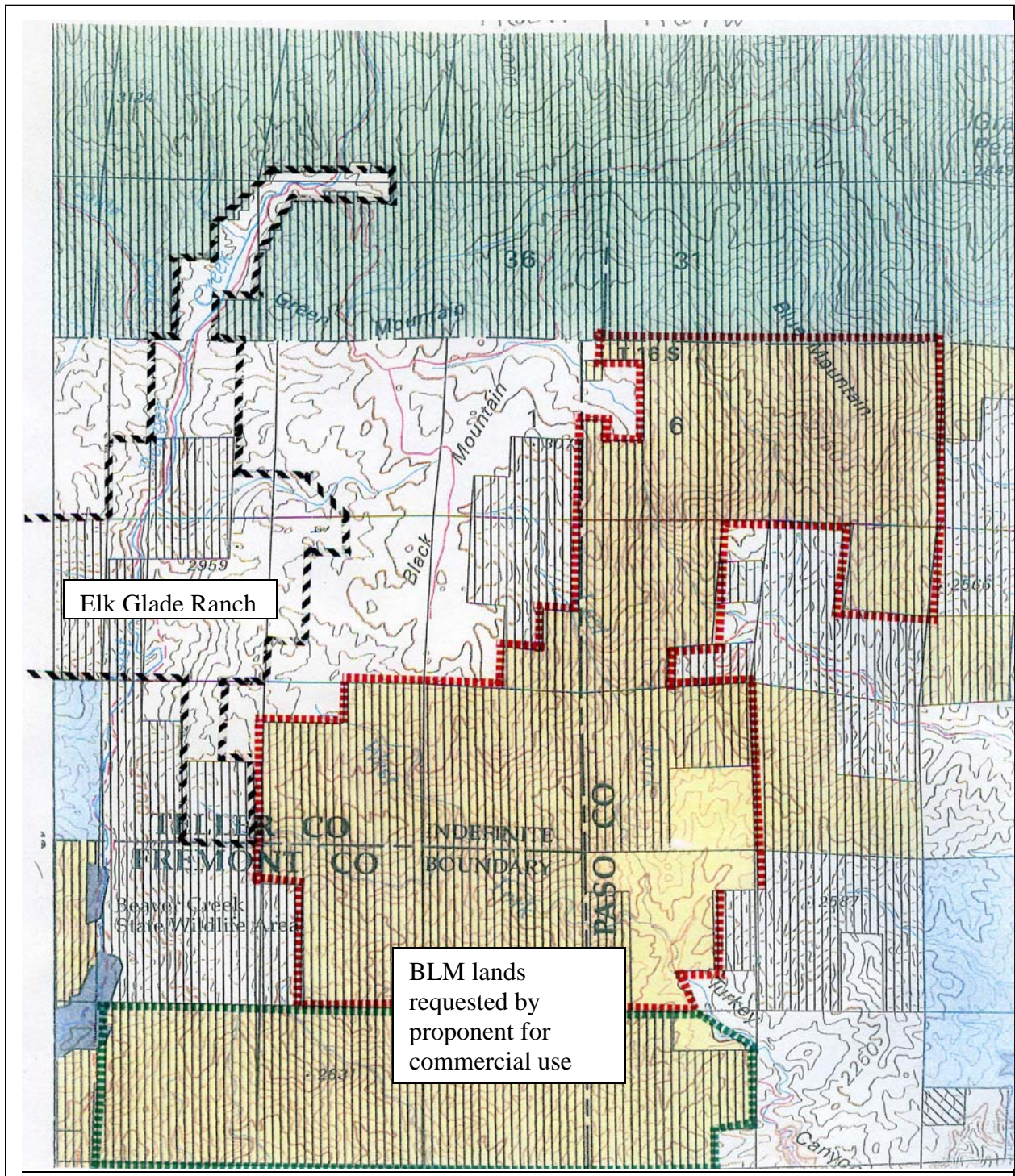
Decision Language:

5-86 Recreation will be managed to provide for a variety of recreational opportunities and settings

5-90 Various actions will occur to enhance recreation; provide for acquisitions or easements to enhance hunting

Standards for Public Land Health: In January 1997, Colorado 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.

Elk Glade Outfitters Permit Area



AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: Area is largely undeveloped land with few permanent residents and little public access.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: Will not impact air quality. Occasional use by hunters probably does not increase use in the area substantially. Foot and horse traffic will not generate the usual culprits that contribute to air quality degradation; fugitive dust generated by vehicles on un-surfaced county and private roads.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: none necessary.

No Action Alternative: Same as Proposed action

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Other Alternative: N/A

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope: None

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Both prehistoric and historic sites are present in the vicinity of the area of potential effect. However, because of the dispersed nature of the undertaking and because the undertaking involves no ground disturbance, no specific impacts to historic properties are likely to occur.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Because no historic properties will be impacted, no cultural resources inventory was required. No further work is necessary.

Proposed Action: None.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

No Action Alternative: None.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Other Alternative: None.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:
None foreseen.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: The proposed action is in an area surrounded by steep rugged public and private land. Equally as important this action will not adversely affect minority or low-income populations.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: None

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

No Action Alternative: None

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Other Alternative: None

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:
None

FARMLANDS, PRIME AND UNIQUE

Affected Environment: There are no prime or unique farmlands involved in the proposed action or the alternatives.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: None

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

No Action Alternative: None.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Other Alternative: N/A

Recommended Mitigation Measures: N/A

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:
None.

FLOODPLAINS, WETLANDS & RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: The public lands discussed are headwater canyon lands for four small, but important front-range streams; Little Fountain, Little Turkey, and the East and West Forks of Turkey Creek. These creeks have rapid descent from Black Mountain and Blue Mountain (private/USFS) towards Highway 115 to the east. BLM generally manages the extremely rugged canyons in between, though short areas with flatter floodplain are present. Due to the extreme ruggedness and difficult access to the public land, the creeks are generally in a natural state without roads, recreation, substantial grazing, etc. These drainage ways are mostly vegetated by forest cover-types and they appear ready to burn as there is extensive dead timber criss-crossed across these streams indicating a long time without a major fire.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: Generally there will be no impact to these small streams from hunters lightly traveling through the uplands and crossing the streams of these watersheds. There is an added risk of exotic plant introduction to riparian areas with added public use, but this risk is area wide continuously.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None for the protection of the riparian areas discussed beyond the stipulations given with the permit.

No Action Alternative: There will be no impact upon riparian areas under this alternative.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:
There will be no cumulative impacts from the proposed action to the riparian resources discussed as a result of authorization of this activity. Because access into these public lands is difficult use outside of the guided activity will remain light.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Riparian Systems: The proposed action does not affect the condition of public land wetland and riparian resources.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The ecological sites involved in this proposal are prone to a wide variety of noxious weed species if severe soil surface disturbance occurs. There are no known existing weed infestations on or near the project site.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: The proposed action will not result in the type of surface disturbance that would increase the risk of noxious weed invasion.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Any horse feed that is brought onto public land should be certified weed free.

No Action Alternative: There would be no additional risk of weed invasion.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Other Alternative: None

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope: None.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The proposed permit area elevation ranges from about 6,500 feet to 10,000 feet and the annual precipitation varies from 14 inches at lower elevations to 26 inches at higher elevations. The variation in elevation and precipitation creates a diversity of vegetation and habitat types in the project area. At lower elevations pinyon-juniper habitat is prevalent. At mid-elevations Douglas fir and ponderosa pine are common with large stands of aspens and smaller open meadows. Much of this area is steep, rocky, canyon-cliff habitat that prevents easy access.

The Colorado Bird Conservation Plan identifies 13 vegetation habitat types important to birds in Colorado. The habitat classifications and assignment of bird species to the habitats were developed by Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) staff along with individuals who contributed to early development of the conservation prioritization scheme. Bird species were assigned to specific habitats based on their restriction to, or strong representation within, that habitat type. Of these 13 habitat categories, 5 (aspen, riparian, mixed conifer, ponderosa pine and Pinyon-juniper) occur in the project planning area. Bird species typically found in these habitats are described for each habitat type.

Aspen provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species from large ungulates to small non-game birds and mammals. Aspen grows under a wide variety of environmental conditions and upland sites. Required site conditions include long growing seasons, deep snow, and annual precipitation exceeding 16-20 in. At lower elevations typical of the area, it is often found as stringers along riparian corridors, or in small mesic islands surrounded by drier pine uplands. The value of aspen habitats to wildlife is directly related to the structural diversity of the canopy and undergrowth. The most common understory shrubs are snowberry, western serviceberry, chokecherry, and rose. The most common forbs include geranium, valerian, yarrow, and dandelion.

Because aspen is seral to and is usually mixed with adjacent conifer types, the importance of aspen dominated woodlands to birds and other wildlife far exceeds the aerial extent of the stands themselves. Approximately 134 species of birds are reported to use aspen-dominated habitats. This list includes 34 cavity nesters, 7 canopy nesters, 10 shrub nesters, and 10 ground nesters. Few species are limited to aspen, but some reach their highest breeding densities within this habitat type. Bird communities within aspen stands are often composites of aspen-associated species along with many species found in the surrounding conifer habitats. However, the exact species mix depends on the relative amounts of aspen and conifer in the stand. Perhaps the most important contribution of aspen-dominated woodlands to avian nesting habitat is as a structural substrate for primary cavity excavators and secondary cavity nesters. False tinder rot is a major source of heartwood decay in live aspens; it produces a hard sapwood shell surrounding a soft interior that is ideal for cavity excavation. Habitat preferences of primary cavity excavators and the decay characteristics of aspen combine to produce much higher cavity densities in aspen than in surrounding conifer habitats. Species that are typically found in aspen habitats include broad-tailed hummingbird, house wren, Lincoln's sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, dark-eyed junco, violet-green swallow, purple martin, mountain bluebird, Cooper's hawk, western wood-pewee, warbling vireo, red-naped sapsucker, mountain chickadee, pygmy and white-breasted nuthatches, and western bluebirds.

Foothills riparian habitat is distributed along stream systems in the foothills, lower mountains and mountain parks from 7,500-10,000 ft elevation. In some areas, the riparian forest is dominated by a deciduous component, especially narrowleaf cottonwood or aspen, a variety of willow species, box elder, mountain alder and river birch. In other areas Colorado blue spruce and other coniferous trees dominate, and conifers often form a mixture with cottonwoods. The understory of these systems is typically rich, with a wide variety of shrubs and herbaceous plants. Riparian areas represent a transition zone between the aquatic ecosystem and the drier uplands. The riparian zones are well defined, unique, and highly productive areas which are sensitive to disturbance. In most western riparian areas, 75% of the bird species use riparian areas during some part of their life cycle. Riparian areas provide habitat for many wildlife species. Not only do riparian systems serve as a source of water but they usually contain green forage during late summer and fall when most other forage sources are of lesser quality.

Species most commonly found in the riparian habitats are broad-tailed hummingbird, dusky flycatcher, yellow warbler, MacGillivray's warbler, Wilson's warbler, Lincoln's sparrow, song sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, and fox sparrow. In deciduous foothills riparian systems,

yellow warbler is the species most frequently detected, followed by American robin, northern flicker, house wren, warbling vireo, song sparrow, western wood-pewee, and broad-tailed hummingbird. In coniferous systems, Cordilleran flycatcher is the most frequently detected species, followed by broad-tailed hummingbird, ruby-crowned kinglet, American robin, golden-crowned kinglet, Swainson's thrush, mountain chickadee, yellow-rumped warbler, and western tanager.

Pinyon-juniper habitat is a cold adapted evergreen woodland situated above desert or grassland vegetation. Colorado pinyon pine is the predominate pinyon species in the area and Rocky Mountain juniper is also dominate. Proportions of juniper and pinyon within the habitat vary greatly, and pure stands of either tree may occur. Usually, as elevation increases pinyon dominance increases, juniper density decreases, total tree density increases, and trees become larger. Pinyon pines drop out completely at the lowest elevations. Depending on site variables, pinyon-juniper may range from an openly spaced savanna to a closed forest. Pinyon-juniper understories vary from completely open to quite dense, the densest understories occurring in open canopy woodland/oak communities. Soils underlying pinyon-juniper often are shallow, rocky and low in fertility. The relative resistance to fire of these soil types favors pinyon-juniper growth. Deep soil sites that are burned tend to revert to open "parks," often mountain shrubs, and resist returning to pinyon-juniper cover for many years.

Pinyon-juniper habitat supports the largest nesting bird species list of any upland vegetation type in the West. Lowland riparian habitats will, across an entire year, harbor more species of birds due to their importance to migrants. A single ponderosa pine stand supports more species than a single pinyon-juniper stand. Aspen stands may hold a higher density of birds. However, the richness of the pinyon-juniper vegetation type is important due to its middle elevation. Survey tallies in pinyon-juniper are similar in species diversity to the best riparian.

Species that are found in the pinyon-juniper habitat include: black-chinned hummingbird, gray flycatcher, Cassin's kingbird, gray vireo, pinyon jay, juniper titmouse, black-throated gray warbler, Scott's oriole, ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick's wren, mountain chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, and chipping sparrow.

Mixed conifer forests are found at higher elevations where they are transitional between ponderosa pine and spruce-fir forests. At lower elevations, ponderosa pines are common, with Douglas fir on north facing slopes and in drainages. Mixed conifer gives way to spruce-fir at higher elevations. Aspen stands are an important component, and so pervasive as to be considered an integral part of the mixed conifer forest. Other tree species present include blue spruce, white fir, and bristlecone pine. Mixed conifer habitats support species such as the yellow-rumped warbler, western tanager, dark-eyed junco, and evening grosbeak. Blue grouse and Williamson's sapsucker, red-naped sapsucker, house wren, and western bluebird are also common.

Ponderosa pine forests are very dry and warm, with less than 25 in of precipitation annually. Mature ponderosa pine forests on dry sites are open and park like; mature trees achieve wide separation as they compete for limited soil moisture, and a luxuriant grassy ground cover is maintained by frequent low intensity fires. On more mesic sites, ponderosa stands are denser,

and closed canopy stands are common. Ponderosa pines are the largest conifers in Colorado and Gambel oak is a common component of the understory, usually in a shrubby form. Other common understory shrubs include mountain mahogany and wax currant. Tree species sometimes found mixed with ponderosa pine are junipers, pinyon pine, aspen, white fir, and Douglas-fir. Ponderosa pine forests support a rich avifauna, in part a reflection of the prevalence of gambel oak in many ponderosa stands. Oak adds structure and prey-insect densities are higher than in nearby conifers.

Birds typical of the Ponderosa pine forest type include Merriam's turkey, Williamson's sapsucker, pygmy nuthatch, western bluebird, band-tailed pigeon, Mexican spotted owl, Grace's warbler, flammulated owl, red-breasted nuthatch, violet-green swallow, western tanager, and chipping sparrow.

The following birds are listed on the US Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) – 2002 List for BCR 16-Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau. These species have been identified as species with declining populations that should be monitored and protected from habitat alterations.

The golden eagle is a bird of grasslands, shrublands, pinon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests, may occur in most other habitats occasionally, especially in winter. Nests are placed on cliffs and sometimes in trees in rugged areas, and breeding birds range widely over surrounding habitats.

The flammulated owl has a scattered, disjunct distribution from southern British Columbia south through the Rocky Mountains into western Mexico, and as far west as southern California. They are found in suitable habitat with concentrations in the ponderosa pine belts along the Front Range, the Uncompahgre Plateau, and the San Juan Mountains. Flammulated owls prefer old-growth or mature ponderosa pine, apparently due to the presence of large broken-top and lightning-damaged snags and trees for nesting cavities, large cavities excavated by Northern Flickers and other woodpeckers, open structure of trees and understory for foraging, and high prey availability. They will utilize other habitats with similar structure, such as open mixed-conifer and aspen forests. Key habitat features seem to be the presence of large trees and snags, scattered clusters of shrubs or saplings, clearings, and a high abundance of nocturnal arthropod prey.

Williamson's sapsuckers breed in forested regions throughout the western United States. In Colorado populations are concentrated along the eastern edge of the Rockies and in the San Juan Mountains in southwestern Colorado, with smaller numbers in appropriate habitat throughout the area. Williamson's sapsuckers nest primarily in ponderosa pine and in aspen components of mixed-conifer. They often place nest cavities in aspen trees, and often choose nest trees in aspen stands adjacent to open ponderosa pine or mixed-conifer forest. Nest substrate preferences appear to be live aspen (with some decay) or aspen snags, followed by conifer snags.

Virginia's warblers breed in the Four Corners states of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona. In Colorado, these warblers nest primarily between 5,000-9,000 ft elevation. They breed most abundantly in the western quarter of the state, along the eastern slope foothills, and in the Upper Arkansas River drainage. Virginia's warblers nest in dense shrublands and on scrub-

adorned slopes of mesas, foothills, open ravines, and mountain valleys in semiarid country. They use scrubby brush, pinyon-juniper woodland with a well-developed shrubby understory, ravines covered with scrub oak, and dense shrublands--especially gambel oak. They also breed in open ponderosa pine savannahs that have a dense understory of tall shrubs.

Grace's warblers breed from southwestern Colorado and southern Utah, south through central Arizona, western New Mexico, and into north-central Mexico. Grace's warblers inhabit open ponderosa pine forests with pines 16 ft tall, especially with a shrubby understory, usually gambel oak.

Olive-sided Flycatchers reside in mature spruce-fir and mixed-conifer forests. They are closely associated with burned areas, where they take advantage of the open forest structure for aerial pursuit of insects. They hunt from snags or trees that extend above the canopy, often frequenting steep slopes where tall snags or live trees afford opportunities for unimpeded aerial foraging.

Hammond's Flycatchers breed in mature closed-canopy spruce-fir, mixed-conifer, and aspen forests with limited ground vegetation. These flycatchers are strictly insectivorous, their diet consisting of beetles, caterpillars, butterflies, and moths.

In order to be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, BLM must avoid actions that will result in a "take" of migratory birds. Generally this requires a seasonal restriction that requires that all vegetation disturbance be avoided from May 15 thru July 15. This is the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: Issuing this permit would result in a low intensity, minor disturbance for migratory birds. The presence of people, horses and the noise from firearms might cause birds to move away from the disturbance but this would only be a short-term, minor impact. Implementing the proposed action would not result in a "take" of migratory birds.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Ensure there is no vegetation disturbance, motorized travel or camping on public lands.

No Action Alternative: This alternative would have any effect on migratory birds.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:
Much of the permit area is extremely rough terrain adjacent to mostly undeveloped private land. It is unlikely that issuing the permit would have any cumulative effect as the disturbance would be low intensity, localized and short term.

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

Affected Environment: Aboriginal sites are known to be present in vicinity of the area of potential effect. However, because of the dispersed nature of the undertaking and/or because the undertaking involves no ground disturbance, no impacts to them are likely to occur.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Numerous cultural resource inventories have been conducted in the area, and no sites that might hold special significance for Native Americans (e.g., traditional cultural properties) were found. However, new inventories will be conducted before initiation of any undertakings that might affect such sites.

Proposed Action: Because no additional cultural resources inventory was required, no new sites were identified. However, previous inventories did not result in the location of any potentially sacred or traditional sites.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

No Action Alternative: Same as Proposed Action.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Other Alternative: Same as Proposed Action

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:
None foreseen.

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

Affected Environment: The proposed permit area elevation ranges from about 6,500 feet to 10,000 feet and the annual precipitation varies from 14 inches at lower elevations to 26 inches at higher elevations. The variation in elevation and precipitation creates a diversity of vegetation and habitat types in the project area. At lower elevations pinyon-juniper habitat is prevalent. At mid-elevations Douglas fir and ponderosa pine are common with large stands of aspens and smaller open meadows. Much of this area is steep, rocky, canyon-cliff habitat that prevents easy access.

There are BLM records of Mexican spotted owls (threatened) within the permit area. Much of the permit area is also designated critical habitat for this species.

Mexican Spotted Owls nest in steep canyons with dense stands of large ponderosa pine or pinyon-juniper with Douglas-fir, and in mature to old-growth mixed-conifer forest with high canopy closure and open understory. Favored stands generally are multi-storied, with snags and downed logs. They nest in tree cavities or on cliff ledges.

Pair bonding probably occurs in February and March, and eggs are laid in March and April. Young birds fledge in June. Members of this subspecies are non-migratory, although individuals sometimes move to lower elevations in winter. Their diet primarily consists of small- to medium-sized mammals, especially woodrats and mice (*Peromyscus* spp.); they also take voles, rabbits, and some birds.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: Issuing this permit would result in a low intensity, minor disturbance, if any, for Mexican spotted owls. It is unlikely that hunters would be in an area where these owls are roosted or nesting, especially at night when owls are active. As mentioned above, much of the permit area is steep, narrow canyon habitat e.g. spotted owl habitat, that is very difficult to access. The presence of people, horses and the noise from firearms might cause these birds to be on alert due to the disturbance but this would only be a short-term, minor impact. Implementing the proposed action would not impact these owls and would result in a “no effect” determination.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Ensure that there is no vegetation disturbance, off-road motorized travel or camping on public lands.

No Action Alternative: This alternative would have no effect on T&E species.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:

Much of the permit area on public land is extremely rough terrain with difficult access, adjacent to mostly undeveloped private land. It is unlikely that issuing the permit would have any cumulative effect as the disturbance, if any, would be low intensity, localized and short term.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species:
The proposed action will have no impact on the public land health standard for T&E or sensitive species.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: Public lands in the area are rugged with little public access and no vehicle access. Dumping has never been a problem to BLM’s knowledge

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: Level of day use proposed, limited to travel by foot and by horse will not result in the use, storage or disposal of hazardous materials on public lands.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

No Action Alternative: Same

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Other Alternative: N/A

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:
None

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

Affected Environment: The area covered under this proposal lies mainly within the Turkey Creek watershed northeast of Cañon City and is tributary to the Arkansas River. Water quality in this area is generally considered to be good. There are no waters in the area that are on the State of Colorado's 303(d) or M&E lists.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would be geographically dispersed, only adding up to 80 guided user days across the relatively large proposal area. Several of the big game seasons in this unit have limited licenses and the Proposed Action would not increase the number of hunters in the field during these seasons. All of the travel would be in compliance with the Gold Belt Travel Management Plan and no new structures or camping would be permitted. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no measurable impacts to water quality.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: No mitigation would be necessary.

No Action Alternative: No new impacts to water quality would result from the No Action Alternative since there would be no changes to use.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: No mitigation would be necessary.

Other Alternative:

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:
Cumulatively, the Proposed Action would add immeasurable impacts to the water quality throughout the watershed. This proposal would mainly add guided hunters and have little effect on the total number of hunters in the field due to the limited licenses in this big game unit. But some of these guided hunters may return outside of hunting season, or hunt unguided once they become familiar with the area. This could lead to increased use of the area in the future adding more stress on existing infrastructure resulting in increased sediment production; however, due to the remote location and difficult access to this area any increase in use would be minimal.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Water Quality: Currently, water quality in the area is meeting Public Land Health Standards. If the Proposed Action is implemented, there would be no detectable changes to water quality or any effect on the Public Land Health Standard.

WILDERNESS, AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN, WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: The Proposed Action would take place in the Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and the Beaver Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The Beaver Creek WSA (CO-050-016) located 10 miles northeast of Cañon City and 23 miles southwest of Colorado Springs, includes 26,150 acres of BLM public lands and 870 acres of state land administered by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. The area is characterized by rugged topography and very diverse vegetation. The elevations within the WSA range from 6,200 feet to 9,922 feet.

There are three primary public access sites into the WSA, the Beaver Creek Trailhead (southside), the Holbert Trailhead (from Phantom Canyon Road), and at Skaguay Reservoir (northwest side). Public use originates primarily from these three access points. The Beaver Creek Trailhead is the most heavily used access point, and there is a small trail network that starts from this point. Primary recreation activities in the WSA include day hiking, hunting, fishing, backpacking, horseback riding, and camping.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and was included in the *Cañon City District Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement* published in December, 1987. In this document, BLM recommended 20,750 acres in the central portion of the WSA for wilderness designation based on its outstanding scenery and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Management of Beaver Creek WSA is guided by BLM's *Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review*. The Beaver Creek WSA is managed under this policy until Congress either designates these lands as wilderness or releases them for other purposes.

The Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan designated the Beaver Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern (13,734 acres) in 1996. The ACEC was designated to protect and enhance visual resources, wildlife habitat, naturalness, primitive recreation opportunities, and water-related recreation opportunities. The lands within the ACEC lie completely within the WSA boundary.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: BLM's *Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review* (IMP) states, "Concessions and actions that require authorization under a special recreation permit will be allowed only if the use and related facilities satisfy the nonimpairment criteria." The Proposed Action meets the nonimpairment criteria because it is a temporary use

(day use hunting, 80 client days over a 9 month period) that would not affect the suitability of the area for wilderness designation.

The IMP also states, “It is BLM’s policy to minimize the establishment of new discretionary uses in the WSAs that would be incompatible with possible wilderness designation, even when the uses would not in themselves exceed the nonimpairment standard.” The Proposed Action would be a new discretionary use; however, it would not be incompatible with wilderness designation. In addition, because Special Recreation Permits are issued at the discretion of the Field Manager, he may choose not to issue permits for certain activities or use areas, at any time and without prior notice. The operations of the outfitter/guide would be reviewed annually for compliance with all permit stipulations. The permit would be issued for a one year period for the first two years (assuming satisfactory performance in the first year). If the permittee’s performance is deemed satisfactory for two consecutive years, the permit may be issued for up to five years.

There is no other commercial special recreation use authorized within the Beaver Creek WSA/ACEC. Use would originate on private land and be limited to an area that is relatively inaccessible to the general public so it would not impact outstanding opportunities for solitude in the WSA.

The Proposed Action is consistent with the RMP guidance on ACECs (i.e. to protect and enhance special values). The guided hunting experience would enhance primitive recreation opportunities in the ACEC.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: 1) Conduct on-site compliance annually and 2) include a specific permit stipulation prohibiting the use of motorized/mechanized vehicles on all public lands within the area of use authorized under the permit.

No Action Alternative: The Special Recreation Permit would not be issued. There would be no impacts to the WSA or ACEC.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope: The primary activities affecting the WSA and ACEC are increasing recreation use, increasing development (roads, houses, etc.) on adjacent private land, and illegal motorized/mechanized use (originating from adjacent private land). The commercial outfitter guide activities under the Proposed Action would be limited in geographic scope to the northeast portion of the Beaver Creek WSA/ACEC, an area that receives very little recreation use. Over time, BLM could reasonably expect to receive additional permit applications for commercial recreation use in the Beaver Creek WSA. Each proposal would be analyzed for short term, long term and cumulative impacts to wilderness values. Over time, recreation use in the WSA can be expected to increase. This increase would be at and near the three primary public access points and be limited by the trail network and terrain. Due to rugged terrain and the limited number of trails, it is unlikely that recreation use would reach a level that would impair wilderness values.

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: The proposed activities are on varied soils covering the a large area. Teller County soils are not published, but available upon request from the NRCS. Soils in Fremont County are published. The soils of the area described are primarily well functioning soils covered with native vegetation. There is limited trails and roads in the proposed use area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action:

The proposed 80 client day use would not be anticipated to cause noticeable impacts to the soils, assuming no trail construction / development occurs from continuous routine use of same paths repeatedly over the hunt season. Both continuous use by hikers, and especially horses will denude areas of vegetation, loosen soils, and encourage other hikers and travelers to use the same routes.

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

It is recommended that the permit specify limited use of same pathways to access hunting areas during the seasonal hunts, so as to prevent development of trailing paths that could become part of an undeveloped trail system..

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative would not alter the current state or use of soils.

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

Other Alternative:

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:

The proposed permit for horse / hiking use if not dispersed, could lead to a cumulative impact of trail development from constant use over certain locations within the area. This would not necessarily apply to existing developed roads and trails that exist and are maintained.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Upland Soils:

The soils in the proposed area of use are considered to be meeting the Health of the Land Standards as defined by the BLM. The proposed permit use is not anticipated to change this status, but also would not improve it.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment:

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action:

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

No Action Alternative:

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

Other Alternative:

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities

(partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial):

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The public lands discussed are headwater canyon lands for four small, but important front-range streams; Little Fountain, Little Turkey, and the East and West Forks of Turkey Creek. These creeks have rapid descent from Black Mountain and Blue Mountain (private/USFS) towards Highway 115 to the east. BLM generally manages the extremely rugged canyons in between, though short areas with flatter floodplain are present. Due to the extreme ruggedness and difficult access to the public land, the creeks are generally in a natural state without roads, recreation, substantial grazing, etc. These drainage ways are mostly vegetated by forest cover-types that appear ready to burn as there is extensive dead timber criss-crossed across these streams indicating a long time without a major fire. These streams are small on BLM land, however fish are found in some locations.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: Generally there will be no impact to these small streams from hunters lightly traveling through the uplands and crossing the streams of these watersheds. As part of the Greenback Cutthroat trout recovery plans, Turkey Creek was studied for reintroduction of these fish. A BLM EA was done to analyze this activity (RGFO records). The proposed action does put a commercial use into a basin that may receive substantial short term activity related to the reintroduction of this fish. As such, the applicant will want to participate in coordination efforts in future years of planned project work so as not to have a conflict in

permitted guiding operations. Otherwise there are no impacts to stream resources as a result of this planned action.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: The applicant needs to be aware of likely out-year activity to introduce Greenback Cutthroat trout. Often this work coincides with fall lower stream flows which can overlap with hunting activities. Planned work would be limited in area and there should be plenty of other room to guide.

No Action Alternative: Impacts upon stream resources or aquatic wildlife do not occur with a no action decision.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: **Geographic scope; Time Scope:** There will be no cumulative impacts from the proposed action to aquatic wildlife or resources as a result of authorization of this activity. Because access into these public lands is difficult use outside of the guided activity will remain light.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The proposed action does not affect the condition of public land wetland, riparian or aquatic resources.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed permit area elevations range from about 6,500 feet to 10,000 feet and the annual precipitation varies from 14 inches at lower elevations to 26 inches at higher elevations. The variation in elevation and precipitation creates a diversity of vegetation and habitat types in the project area. At lower elevations pinyon-juniper habitat is prevalent. At mid-elevations Douglas fir and ponderosa pine are common with large stands of aspens and smaller open meadows. Much of this area is steep, rocky, canyon-cliff habitat that prevents easy access.

The Colorado Bird Conservation Plan identifies 13 vegetation habitat types in this area of Colorado. The habitat classifications and assignment of bird species to the habitats were developed by Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO). Of these 13 habitat categories, 5 (aspen, riparian, mixed conifer, ponderosa pine and Pinyon-juniper) occur in the project area.

Aspen provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species from large ungulates to small non-game birds and mammals. Aspen grows under a wide variety of environmental conditions and upland sites. Required site conditions include long growing seasons, deep snow, and annual precipitation exceeding 16-20 in. At lower elevations typical of the area, it is often found as stringers along riparian corridors, or in small mesic islands surrounded by drier pine uplands. The value of aspen habitats to wildlife is directly related to the structural diversity of the canopy and undergrowth. The most common understory shrubs are snowberry, western serviceberry, chokecherry, and rose. The most common forbs include geranium, valerian, yarrow, and dandelion.

Because aspen is seral to and is usually mixed with adjacent conifer types, the importance of aspen dominated woodlands to birds and other wildlife far exceeds the aerial extent of the stands themselves. Approximately 134 species of birds are reported to use aspen-dominated habitats. **Riparian:** This habitat type consists of foothills riparian forests. The foothills riparian forests are distributed along stream systems in the foothills, lower mountains and mountain parks from 5,500-10,000 ft elevation. In some areas the riparian forest is dominated by a deciduous component, especially narrowleaf cottonwood, a variety of willow species, box elder, mountain alder and river birch. In other areas Colorado blue spruce and other coniferous trees dominate, and conifers often form a mixture with cottonwoods. The understory of these systems is typically rich, with a wide variety of shrubs and herbaceous plants. Riparian areas represent a transition zone between the aquatic ecosystem and the drier uplands. Riparian zones are well defined, unique, and highly productive areas which are sensitive to disturbance. However in most western riparian systems 75% of the bird species use riparian areas during some part of their life cycle.

Pinyon-Juniper: Pinyon-juniper habitat extends over the smaller parcels to be exchanged at lower elevations in the exchange area. The pinyon-juniper habitat type is evergreen woodland situated above desert or grassland vegetation and below mountain shrub. Colorado pinyon pine is the predominate pinyon species in the area and Rocky Mountain juniper is also dominate. Proportions of juniper and pinyon within this habitat type vary greatly, and pure stands of either tree may occur. Typically, as elevation increases pinyon dominance increases, juniper density decreases, total tree density increases, and trees become larger. Depending on site variables, pinyon-juniper may range from an openly spaced savanna to a closed forest. Pinyon-juniper understories vary from completely open to quite dense, the densest understories occurring in open canopy woodland/oak communities. Soils underlying pinyon-juniper often are shallow, rocky and low in fertility.

Mixed Conifer: This forest type is found at elevations of 5,600-10,000 ft, where it is transitional between ponderosa pine and spruce-fir forests. At lower elevations, ponderosa pines are common, with Douglas-fir on north-facing slopes and in drainages. Mixed conifer gives way to spruce-fir at higher elevations. Other tree species present include blue spruce, white fir, lodgepole pine, limber pine, and bristlecone pine. The stand- and landscape-level structure of mixed conifer forests is shaped by fire, blowdown, and insect infestations (western spruce budworm, Douglas-fir bark beetle, and Douglas-fir tussock moth).

Ponderosa Pine: In Colorado, ponderosa pine is found at 5,600-9,000 ft. It is a very dry and warm forest, with less than 25 in of precipitation annually. Mature ponderosa pine forests on dry sites are open, mature trees achieve wide separation as they compete for limited soil moisture, and a grassy ground cover is maintained by frequent low-intensity fires. On more mesic sites, typical of the ponderosa pine habitat of the exchange area, ponderosa stands are dense, and closed-canopy stands are common. Ponderosa pine distribution at local scales is influenced by soil moisture and fire. Ponderosa forests are shaped primarily by fire, which affects species composition and forest structure. Ponderosa forests evolved with frequent, low-intensity fires that cleared understory vegetation and other tree species with lower fire tolerance, but left unharmed the large ponderosa pines with their thick bark. Most ponderosa forests in the exchange area are young in age.

SPECIES DESCRIPTIONS

Elk: The elk is a large cervid whose general body color is pale tan or brown. Elk are among the better studied big game mammals of North America. Once the animals ranged well eastward on the Great Plains, but today they are associated with semi-open forests or forest edges adjacent to parks, meadows, and alpine tundra. Generalist feeders, elk are both grazers and browsers. In the northern and central Rocky Mountains, grasses and shrubs compose most of the winter diet, with the former becoming of primary importance in the spring months. Forbs become increasingly important in late spring and summer, and grasses again dominate in the fall. Browse constituted over 56 percent of the winter diet. Elk breed in the fall with the peak of the rut in Colorado occurring in late September.

Mule Deer: Mule deer are medium-sized cervids with conspicuously long ears and a coarse coat. Mule deer occupy all ecosystems in Colorado from grasslands to alpine tundra. They reach their greatest densities in shrublands on rough, broken terrain, which provide abundant browse and cover. In the Rocky Mountains, fall and winter diets of mule deer consist of browse from a variety of trees and shrubs. In the spring and summer, browse contributes 49 percent of the diet, and forbs and grasses make up about 25 percent of each. Mule deer seem to be able to survive without free water except in arid environments. Over much of Colorado the species is migratory, summering at higher elevations and moving downslope to winter range. During midwinter, deer moved to lower elevations and foraged on more protected south-facing exposures. This latter movement is timed with severity of weather. Spring and summer ranges are most typically mosaics of meadows, aspen woodlands, alpine tundra-subalpine forest edges, or montane forest edges. Montane forests and piñon-juniper woodlands with good shrub understory are often favored winter ranges.

Mule deer are found in the exchange area in all ecosystems. Highest densities are found in mountain shrub and mixed conifer communities at approximately 7500 ft elevation. Mule deer in the area frequently use wet, hay meadows on private lands, especially in the spring. Deer densities are slowly increasing after several years of below average populations.

Black Bear: A medium-sized bear, this species is Colorado's largest surviving carnivore. Color varies greatly, from black to pale brown and blond. Black bears can survive in practically any habitat that offers sufficient food and cover. In Colorado the species is most common in montane shrublands and forests, and subalpine forests at moderate elevations, especially in areas with well-developed stands of oakbrush or berry-producing shrubs such as serviceberry and choke-cherry. However, the animals also occupy habitats ranging from the edge of the alpine tundra to the lower foothills and canyon country. Black bears in Colorado probably breed from early June to perhaps mid-August. Cubs are born in the den in late January or February, while the mother is in hibernation. Litter size is two or three. Black bears are typically solitary, except for family groups (a sow and cubs), or aggregations at concentrated food resources, where bears may show a relatively high tolerance for each other. Black bear populations are difficult to estimate. Black bears are locally common in suitable habitats in the higher elevations of the permit area, but occur in all habitat types throughout the area. Highest population densities occur in the montane shrublands.

Mountain Lion: The mountain lion is the largest cat in the United States. Its' color is brownish to reddish brown. Colorado individuals are among the largest representatives of the species. Mountain lions inhabit most ecosystems in Colorado, including the eastern plains according to periodic reports. They are most common in rough, broken foothills and canyon country, often in association with montane forests, shrublands, and piñon-juniper woodlands. Mountain lions have the widest distribution of any mammal in the New World. In Colorado the species is still common in much of the western two-thirds of the state, although largely eliminated from the eastern plains. Mountain lions are common in the permit area and some of the highest densities in the state are found in the Canon City area.

Raptors: A variety of raptor species occur in the permit area. The following species have been documented as occurring regularly in the area: golden eagle, peregrine falcon, prairie falcon, red-tailed hawk, Coopers hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, goshawk and kestrel. Golden eagles are common in the area and nest in suitable habitats, primarily cliffs and rock outcroppings. The large amount of canyon habitat found in Beaver Creek, Phantom Canyon, Shelf Road and along the Fourmile Creek drainage provide abundant nest sites. Peregrine breeding pairs nest on cliffs and forage over adjacent coniferous and riparian forests. Migrants and winter residents occur mostly around reservoirs, rivers, and marshes, but may also be seen in grasslands, agricultural areas, and less often in other habitats.

Prairie falcon's are widespread in the area utilizing cliff and rock habitats. Red-tailed hawks are the most common broad-winged hawk found in the area at all elevations and most habitat types. The forest hawks: Coopers hawk, goshawk and sharp-shinned hawk occur in smaller numbers due to the absence of large tracks of forested landscape. Kestrels can be found at the lower elevations. Ferruginous, rough-legged, and Swainsons hawk are primarily plains species that would occasionally be seen in the east side of the permit area. Northern harriers and osprey are also rarely seen on BLM lands in the area.

Merriam's Turkey: The Merriam's turkey is a fairly common resident in foothills and mesas of southern Colorado, primarily from Montezuma County east to Archuleta County and from Las Animas County east to southwestern Baca County and north to Fremont County. The Merriam's turkey is very common in the exchange area in suitable habitat. Merriam's are found primarily in ponderosa pine forests with an understory of gambel oak. Tall pines are used during all seasons for roosting.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: The proposed action will have low intensity, localized and short term impact on terrestrial wildlife or wildlife habitat. The guided hunting trips will occur during various established hunting seasons. In addition, the permit does not allow for vegetation disturbance, off road driving, camping and other support facilities to be located on public land. The permit will only allow lawful hunting during established seasons, an activity that is currently ongoing.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Insure that there is no vegetation disturbance, off-road motorized travel or camping on public lands.

No Action Alternative: This alternative would have no effect on terrestrial wildlife.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:

Much of the permit area on public land is extremely rough terrain, with difficult access, adjacent to mostly undeveloped private land. It is unlikely that issuing the permit would have any cumulative effect as the disturbance would be low intensity, localized and short term.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities

(partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The proposed action will have no effect on the public land health standards for plant and animal communities.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, those brought forward for analysis will be formatted as shown above.

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

Use the following template when adding to the EA. Just copy and paste below and change the title.

YOUR RESOURCE

Affected Environment:

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action:

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

No Action Alternative:

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

Other Alternative:

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope:

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is within the Gold Belt Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). The management objective for recreation in Beaver Creek WSA is to enhance recreational opportunities that would maintain the remote backcountry setting (Gold Belt Travel Management Plan, 2004). Recreation activities in the Beaver Creek (WSA) include horseback riding, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and dispersed camping. Because of its status as a WSA, motorized and mechanized recreation use is prohibited. Developed trailhead access to the WSA is limited to the Beaver Creek State Wildlife Area at the end of Fremont County Road 132, Holbert Trail in Phantom Canyon, and the Skaguay Reservoir trailhead. Use is concentrated in Trail Gulch and Beaver Creek along the existing trails. The estimated use in 2007 was approximately 7,800 visits from the Beaver Creek State Wildlife Area, approximately 650 visits from the Holbert Trail, and approximately 2,000 visits from the Skaguay Reservoir trailhead. Increasing use is the trend at all trailheads that provide access to the WSA.

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class for the Beaver Creek WSA is a combination of Primitive (P) and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM). The Primitive ROS class area is the core area of the WSA; the SPNM area is along the WSA perimeter. Primitive areas are characterized by an essentially unmodified natural environment of fairly large size. Interaction among users is very low and evidence of other users is minimal. The area is managed to be essentially free from evidence of human-induced restrictions and controls. SPNM areas are characterized by a predominately natural environment of moderate to large size. Concentration of users is low, but there is evidence of other users. The area provides opportunities for isolation from the sights and sounds of people and a high degree of interaction with the natural environment. Under this class, this area is managed to minimize on-site controls and restrictions; when on-site controls are present, they are subtle.

Many of the visitors originating at the Beaver Creek SWA trailhead and the Skaguay Reservoir trailhead hike along Beaver Creek and do not venture into the rugged and remote terrain that makes up of the majority of the WSA. Off trail travel is highly challenging and requires considerable route-finding skills and is recommended only for those with experience traveling in remote and rugged terrain. At this time, there are no Special Recreation Permits issued that allow use in Beaver Creek WSA.

Experiences that the WSA provides include access to back country recreation, solitude, risk taking adventure, spending time with friends and families, and enjoying nature. Personal benefits to visitors include improved physical fitness and self confidence, stress relief, greater self-reliance, enhanced environmental awareness, and improved outdoor knowledge and skills.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: The proposed commercial outfitter use for guided big game hunting would be compatible with the recreation settings (P and SPNM) and provide recreation activity opportunities, experiences, and benefits consistent with these recreation settings. It would also meet the management objective as stated in the Gold Belt TMP by enhancing recreational opportunities that would maintain the remote backcountry setting. The amount of use would be relatively limited when compared to the overall visitor use in the WSA. It would occur in an area that is remote and difficult for the majority of visitors to reach. This would minimize the opportunities for contact between the outfitter and his clients and other visitors.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, the recreational opportunities in the WSA would not be enhanced by commercially guided big game hunting.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: Geographic scope; Time Scope: The proposed commercial outfitter use would contribute minimally to the general increase in recreation use in the WSA. Over time, this use even in combination with other recreation use is unlikely to negatively impact the recreation settings, activity opportunities, experiences and benefits.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: The proposal area receives light public use and there are no other permitted actions taking place. This action will not create cumulative impacts on the environment. If additional uses are requested in the future this use will be considered in the evaluation of those new requests.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Debbie Bellew	Land Law Examiner	Realty
Keith Berger	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation
Jim Backstrand	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife, T&E, Migratory Birds
Natalee Czarnota	Realty Specialist (SCEP)	Realty
Mike Gaylord	Fire Mit./Educ. Spec.	Air, Hazardous Materials
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife, Riparian/Wetlands
Ernie Gillingham	Surface Reclamation Spec.	Soils
Lindell Greer	Realty Specialist	Realty
Dan Grenard	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology
Tom Grette	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland, Weeds
Jack Hagan	Law Enforcement Ranger	Law Enforcement
Dave Hallock	Realty Specialist	Realty
Tony Mule'	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey
Leah Quesenberry	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, Visual, ACEC
Ken Reed	Forester	Forestry
Ed Skerjanec	Fire Management Officer	Fire
John Smeins	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights
Melissa Smeins	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology
Dave Toelle	Fire Ecologist	Air, Vegetation
Dave Walker	Transportation Planner	Transportation, Access
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American
Jeff Williams	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation

FONSI

CO-200-2008-0033 EA

The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures 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.

RATIONALE: The limited access and light use requested by this proposal will not adversely impact public health or safety. The resource specialist's review concluded that the proposal would not impact scientific, cultural or historical resources, threatened or endangered species or their critical habitats.

The uniqueness, a Wilderness Study Area, of the project area is not impacted by the proposed action because the proposal satisfies the non-impairment criteria outlined in the Interim Management Policy for lands Under Wilderness Review.

The resource specialists' reviews also concluded that the requested use would neither adversely affect the environment nor generate controversy. The effects are certain and well defined in the Environmental Assessment; therefore, the project does not involve any unique or unknown risks. The proposed action does not set a precedent for future actions because the Royal Gorge Field Office administers multiple big game guiding special recreation permits throughout the Field Office and knows that the impacts of these operations are minimal. BLM analyzed this proposal and determined that this action is not directly related to other actions with cumulative effects. Finally, it was determined through the EA process that the proposed action does not violate Federal, State or local laws or requirements.

DECISION RECORD

DECISION: It is my decision to approve this action.

RATIONALE: Resource specialists' review of the proposed action identified minor impacts to resources in the Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area. According to the review the area is characterized by rugged terrain that is virtually inaccessible; therefore the opportunities to degrade habitat values are limited. Also, the use numbers requested, 80 client days per year, are low enough to prevent impacts. There was concern expressed over the return of non-guided hunters, but with limited public access, the fact that guided hunts will originate on private land, and the rugged remote terrain mentioned earlier the likelihood of hunters returning on their own was considered very small. Based on the combination of rugged remote terrain and low user days, resource specialists concluded the effects were so minor that no mitigation measures are necessary for this action. In sum, the environmental analysis identified minor impacts, so minor they do not require mitigation; therefore it is my decision to approve this proposed action based

on the resource specialist determination that this action will not create adverse impacts to the human or natural environment.

This decision is also based on compliance with the Interim Management Policy for lands Under Wilderness Review (IMP), and with the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan (RMP). The IMP states that “Concessions and actions that require authorization under a special recreation permit will be allowed only if the use and related facilities satisfy the non-impairment criteria.” In this case the action meets the non-impairment criteria because it is temporary use (day use hunting with 80 client days over a 9 month period) that would not impair the suitability of the area for wilderness designation. In the Gold Belt subregion section, the RMP states that Recreation (in this subregion) will be managed to provide for a variety of recreational opportunities and settings, and that various actions will be taken to enhance upland recreation opportunities.

MITIGATION MEASURES: None. Note: The Proposed Action is subject to Special Recreation Permit Terms, Conditions, and Stipulations for Permitted Activities.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING (optional):

NAME OF PREPARER: Elliot Hinckley and Leah Quesenberry, Outdoor Recreation Planners

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: Paul Trentzsch /S/ 04-08-2008

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: John Dow

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: _____
Roy L. Masinton, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: _____

APPENDICES: Special Recreation Permit Terms, Conditions, and Stipulations for Permitted Activities.

ATTACHMENTS: None.