

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

## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

*Grazing Permit Revision and Reissuance – Blacks Gulch and West Shutta allotments (LK Ranch, Livestock LLC)*  
**DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2016-0052-EA**

### **Background**

LK Ranch Livestock currently has livestock grazing permits on the Blacks Gulch allotment and the West Shutta allotment. Recently private lands in two pastures of the allotment have sold and been fenced. These two pastures need to be eliminated from the remaining BLM lands incorporated into the Oil Well Gulch pasture to reflect the remaining area available for livestock grazing. Additionally, the one year permit issued to LK Ranch for the West Shutta Allotment when they obtained the grazing preference does not match well with the permitted use on the adjacent Blacks Gulch allotment. The West Shutta grazing permit needs to be modified to allow coordinated use between these two allotments and to ensure use that is consistent with meeting Greater sage-grouse (GRSG) habitat objectives for this area.

The proposed grazing permit for the Blacks Gulch reflects the loss of newly fence private lands, the reconfiguration of pastures, the adjusted percent public lands, and reduced use in the Blacks Gulch pasture to make progress toward meeting GRSG objectives. The grazing permit for the West Shutta allotment has been adjusted to coordinate use with the Blacks Gulch allotment and to reduce use in the South pasture to make progress toward meeting GRSG objectives.

A three year rotation will be incorporated in both allotments to allow reduced grazing in most pastures either every year (Blacks Gulch pasture), two in three years (West Shutta allotment), or one in three years (Oil Well and Middle pasture of Blacks Gulch allotment). Reduced use in the Scenery and Tschuddi pastures will be provided by rotations between specific use areas within each of these pastures. Overall, the schedules address the timing, duration, and intensity of grazing to varying degrees in every pasture.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the White River Resource Area Proposed Resource

Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (1996). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

### ***Context***

The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public lands that do not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. This action is a revision of existing grazing permits and will authorize livestock grazing similar to the grazing use currently authorized. Approximately 200 feet of drift fence will be constructed to mitigate impacts to a fossil formation and help direct cattle trailing through a steep narrow area as they trail between pastures. A gate with short wing-fences to prevent travel around the gate will be constructed as a mitigation measure to stop illegal vehicle use in the Black Mountain WSA. Fence construction and gate installation will create minor disturbance but reduce damage to the fossil resource and stop illegal travel into the WSA. There are no additional range improvement projects proposed so there will be no additional disturbances associated with this revision. The applicant is the current grazing preference holder for these allotments. There is some oil and gas development with associated infrastructure and roads in both of these allotments. There will likely be some additional development in the future that will create additional disturbance.

### ***Intensity***

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

#### **1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.**

The allotments associated with the permit revisions are about 20 miles west of Meeker. Adverse effects of this action include impacts to soils and vegetation associated with livestock grazing. These effects are expected to be low level and insignificant. Benefits of the revised permits would be support of the local livestock industry increased stewardship associated with proper livestock grazing and forage management. Other benefits include potential for improved plant community composition associated in areas that include GRSG habitat.

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

There would be no impact to public health or safety.

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

There are 22 identified archaeological sites eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places within these allotments. The Blacks Gulch Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designated for its fossil resources is situated in the Blacks Gulch allotment. There is a small amount of perennial riparian channel on BLM administered lands within the Blacks Gulch allotment. All of these resources have been considered in the analysis of this action.

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

No comments or concerns have been received regarding possible effects on the quality of the human environment during scoping.

**5. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.**

No highly uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment were identified during analysis of the Proposed Action.

**6. Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.**

The Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. Livestock grazing in the affected allotments was analyzed in the 1981 Grazing Management EIS and different grazing plans for these allotments have been analyzed in several environmental assessment documents since then.

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

The grazing permits and associated grazing schedules for these allotment analyzed in the Proposed Action are not related to any other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

**8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.**

Within the affected allotments surveys have been conducted that identified cultural sites and paleontological resources. Mitigation measures have been included to address potential impacts from livestock grazing to these resources.

**9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973.**

There are no threatened, endangered, or candidate animal species known to inhabit or derive important use from the affected allotments. There are also no special status plant species issues or concerns associated with the Proposed Action.

**10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.**

Neither the Proposed Action nor impacts associated with it violate any laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

**Signature of Authorized Official**

*Hunt C. Walte*

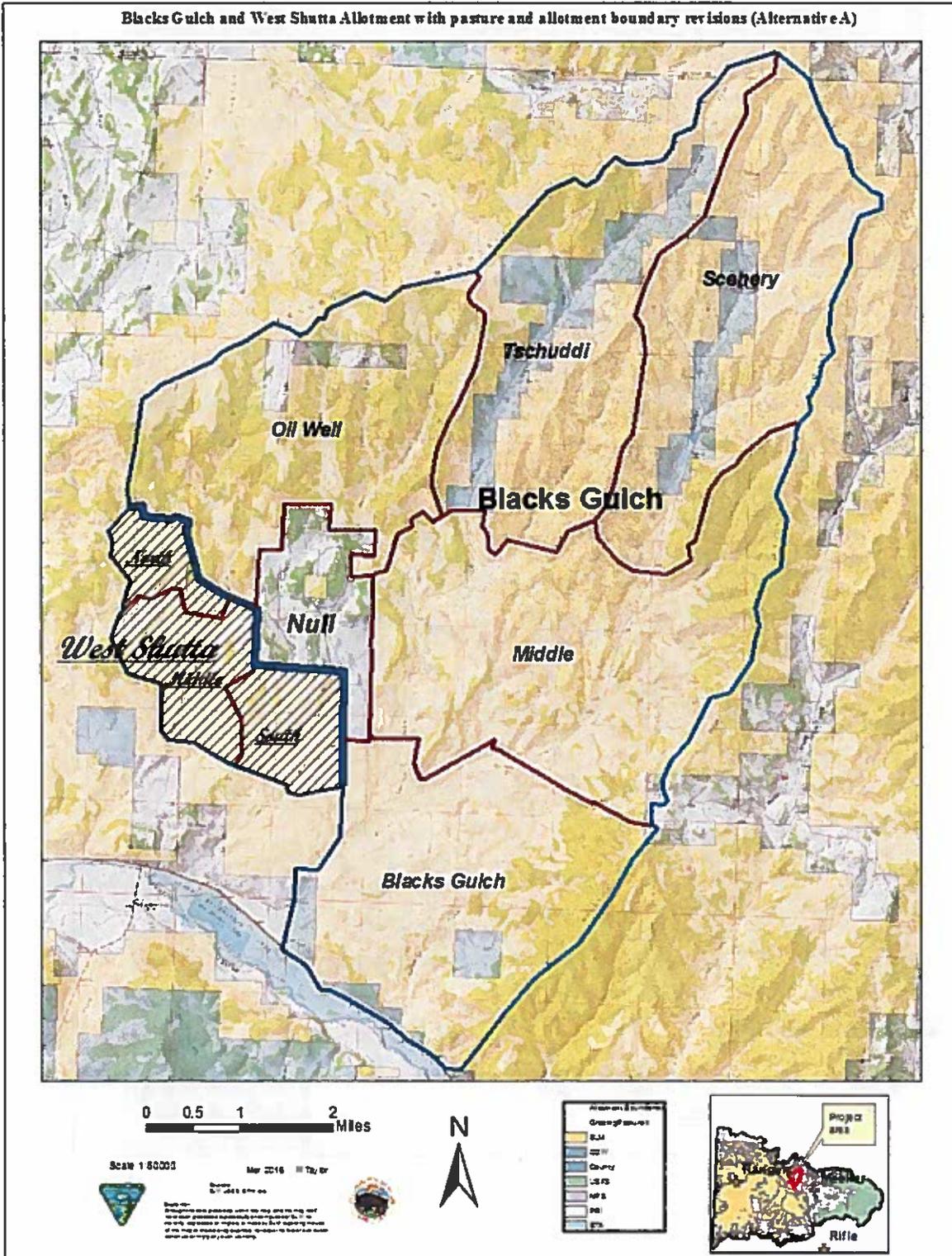
Field Manager

*03/11/2016*

Date

# Appendix A. Figures

Map 1.



Map 2.

