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ATTACHMENTS:
A. Colorado Standards For Rangeland Health
B. Texas Creek Analysis 1996
C. Form 1842-1 Appealing a Decision of the Authorized Officer
D. Public Participation- Comments and Responses
1998 WEST DOUGLAS HERD AREA WILD HORSE GATHER PLAN/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

West Douglas Herd Area and Adjacent Land
E.A. No. CO-017-WR-98-105-EA

Purpose and Need for Action

Application of Standards for Rangeland Health, and a rangeland analysis conducted in 1996 on the West Douglas Herd Area, shows serious rangeland degradation. In some areas this degradation is attributable to overuse by wild horses. Action needs to be taken to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance. There are also wild horses outside of the established Herd Area and they must be removed.

The bureau planning process evaluated habitat associated with the 1974 wild horse distribution. Throughout the planning process's the determination of habitat suitability has consistently been for the removal of all horses from the West Douglas Herd Area.

The following is a brief synopsis of the key planning decisions for the West Douglas Herd Area.

1975 WRRA Management Framework Plan - Identified two "Herd Units" the Piceance and Douglas. The Douglas Herd Unit contains what is now the East Douglas part of the Herd Management Area and the area West of Douglas Creek. The decisions for the Douglas Herd unit were: 1) Remove wild horses west of Douglas Creek, 2) Retain Wild Horses East of Douglas Creek, 3) Construct a fence along the Douglas Creek road from Rangely up East Douglas Creek.

1980-1981 WRRA Management Framework Plan - 1) Allocate 2,101 AUMs of forage for a range of 95-140 wild horses to be managed on an area of 148,153 acres (the Piceance - East Douglas HMA), 2) Remove all horses west of Douglas Creek, 3) Remove horses from all other allotments within the Piceance Planning Unit, 4) Complete boundary fencing of Yellow Creek and Cathedral Bluffs (allotments) to eliminate drift of wild horses into adjacent allotments.

1981 WRRA Environmental Impact Statement on Grazing Management - Reiterated the 1980 Management Framework Plan decisions with the following rationale: "Decisions for wild horse management are aimed at maintaining a viable wild horse population within the best habitat of their present range, while simultaneously satisfying the needs for various other resource considerations."


1985 WRRA Piceance Basin RMP - Wild horse management would continue according to decisions approved in the WRRA Herd Management Area Plan (Piceance - East Douglas Herd Management Area Plan). The plan designates the areas on which horses will be managed and states how the maintenance of a viable herd will be achieved.
1996 WRRA Resource Management Plan - Manage for a healthy, viable breeding population of 95-140 wild horses on 190,130 acres (added Greasewood allotment from North Piceance HA to the Piceance - East Douglas HMA) so that a thriving ecological balance is maintained for all plant and animal species on that range. Continue monitoring studies and adjust the long term AML based on the results of that monitoring. In the long term, remove all horses from West Douglas and the remainder of North Piceance Herd Areas.

Conformance with Land Use Plans

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations or Other Plans
The Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro act of 1971 (Public Law 92-195) requires removal of excess wild horses in order to restore a thriving natural ecological balance on the range; also wild horses are to be managed within the confines of the areas they were located at the passage of the act.

The necessity of removing horses outside the West Douglas Herd Area is consistent with 43 CFR 4710.4 which states "Management of wild horses will be undertaken with the objective of limiting the animal's distribution to herd areas". A herd area is the geographic area identified as having been used by a herd as its habitat in 1971 (43 CFR 4700.0-5).

The removal action is consistent with both the Strategic Plan for Management of Wild Horses and Burros on Public Lands (1992) and the Strategic Plan for the Management of Wild horses and Burros in Colorado (1993).

Description of the Alternatives

Proposed Action - Removal of 77 Horses from the West Douglas Herd Area and Adjacent Areas
This removal will target horses within the West Douglas Herd Area; specifically in the Texas Creek, Texas Mtn., and Sand Draw areas, but this will not preclude gathering horses from areas adjacent to these areas including Red Wash and Park Mountain because horses are known to disperse into these areas during gathering operations. Removal will also target those horses outside of the Herd Area on the Evacuation Creek allotment. (See attached map)

The operation is expected to start in late August 1998, and may take two weeks to complete. If there are delays in the gather schedule this gather plan will be in effect until the gather is completed. A census of the entire West Douglas Herd Area was completed in late February 1997. The census population at that time was 95 horses. Before the 1998 gather is started there will have been two foal crops, calculating an increase of 20% per year, the population will be a minimum of 137 horses.

Our goal with this gather is to have no less than 60 horses remaining in the Herd Area. To achieve the stated removal objective from the expected population of 137 horses, 77 horses will need to be captured. Retention of 60 head relates to a decision made in the 1996 West Douglas Gather Plan which is currently under appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

Removal Method
The removal method will be drive trapping using a helicopter. The trap is constructed of portable steel panels constructed of 2" round pipe. Wings are constructed of natural jute netting which is hung on both trees and long steel posts. This sort of wing forms a very effective visual barrier to the horses that they typically will not run through. When the trap is ready for use, a helicopter will start moving one band of horses at a time toward the trap and into the wings. Men on horseback or on foot will wait outside the wings of the trap and haze the horses on into the trap once the helicopter
puts the horses within the wings.

The removal will be completed by the BLM Rock Springs gather crew with assistance by in-house BLM personnel who are experienced in drive trapping horse capture.

The Authorized Officer will determine trap locations based upon horse distribution, concentration, accessibility, and helicopter safety.

**Guidelines in Herding and Handling Horses:**

In the herding and gathering phase of the project, a major concern will be for the welfare of the horses. The efficiency of the operation lies in the ability of the helicopter to encourage the animals to move, thus allowing the helicopter to herd them to the trap site. The helicopter pilot must be able to maneuver the helicopter in such a way as to use the horses' natural apprehension to move them in the direction that is necessary for their capture. The helicopter must never be used so that it causes horses to run blindly or scatter causing injury to themselves. Actual herding of the horses by the helicopter will be done as far away from the horses and as slowly as possible. The objective is to let the horses set their own pace.

The helicopter will be used to herd horses to the trap. Once the horses are in the wings, the ground crew will drive the horses into the trap. This will keep the helicopter from low overflying the hazers and trap.

A parada horse may be used to guide the wild horses into the trap.

Where horses are likely to cross fences, the fences will be taken down. At no time will there be the opportunity for horses to encounter barbed wire around the trap.

When necessary, low-level flying will be used to haze the horses onto existing roads or trails leading to the trap. This will apply more to open flatter terrain where horses may not be inclined to travel on existing trails.

During all stages of the removal, the helicopter will be used in a manner that maintains band integrity. Foals will not be left behind. If a band is encountered which has a new foal, these animals may be avoided.

If the pilot identifies bands of animals which may warrant special consideration (such as a small band of older studs or a band containing a very near term mare) the pilot will relay this information to the Authorized Officer and await a response as to the course of action.

Roping will be done only when necessary and only with prior approval by the Authorized Officer. Tying an animal down will be used only as a last resort to subdue the animal. Should an animal be tied down, priority will be given to freeing the animal.

The Authorized Officer may fly with the pilot to locate and select bands of horses to be moved to the trap. The Authorized Officer will not be in the helicopter during actual moving of the horses.

A contract veterinarian will be available in the event of injury of a horse.

Animals which are diseased, crippled or otherwise handicapped so that destruction is an act of mercy, or where their characteristics affect survivability, will be disposed of humanely. These actions will be taken at the discretion of the veterinarian, Authorized Officer, and will be performed in a humane and expedient manner by a qualified individual.

**Public Participation**

The public is welcome to view the capture of the horses at traps where the public presence will not interfere with the
operation, or where the safety of the public or employees is not at risk. The public must adhere to guidance from the agency representative and viewing must be prearranged. Qualified local volunteers may also help in the preparation and adoption of the horses. Volunteers will only be placed in non-hazardous support roles. Each volunteer will have a current BLM Volunteer agreement in place prior to helping with any facet of the removal or adoption operation.

Transportation

Gathered horses will be transported from individual trap locations to the Yellow Creek Holding Facility for preparation and disposition. Listed below are the guidelines for transporting horses.

During the transport of animals from the trap to the holding facility, and from the holding facility to release locations, all precautions will be taken to assure the safety and welfare of the animals. Should any complications arise, or be foreseen to arise, immediate action will be taken to alleviate the problem. These actions include, but are not limited to, regrading access roads, relocating traps to more accessible locations and temporary cessation of operations. Alternative route of travel may also be considered.

Younger, adoptable animals will be trailered from the trap to the Yellow Creek holding facility. These animals may be adopted from the Yellow Creek facility, transported to a satellite adoption site, transported out of state, and/or transported to the Department of Correction training facility in Canon City, Colorado. Should removal numbers warrant, selected animals may be sent to out-of-state holding facilities.

All motorized equipment employed in the transportation of captured animals shall be in compliance with appropriate State and Federal laws and regulations applicable to the humane transportation of animals. Vehicle drivers must possess complete knowledge regarding the capabilities of the vehicle they are driving and the terrain over which they must travel. Drivers must be qualified and licensed to operate the vehicles used.

Vehicles shall be in good repair, of adequate rated capacity, and operated so as to insure that captured animals are transported without undue risk or injury.

Only stock trailers shall be allowed to transport animals from traps to temporary holding facilities. Only Bobtail trucks, stock-trailers, or single deck trucks shall be used between temporary holding facilities to final destination. Sides or stockracks of transporting vehicles shall be a minimum height of 6 feet 6 inches from vehicle floor. Single deck trucks with trailers 40 feet or longer shall have two partition gates to separate animals. Trailers less than 40 feet shall have at least one partition gate to separate the animals. Each partition shall be a minimum of 6 feet high and shall have a minimum 5 foot wide swinging gate. The use of double deck trailers is unacceptable and shall not be allowed.

All vehicles used to transport animals to final destination shall be equipped with at least one door at the rear end of the vehicle which is capable of sliding either horizontally or vertically.

Floors of vehicles and the loading chute shall be covered and maintained with a non-skid surface such as sand, mineral soil or wood shavings, to prevent the animals from slipping prior to loading. Animals to be loaded and transported in any vehicle shall be as directed by the Authorized Officer and may include limitations on numbers according to age, size, sex, temperament, and animal condition.

The officer supervising the loading of the wild horses to be transported from the trap to the temporary holding corral may require separation of small foals and/or weak horses from the rest to prevent injury during the trip. The Authorized Officer will consider the distance and condition of the road and animals in making this determination. Horses shipped from the temporary holding corral to the BLM facility will normally be separated by studs, mares and foals (including small yearlings).

The Authorized Officer will require off-loading of animals should the determination be made there are too
many horses on the trailer/truck.

The officer shall consider the condition of the animals, weather conditions, type of vehicles, distance to be transported, or other factors when planning for the movement of captured animals. The officer shall provide for any brand and/or inspection services required for the captured animals.

If the officer determines road conditions are such that the animals could be endangered during transportation, the contractor will be instructed to adjust speed.

Periodic checks by BLM employees will be made as the horses are transported along dirt roads. If speed restrictions are placed in effect, then BLM employees will, at times, follow and/or time trips to ensure compliance.

In the event that weather conditions become unfavorable, alternate trap locations and routes of travel will be considered.

**Holding Facilities**

Horses will be held at Yellow Creek Corrals until the gathering operation is complete. The horses will then be prepared, and offered for adoption locally. Unadopted horses will be transported to Canon City, or returned to the range as necessary.

**Preparation of Horses**

All horses will be aged. Those horses not turned back onto the range will be wormed, vaccinated and freeze branded. Blood will be drawn for Coggins tests. Because of the outbreak of Equine Infectious Anemia in Utah, horses may be held until the Coggins test results are received.

**Disposition of Gathered Horses Determined to be Privately Owned**

After the horses have been transported to the holding facilities, the Authorized Officer will notify the State Brand Inspector and local ranchers that horses are available for inspection. If the Brand Inspector determines that one or more of the horses are branded, he will notify the owner of those horses. After consultation with the parties who inspected the horses, the BLM Authorized Officer, will then make a final written determination and decision concerning wild horses, and ownership of claimed animals pursuant to the appropriate Federal Regulations and the cooperative agreement between the BLM and the Colorado State Board of Stock Inspection. Those unclaimed, branded horses, their determined progeny, and horses with obvious signs of domestication will be released to the State of Colorado for disposition under the state estray laws. Those branded horses (or unbranded horses with a valid claim) will be considered to have been in trespass and will not be released until trespass charges have been assessed by the Authorized Officer and have been paid by the claimant. No animal will be removed from the holding facility by a claimant until the claim of ownership has been proven and documented to the satisfaction of the Authorized Officer. This will include a written certification by the Brand Inspector, as required by State law.

**Disposition of Gathered Horses Determined to be "Wild"**

This section is modified to reflect the National Wild Horse Program Office acceptance of all horses gathered. All horses gathered will be placed in the adoption program. Previously this section read;

*Because the removal is age selective, the majority of the animals that will be placed in BLM's adoption program will be nine years and under. All female horses regardless of age will be placed in the adoption program. Studs older than nine years, for which no adoption demand exists, will be gelded by the contract veterinarian, freeze branded on the hip, and placed back on the West Douglas Herd Area, near the capture location. These horses will remain in the Herd Area for the rest of their days.*

**Safety**
Safety of BLM employees, wild horses and members of the public during the removal operation will be given primary consideration. The following safety measures will be used by the Authorized Officer and all others involved in the operation as the basis for evaluating safety performance and for safety discussions during the daily briefings:

A briefing between all parties involved in the gather will be conducted each morning.

All BLM personnel, contractors and volunteers will wear protective clothing suitable for work of this nature. BLM will alert observers of the requirement to dress properly. BLM will assure that members of the public are in safe observation areas.

The handling of hazardous, or potentially hazardous materials such as liquid nitrogen and vaccination needles will be accomplished in a safe and conscientious manner by BLM personnel or the contract veterinarian. (Refer to page 28, Hazardous Materials.)

The Authorized Officer and pilot will take a familiarization flight identifying all natural hazards (rims, canyons, winds) and man-made hazards in the area so that helicopter flight crew, ground personnel, and wild horse safety will be maximized. Aerial hazards will be recorded on the project map.

The Authorized Officer will make a careful determination of a boundary line to serve as an outer limit within which horses will be herded to a selected trap site. Authorized Officer will insure that the pilot is fully aware of all natural and man made barriers which might restrict free movement of horses. Topography, distance, and current condition of the horses are factors that will be considered to set limits so that undue stress on horses is avoided.

The location of waters, trails, and all natural barriers and hazards will be delineated on the project map.

An Aircraft Safety Plan and flight hazard analysis will have been filed and approved prior to commencing the removal operation. Daily flight plans will also be filed. If a BLM contract helicopter is used, all BLM, Colorado and Craig District Aircraft Safety and Operations standards will be adhered to.

There will be daily briefings with the helicopter pilot, Authorized Officer and all personnel involved in the days operation. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss in detail all information gathered during the familiarization flight such as hazards, location of horses, potential problems, etc. Discuss any safety hazards anticipated for the coming day's operation or any safety problems observed by the Authorized Officer or anyone else, outline the plan of action, delineate course of actions, specifically position the hazers and their responsibilities, logistics, and timing. After each flight, removal personnel will discuss any problems and suggest solutions. This may be accomplished over the radio or on the ground as the need dictates.

A flight operations plan will be filed with the Craig Dispatch Center. This plan will describe the area to be flown. The expected time frames of flight operations. A weather forecast will be acquired from the dispatcher. There will be no flights on days of high or gusty, erratic winds or days with poor visibility. Two-way radio communication between the helicopter and the ground crew will be maintained at all times during the operation.

An operation or contractor's log will be maintained for all phases of the operation. The log will be as detailed as possible and will include names, dates, places and other pertinent information, as well as, observations of personnel involved.

No Action Alternative
Under this alternative no gather operation would be conducted and the horses would be allowed to expand at the
existing rate of about 20%. Based on the current population of 137 horses, the horse population would increase to 164 horses in 1999, and 197 horses in the year 2000. Application of the Standards for Rangeland Health has shown that a thriving natural ecological condition is not being maintained with the existing numbers of horses; wild horses are the causative factor, and therefore the numbers of horses must be reduced.

Those horses outside the Herd Area would not be gathered which is in violation the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act.

The White River Resource Area, Resource Management Plan is for the removal of all horses from the West Douglas Herd Area.

For the reasons above, the no action alternative is not a reasonable alternative as a violation of law would continue to exist, and unacceptable rangeland health conditions would be perpetuated or exacerbated. This alternative will not be discussed further in this document.

**Range Improvement Alternative**
Under this alternative the BLM would attempt to eliminate rangeland health problems by developing rangeland improvement projects.

There have been suggestions that the rangeland conditions of the Texas Creek Basin could be improved by changing the horses distribution and resulting forage use patterns. This change in use would be stimulated by developing additional water sources and vegetation treatments to increase forage. Several rangeland improvement projects have been completed, but no significant changes in horse distribution have resulted. The wild horses of Texas Creek Basin have shown strong fidelity for their home range regardless of the forage condition. This alternative has been tried with no improvement if rangeland condition. This alternative does not address the exponential growth in horse numbers which would still require gathers of excess horses.

Those horses outside of the Herd Area would still need to be gathered in order to comply with the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act.

This alternative will not be discussed further in this document.

**Emphasize Wild Horse Management on the West Douglas Herd Area**
The (Draft) White River Resource Management of 1994, offered as an alternative "C" designation of a Texas Creek Herd Management Area, which would be managed for 60-70 wild horses, with the remainder of the Herd Area to serve as a permanent relocation for older, predominantly male, unadoptable horses. The environmental consequences of this alternative are described in the WRRA (Draft) Resource Management Plan. This alternative was not being chosen as the preferred alternative. Implementation of this alternative would be a violation of the approved Land Use Plan. This alternative will not be discussed further in this document.

**Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**
The West Douglas Herd Area is made up of the Twin Buttes and Bull Draw allotments. Generally the area is characterized as a canyon/plateau geographic type. Elevations range from 6,300 feet near Rangely to 8,000 feet on Oil Spring Mountain. Precipitation ranges from 11 inches at the lower elevations to 18 inches at the higher elevations. Vegetation is highly varied as a result of topography and precipitation. At the lower elevations are greasewood bottoms. Mid-elevations are Pinyon/juniper woodlands and sagebrush parks. Upper elevations are made up of the mountain shrub and Douglas-fir communities. There are few natural waters (springs, seeps, creeks) with the majority of water provided by stock ponds which are scattered throughout the area.

**Landscape Analysis**
Wherever practical, the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences have been evaluated through the application of the Colorado Rangeland Health Standards. The Standards and Guidelines for Colorado are attached in Appendix A. To facilitate this analysis the standards have been applied on three fundamental landscapes. This landscape analysis was conducted as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape</th>
<th>Standards Applied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pasture   | - Standard 1, Upland Soils  
                       - Standard 3, Healthy Plant Community Component |
| Watershed | - Standard 2, Riparian System Function  
                       - Standard 5, Water Quality |
| Region    | - Standard 3, Healthy Animal Community Component  
                       - Analysis of issues and values (such as Cultural Resources) that are not directly addressed by the Colorado Public Land Health Standards, are conducted using a regional landscape framework |

**Pasture**

An analysis of rangeland health was conducted during consultation and coordination for revision of the Twin Buttes Allotment Management Plan, which contains the West Douglas Herd Area. This analysis was conducted by applying the Colorado Standards for Rangeland Health. During this analysis the primary concern dealt with the soil and vegetation resources. Also, as a part of the process the "causitive factors" were determined. Causative factors are the responsible agent for degradation of the standard. For this gather plan an analysis of the Bull Draw Allotment has also been included.

Following the summary chart of "Wild Horse Impacts on the Soils and Vegetation Standards" is the pasture by pasture analysis. For each pasture a map is included showing the location of the pasture, a brief description of the pasture, followed by a chart showing the indicators of concern, and causative factor.

**Watershed**

Analysis of Riparian Systems and Water Quality is based on three watersheds - Douglas Creek, Cottonwood Creek, and Evacuation Creek.

**Region**

Several values, most notably the animal component of healthy rangelands are best evaluated at the regional level. In the document, the region is described as the area in Colorado, South of the White River, West of Cathedral Buttes, and North of the Colorado River/White River divide.
Summary of Wild Horse Impacts on the Soils and Vegetation Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PASTURE</th>
<th>PROBLEMS NOTED WITH UPLAND SOIL STANDARD</th>
<th>PROBLEMS NOTED WITH PLANT STANDARD</th>
<th>HORSES (#) PRESENT ON THIS PASTURE</th>
<th>HORSES IDENTIFIED AS A CAUSATIVE FACTOR</th>
<th>OTHER INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cottonwood</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (4)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Horse Draw</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Canyon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (10)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Creek West</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (62)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Private Land Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Creek East</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (17)</td>
<td>Impacts on Vegetation Only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Creek</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (10)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (4)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Private Land Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Hole</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (8)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Private Land Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull Draw Allotment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (Same horses as Water Canyon)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Refer to the project area map for horse locations.
Landscape - Cottonwood Pasture

Affected Environment
Cottonwood pasture is actually two former allotments, Cottonwood and Moonlight. This pasture contains 13,389 acres of public land. Elevations range from 5500 feet to 7000 feet. Plant communities include sage/wheatgrass bottoms, the hillside bunchgrass community, sagebrush flats and pinyon juniper ridges. Currently approximately four wild horses use this pasture on a year-round basis.

Analysis of Standard 1 - Upland Soils
The soils in the bottoms of the draws are of concern as there are the following indicators of soil health problems. These bottom soils make up about 9.6% of the pasture. Indicators applied on the uplands showed no problems with the standard for soils. Problems with Indicators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Upland Soils - Standard 1</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively Eroding Gullies</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Plant Canopy and Ground Cover</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Diversity of Plant Species</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigorous, Desirable Plants lacking</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Standard 3 - Plant Component
As described in the Soils Standard section the condition of the plant communities in the bottoms of Cottonwood Pasture are unsatisfactory. Nonnative cheatgrass understory is undesirable. This vegetation type is limiting opportunities for improving the composition, reproductive capability and sustainability of these bottoms. Noxious weeds are occasionally popping up on this pasture. The species of concern are the knapweeds, Canada thistle, burdock, and showy milkweed. Currently all outbreaks have been controlled. Problems with Indicators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Plants - Standard 3</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noxious Weeds and Undesirable Species</td>
<td>Cheatgrass - Livestock Noxious Weeds - Oil and Gas Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Plant and Animal Communities are not of the Composition, Reproduction Capability and Sustainability</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack Appropriate Accumulations of Litter</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Environmental Consequences
The current numbers of wild horses are not having any negative impacts on the soil or vegetation resources within the Cottonwood pasture. The proposed action will have limited impact on this pasture.
Landscape - Lower Horse Draw Pasture

Affected Environment
Lower Horse Draw pasture contains 10,274 acres of public land. Lower Horse Draw is an upland pasture, without the broad drainage bottoms of Cottonwood pasture. Elevations range from 5,500 to 6,250 feet. Major vegetation types include hillside bunchgrass, pinyon/juniper, greasewood bottoms and sagebrush parks. There are no horses using this pasture.

Analysis of Standard 1 - Upland Soils
The majority of soil erosion is the result of oil and gas development, primarily from roads. Soil erosion related to grazing is very localized around waters (1% of pasture). On the Horse Draw pasture adjacent to waters the following problems with indicators were found:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Upland Soils - Standard 1</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Litter Accumulating in Place</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Plant Canopy and Ground Cover</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Diversity of Plant Species</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigorous, Desirable Plants lacking</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Standard 3 - Plant Component
Noxious weeds are rarely found on this pasture. All known locations have been controlled. Problem noxious weeds have been spotted knapweed, Canada thistle and showy milkweed. There are localized areas, around waters, which do not have appropriate accumulations of litter. Problems with Indicators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Plants - Standard 3</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noxious Weeds and Undesirable Species</td>
<td>Cheatgrass - Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noxious Weeds - Oil and Gas Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack Appropriate Accumulations of Litter</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Environmental Consequences
There are no impacts from wild horses on this pasture. The proposed action will have limited impact on this pasture.
Landscape - Water Canyon Pasture

Affected Environment
This pasture contains 23,010 acres of public land. Elevations range from 5650 feet to 7100 feet. Plant communities include sage/wheatgrass bottoms, greasewood bottoms, hillside bunchgrass, sagebrush flats and pinyon juniper ridges. There are approximately 8-10 wild horses using this pasture. Horse use is focused on the ridge between Vandamore and Big Bull Draw.

Analysis of Standard 1 - Upland Soils
On the Water Canyon Pasture the soils in the bottoms and steep slopes are of concern. The majority of erosion is the result of Oil and Gas Development, primarily from roads. There are no erosion problems associated with grazing on the steep slopes. On the Water Canyon pasture in the bottoms the following problems with indicators are found:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Upland Soils - Standard 1</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Litter Accumulating in Place</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Plant Canopy and Ground Cover</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Diversity of Plant Species</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Standard 3 - Plant Component
Noxious weeds are rarely found on this pasture. All known locations have been controlled. Problem noxious weeds have been Canada thistle. There are localized areas adjacent to waters which do not have appropriate accumulations of litter. Problems with Indicators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Plants - Standard 3</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noxious Weeds and Undesirable Species</td>
<td>Cheatgrass - Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noxious Weeds - Oil and Gas Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack Appropriate Accumulations of Litter</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Environmental Consequences
At the current horse numbers there has not been any adverse impacts to the vegetation or soils resources. The proposed action will have limited impact on this pasture.
Landscape - Texas Creek Pasture

This is the largest pasture on the allotment. This pasture contains 64,894 acres of public land. Elevations range from 6000 feet to 8400 feet. Plant communities include sagebrush/greasewood/wheatgrass bottoms, desert shrub hillside, sagebrush flats, pinyon/juniper ridges, and Douglas-fir hillside. This pasture is composed of canyons, mountainous terrain and broad valleys. The broad valleys are located in the Texas Creek drainages. Because of the size of this pasture, for discussion purposes this pasture has been divided into two units the West 1/2 and the East 1/2.

Affected Environment - West Side of Texas Creek Pasture

Approximately 60 head of wild horses are using this area with use concentrated in the flats and basins of Texas Creek.

Analysis of Standard 1 - Upland Soils

The majority of soil problems are on the bottomlands and adjacent hillsides. On the Texas Creek pasture in the bottoms and on the alkaline slopes range site the following problems with indicators are: (15% of pasture).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Upland Soils - Standard 1</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excessive Rills and Soil Pedestalling</td>
<td>Wild Horses - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively Eroding Gullies</td>
<td>Wild Horses - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Plant Canopy and Ground Cover</td>
<td>Wild Horses - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Diversity of Plant Species</td>
<td>Wild Horses - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigorous, Desirable Plants lacking</td>
<td>Wild Horses - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the uplands of the Texas Creek basin there are indicators of soil problems. These problems are almost exclusively because of overuse by wild horses. See range analyses Texas Creek Basin 1995 Appendix B.

Analysis of Standard 3 - Plant Component

The problems indicated in the soils section are also expressed in the vegetation. In the Texas Creek basin there are areas on which desirable forage species have been totally grazed out leaving only annual forbs and grasses. This also relates to the photosynthetic activity. The annuals usually complete their life cycle before available moisture has become limiting. These annual vegetation associations also lack appropriate accumulations of litter. There are also large horse trails crossing the bottoms of Texas Creek. The size and depth of these horse trails prevents overland flow of water by gathering the water onto the trails and funneling the water off site. Several of the horse trails now function as drainages with active headcuts. As stated earlier the vegetation problems are almost exclusively the result of overuse by wild horses.
Problems with Indicators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator for Plants - Standard 3</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noxious Weeds and Undesirable Species</td>
<td>Cheatgrass - Wild horses - Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noxious Weeds - Oil and Gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photosynthetic activity evident through growing season.</td>
<td>Wild Horses - Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack Appropriate Accumulations of Litter</td>
<td>Wild Horses - Livestock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Environmental Consequences**
Noxious weeds have been a problem on this pasture, two noxious weeds are of concern, Canada thistle and spotted knapweed.

Currently the majority of the area used by horses is in a severely degraded condition in terms of plant composition, cover and production. With the proposed action, even if 50 head of horses can be removed from this area rangeland conditions are not expected to improve rapidly if at all. Horse use is year-round which is the most damaging use in terms of forage plants lack of opportunity to grow and reproduce. The proposed action is expected reduce rate of environmental degredation and the size of the concentration areas.

**Affected Environment - East Side of Texas Creek Pasture**
The East side of Texas Creek pasture is mountainous with the primary vegetation being pinyon/juniper woodland. Several ridges have been chained to remove the pinyon/juniper overstory and increase forage. Currently the majority of use by wild horses is on these chainings. Current estimates are that 17 horses are using this pasture.

**Analysis of Standard 1 - Upland Soils**
In the drainage bottoms of Upper Horse draw and West Douglas creek soil related problems related to intense livestock use and surface disturbance from oil and gas production. Problems with Indicators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Upland Soils - Standard 1</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively Eroding gullies</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Plant Canopy and Ground Cover</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Diversity of Plant Species</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigorous, Desirable Plants lacking</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Standard 3 - Plant Component
Vegetation problems in Little Horse Draw and West Douglas Creek are the result of livestock grazing both period of use (growing season long) and intensity (Utilization often exceeds 80%). Throughout the pasture there is excessive erosion on roads. Problems with Indicators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Plants - Standard 3</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noxious Weeds and Undesirable Species</td>
<td>Cheatgrass - Wild horses, Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noxious Weeds - Oil and Gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photosynthetic activity evident through growing season.</td>
<td>Wild Horses - Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack Appropriate Accumulations of Litter</td>
<td>Wild Horses - Livestock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Environmental Consequences
Horse use tends to be concentrated on the chainings and around Texas Mountain and as such adverse impacts to vegetation are localized in these areas. It is expected that the proposed action will have limited impact on the soil and plant communities in this area.
Landscape - West Creek Pasture

Affected Environment
This pasture contains 18,127 acres of public land and 5,821 acres of private land. Elevations range from 6,500 feet to 8,700 feet. Plant communities include sage/wheatgrass bottoms, mountain shrub hillsides, pinyon juniper ridges, aspen pockets, and Douglas-fir slopes. Horse use has historically been confined to the northern 1/3 of this pasture. Specific horse use locations include; the top of Texas mountain; Round Mountain and Texas draws, (this is not Texas Creek) and the south slope of Oil Spring mountain. Current estimates are that 10-12 horses use this area. Horse use in these areas is extensive and possibly transitional because of a lack of close reliable waters.

Analysis of Standard 1 - Upland Soils
Problems with soil indicators are found in the headwaters of Missouri creek as a result of season long and concentrated use by livestock. There are soil related problems on the bottoms of Missouri Creek. Problems with Indicators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Upland Soils - Standard 1</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excessive rills and soil pedestalling</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively Eroding gullies</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Plant Canopy and Ground Cover</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Diversity of Plant Species</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigorous, Desirable Plants lacking</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Standard 3 - Plant Component
There are vegetation related problems near the head of Missouri Creek. Vegetation problems include Kentucky bluegrass which is a shallow rooted perennial that is the result of heavy grazing. On this site production is less than 300 lbs. of forage per acre on a site that should be producing 2,000+ lbs./acre. Being a shallow rooted species, Kentucky bluegrass does not make use of water deeper in the soil profile, as a result growth of forage species through the growing season is severely limited. Areas of Kentucky bluegrass are not resilient and lack diversity. There continues to be problems with houndstongue, the knapweeds, Canada thistle and in the future expect problems with the biennial thistles. Problems with Indicators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Plants - Standard 3</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noxious Weeds and Undesirable Species</td>
<td>Kentucky bluegrass-livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity and density exhibit resilience</td>
<td>Livestock - Elk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photosynthetic activity evident through growing season.</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack Appropriate Accumulations of Litter</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environmental Consequences
Vegetation studies in the area that horses use, of which there is only one study, show horse use is not degrading soil or vegetation at the current level of use. The proposed action will have limited impact on this pasture.
Landscape - Park and Water Hole Pastures

Affected Environment
The Park pasture contains 920 acres of public land and 1,000 acres of private land. Elevations range from 5,650 feet to 6,100 feet. Plant communities include sage/wheatgrass flats, hillside bunchgrass, and pinyon juniper ridges.

The Water Hole pasture contains 40 acres of public land and 640 acres of private land. Elevations range from 5650 feet to 6100 feet. Plant communities include sage/wheatgrass flats, hillside bunchgrass, and pinyon juniper ridges.

Environmental Consequences
No problems with the standards have been identified with the Park Pasture. The Water Hole pasture is primarily private land and an analysis of the Standards for Rangeland Health have not been conducted. These pastures have been brought into the discussion because they adjoin the West side of Texas Creek pasture and wild horses have consistently used these pastures. On the Water Hole pasture wild horse use has adversely affected the vegetation and soils.

Under the proposed action these horses would be removed and there would be improvement in the soil and vegetation components.
Landscape - Bull Draw Allotment

Affected Environment
This pasture contains 9,778 acres of public land. Elevations range from 5650 feet to 7100 feet. Plant communities include sage/wheatgrass bottoms, greasewood bottoms, hillside bunchgrass, sagebrush flats and pinyon juniper ridges. There are approximately 8-10 wild horses using this pasture. These are the same horses using the Water canyon pasture. Horse use is focused on the ridge between Vandamore and Big Bull Draw.

Analysis of Standard 1 - Upland Soils
On the Bull Draw allotment the soils in the bottoms and steep slopes are of concern. The majority of erosion is the result of Oil and Gas Development, primarily from roads. There are no erosion problems associated with grazing on the steep slopes. On the Bull Draw allotment in the bottoms there are the following problems with indicators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Upland Soils - Standard 1</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Litter Accumulating in Place</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Plant Canopy and Ground Cover</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas Development - Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Diversity of Plant Species</td>
<td>Livestock Grazing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Standard 3 - Plant Component
Noxious weeds are rarely found on this pasture. All known locations have been controlled. Problem noxious weeds have been Canada thistle. There are localized areas adjacent to waters which do not have appropriate accumulations of litter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Plants - Standard 3</th>
<th>Causative Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noxious Weeds and Undesirable Species</td>
<td>Cheatgrass - Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noxious Weeds - Oil and Gas Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack Appropriate Accumulations of Litter</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Environmental Consequences
At current wild horse numbers there has not been any adverse impacts to the vegetation or soils resources. The proposed action is not expected to provide an important benefit to this landscape.
Landscape - Douglas Creek Watershed

Affected Environment
Douglas Creek is tributary to the White River near Rangely Colorado. The hydrologic setting of the Douglas Creek watershed ranges from relatively low lying, semi-arid lands yielding relatively little flow to steep, moderately high mountains that contribute major flows to Douglas Creek. There is very little flow or water quality data available for the tributaries to Douglas Creek. A USGS gaging station at the mouth of Douglas Creek collected instantaneous flows and periodic water quality data for the years, 1977, 1978 and 1995. For the period of record, data indicates, this drainage to be an ephemeral stream, flowing in direct response to snow melt or rain. Spring runoff from the semi-arid lands generally occurs from March through early May and from the higher terrain, into early June. Documented instantaneous peak flows from summer storms are 3,250 cfs on July 24, 1977, and 541 cfs July 14, 1995. The major pollutants the Douglas Creek watershed contributes to the White River is high sediment and salinity loads. USGS measured a late summer rainstorm on October 6, 1994. The instantaneous sediment at a discharge of 6.3 cfs was 15,800 mg/l or 270 tons per day with a specific conductance of 4,750 umhos. Douglas Creek watershed is also listed in the White River RMP as a fragile watershed because it has soils that are both highly erosive and moderately saline.

Analysis of Standard 2 - Riparian Systems
Within the Douglas Creek watershed riparian systems occur on Main Douglas, West Douglas and West Creek. Main Douglas and West Creek are in Proper Functioning Condition with an upward trend. West Douglas Creek is split between Not Functioning and Functioning at Risk with an upward trend. West Douglas is projected to have a Proper Functioning Classification within five years.

Analysis of Standard 5 - Water Quality
The State has classified this segment of the White River and its tributaries (from above Douglas Creek to the state line) as a "Use Protected" reach. It's designated beneficial uses are: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. The antidegradation review requirements in the Antidegradation Rule, are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply. For this reach, minimum standards for three parameters have been listed. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0 and Fecal Coliform = 2000/100ml. In addition, this lower reach of the White River and its tributaries are also listed in the report, "Water Quality Limited Segments still requiring TMDLs", a list prepared by the state to fulfill section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. This segment is one of many drainages the state found to have reason to suspect water quality problems. The source of impairment for these tributaries is sediment. Currently the state does not have a numerical standard for sediment loads.

Environmental Consequences
Annual runoff from public land is quite variable and is dependent on soil type and properties, vegetation type and density, watershed aspect and slope, amount of precipitation, and management practices. Forage deficits could deplete the vegetative cover needed to protect watersheds from runoff and erosion and could cause long-term watershed problems. Sensitive (e.g. fragile soils) watersheds have a very high erosion potential and are frequently high is salts. It is evident from the data collected by the USGS, that these drainages often contribute increased sediment and salinity loads into the White River. Because wild horses tend remain in the same area year after year, watershed conditions in these sensitive watersheds are at an extreme risk of becoming even more degraded. Proper grazing practices within fragile watersheds is consequential in reducing erosion and sedimentation from both streambed and upland sources. Compliance and consistency with the state nonpoint source management plan, state water quality standards and the Clean Water Act is mandatory. The CWA places responsibility for protection of water quality with the states and requires federal agency compliance. Improving the rangeland conditions and vegetation cover by reducing the amounts of vegetation grazed by wild horses and better distributing the animals, would have a positive affect on watershed stability and water quality.
Landscape - Cottonwood Creek Watershed

Affected Environment
Cottonwood Creek is an ephemeral drainage that is tributary to the White River downstream from Rangely, Colorado. It is typical of a semi-arid setting, in that runoff comes during spring snowmelt and intense summer or late fall rainstorms and carries with it, elevated sediment loads. A localized intense storm has the ability to erode upstream sediments deposited over a five to ten year period in just one event. Cottonwood Creek watershed is listed in the White River RMP as a fragile watershed because it is a low precipitation area with flashy intense runoff and soils that are highly erosive.

Analysis of Standard 2 - Riparian Systems
Cottonwood Creek has no riparian vegetation nor is there any known opportunity for the development of a riparian system in this channel. The proposed action would not improve this stream system.

Analysis of Standard 5 - Water Quality
Water quality of all water bodies, including groundwater where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado. Water Quality standards for surface and groundwaters include the designated beneficial uses, numeric criteria, narrative criteria and antidegradation requirements set forth under State law as found in (5 CCR 1002-8) as required by Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act.

The State has classified this segment of the White River and its tributaries (from above Douglas Creek to the state line) as a "Use Protected" reach. It's designated beneficial uses are: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. The antidegradation review requirements in the Antidegradation Rule, are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply. For this reach, minimum standards for three parameters have been listed. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0 and Fecal Coliform = 2000/100ml.

In addition, this lower reach of the White River and its tributaries are also listed in the report, "Water Quality Limited Segments still requiring TMDLs", a list prepared by the state to fulfill section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. This segment is one of many drainages the state found to have reason to suspect water quality problems. The source of impairment for these tributaries is sediment. Currently the state does not have a numerical standard for sediment loads.

Environmental Consequences
Annual runoff from public land is quite variable and is dependent on soil type and properties, vegetation type and density, watershed aspect and slope, amount of precipitation, and management practices. Forage deficits could deplete the vegetative cover needed to protect watersheds from runoff and erosion and could cause long-term watershed problems. Sensitive (e.g. fragile soils) watersheds that have very high erosion potential are frequently high in salts and can contribute to increased salinity loads into the White River. Proper grazing practices, from domestic, wildlife or wild horses, within sensitive watersheds is consequential in reducing erosion and sedimentation from both streambed and upland sources. Improving the rangeland conditions and vegetation cover by removing wild horses, would therefore have a positive affect on watershed stability and water quality.
Landscape - Evacuation Creek Watershed

Affected Environment
Texas and Missouri Creeks are tributary to Evacuation Creek which is tributary to the White River in Utah. Surface water and water quality data are not available for these tributaries of Evacuation Creek. The hydrologic setting of area ranges from relatively flat dissected basins to steep, barren side slopes in the upper reaches. Runoff from these semi-arid areas is generally snowmelt from March through May and high intensity summer and late fall rainstorms. Texas Creek is an ephemeral channel and tributary to Missouri Creek while Missouri Creek is tributary to Evacuation Creek. Both Missouri Creek and Evacuation Creek are intermittent streams, having perennial segments in the upper reaches of the watershed.

Currently, there are two active soil stabilization plans within the Lower Missouri Creek watershed. The purpose of these activity plans are to reduce the present rate of soil erosion, control salinity transportation off-site, improve native plant cover and aid the watersheds ability to retain precipitation.

The upper reaches of Evacuation Creek (Texas and Missouri Creeks) are listed in the White River RMP as a fragile watershed. This listing is due to the highly erosive soil within the watershed and the fact that it contains soils that are moderately saline. The RMP recommends using best management practices to help heal the watershed and reduce sediment and salinity loads.

Analysis of Standard 2 - Riparian Systems
Within the the project area, Missouri creek, is the only stream system with potential for important riparian values. Currently Missouri creek is classified as Not Functioning. The causative factor for this classification is livestock grazing. Wild horses have yet to be documented using this stream. An exclosure has been constructed to exclude livestock. There are no indications that wild horse use has had any adverse impacts on these riparian areas. The proposed action would have no effect on this stream system.

Texas Creek has no riparian vegetation nor is there any known opportunity for the development of a riparian system in this channel. The proposed action would not improve this stream system.

Analysis of Standard 5 - Water Quality
As required by the Clean Water Act, the state of Utah has designated the White River from the Colorado-Utah state line to the confluence with the Green River as fully supporting of all of its beneficial use classifications. This segments beneficial use classification are: Recreation and Aesthetics, 2B; and Aquatic Life Use Support, 3C. Four parameters have been listed on the Numeric Criteria for this reach. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.5 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0, maximum Fecal Coliform = 2000/100ml and maximum Total Coliform = 5000/100ml. For these parameters, a fully supporting rating indicated the criterion was not exceeded in more than 10% of the samples collected. Evacuation Creek in Utah has not been assessed at this time. Data that is available for this drainage indicates total dissolved solids entering the White River to exceed state standards in 18 of the 19 samples collected. The mean concentration was 3,041 mg/l.

Environmental Consequences
Proper grazing practices within fragile watersheds is consequential in reducing erosion and sedimentation from both streambed and upland sources. Improving the rangeland conditions and vegetation cover by removing wild horses, would have a positive affect on watershed stability and water quality.
Landscape - Region

Affected Environment
The following resources either by their general occurrence or the scale by which they are managed are being discussed at a regional scale, which is the entire project area. This regional scale contains the Twin Buttes, Bull Draw and eastern portion of the Evacuation Creek allotments. This area is inclusive of the West Douglas Herd Area. Approximate acreage is 230,000 acres.

Analysis of Standard 3 - Animal Component
For a general synopsis of impacts on wildlife attributable to management of livestock and wild horses, please refer to pages 4-68 through 4-70 (big game), 4-84 through 4-85 (raptors), 4-97 through 4-98 (grouse), 4-107 (fish), and 4-118 through 4-119 (special status species) in the draft WRRA RMP/EIS. Although much of this discourse may not be directly applicable to the Twin Buttes, Evacuation Creek, or Bull Draw allotments, all aspects of land management (associated with livestock management and/or wild horse management) are discussed, and therefore, the general direction of wildlife management in this RA can be inferred. Land management performed in this RA is expected to correspond with management applications described within this document (and are also reflected in the Standards and Guidelines).

Because the BLM has no management authority concerning animal numbers, the suitability of wildlife habitat (i.e., rangeland health) is of utmost concern. Habitat of import for big game within the identified horse use areas include summer range/critical habitat for both deer and elk, and elk severe winter range. There are no critical habitats associated with winter ranges, however, the availability of residual herbaceous forage and browse, and the presence of suitable PJ cover for use as thermal shelters are extremely important for winter survival of big game. Sagebrush parks having a good herbaceous understory, in close proximity to mature PJ woodlands with a mix of herbaceous shrubs, would be considered suitable winter range for big game.

Horizontal and vertical diversity of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous cover are necessary to sustain a varied assemblage of neotropical migratory birds, a group of species that is receiving considerable attention worldwide, and that often indicate rangeland health. Individual vegetation components must vary structurally (age classes), and the composition of species over a broad area must also vary to ensure that species specific niches are available. These niches may be found in any of the native plant communities of NW Colorado. Monocultures of non-native vegetation decrease avian diversity, but the interspersion of grasslands, sagebrush parks, riparian bottomlands, black timber and aspen stands, deciduous shrub communities, etc., all enhance the diversity of avian species, and also lead to a more healthy rangeland.

Environmental Consequences
Habitats within the Twin Buttes allotment considered most important (in terms of wildlife/livestock/horse conflicts) include lower elevation sagebrush/grasslands, herbaceous dominated bottomlands, and mesic areas containing riparian vegetation (both upper and lower elevation areas). These areas are also important for raptors (as foraging habitat because they would contain significant numbers of prey species--both mammalian and avian) and to a lesser extent blue grouse (in the upper elevation mesic meadows). Although much of this area contains healthy examples of these habitats, localized areas throughout are in an unhealthy state, and problems are exacerbated through less than optimal livestock management or a horse population that is exceeding its carrying capacity (considering cumulative impacts on the vegetation component). It is in these areas where management efforts must concentrate, for wildlife species also find these areas attractive and may compound the problem. However, BLM does not have the authority to physically manage wildlife, while management of livestock is a major undertaking of this agency, and horse management is solely the responsibility of the BLM. Therefore, through enhanced livestock management and a concerted and continual effort at managing wild horses (in addition to habitat improvements), the overall health of the area used by livestock and horses can be increased, hence improving habitat for wildlife.

Impacts on wildlife as a result of this proposed horse gather varies by group. Generally speaking, this gather is intended to restore a thriving ecological balance between the horses and their habitat. In other words, by removing some horses, the BLM is assuming that rangeland health, and thus wildlife habitat, will improve. Improving the...
habitat can nearly always be considered beneficial to all wildlife species in the long term. However, some short term impacts may also be realized by implementing the proposed action.

Because the gather is scheduled for the months of August-October, few if any impacts will be realized for raptors, neotropical migratory birds, grouse, or fish. Grouse and fish habitat do not occur in the vicinity of trap sites, and raptor and NTMBs will have completed all nesting and fledging activities. Air operations and trap site activities would likely preclude us of those areas by foraging raptors, however, these would be localized and short-term in nature, and would not adversely influence the populations of any raptor species.

Of greater concern (and this may be mainly in regards to public perception) would be impacts related to big game harassment. Human activities on the ground, and inadvertent hazing of big game from the air (via helicopter during gather operations) may force big game out of their normal daily routines, and may cause animals to flee the area. Reduced intake of food and increased energy expenditures just prior to hunting season may have consequences on big game later in the year. Hunting seasons, the rut, and winter are times where big game often only maintain body condition or actually start relying on energy reserves. Again, gather operations will be temporary and more localized in nature, thus negative impacts may be short-lived.

Relatedly, big game hunters on scouting trips will likely place blame on the horse gather (air operations) for "scattering animals" if their season is not successful. Additional public information (to guides and outfitters, CDOW, and the general hunting community) may be necessary to allay any fears.

Analysis of Standard 4 - Special Status Threatened and & Endangered Species.
These subjects are adequately covered in the Affected Environment and Environmental consequences sections of the White River Resource Area, Resource Management Plan. No T&E species are known to make any appreciable use of the herd area. The Northern Goshawk (a species of concern) inhabits PJ woodlands, but impacts would be minimal as described above.

Wild Horse Management

Affected Environment
The proposed removal of horses is from the West Douglas Herd Area containing 64,894 acres of public land and 3,698 acres of private land; and from outside of the West Douglas Herd Area on the Evacuation Creek allotment containing 54,668 acres of public land and 6,983 acres of private land.

Management Goals
The two reasons for the gathering of these horses are; to comply with the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro act (1971 as ammended) which requires that wild horses be managed within the confines of the areas they were located at the passage of the act; and removal of wild horses in order to restore a thriving natural ecological balance on the Herd Area. Application of the Standards for Rangeland Health has shown that a thriving natural ecological condition is not being maintained, wild horses are the causative factor, and therefore the numbers of horses must be reduced. All horses will be gathered outside of the Herd Area. Inside of the Herd Area the objective of this capture of to leave a minimum of 60 horses.

The 1996 White River Resource Area, Resource Management Plan management decision is; The West Douglas Herd Area will be managed in the short term (0-10 years) to provide forage for a hero of 0 to 50 horses... The long term objective (+10 years) will be to remove all wild horses from this area. This gather is in compliance with this decision.

History of the West Douglas Herd Area:
### Completed Gather Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Wild Horses Removed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Census History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Horses Observed During Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
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<td>1982</td>
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<td>1985</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All known censuses were conducted by helicopter.

In the 1997 removal 69 horses were caught and 10 were released back onto the range. At the time of this gather the population of the West Douglas Herd Area was estimated at 151 horses. The 69 horses caught represents 46% of the population. From this sample the average recruitment was estimated at 27%. Also, using the same age distribution sample it is estimated that no more than 16% of the population, or 22 head will be over nine years of age.

Currently there is an outbreak of Equine Infectious Anemia in the wild horses of the Uintah Basin. This outbreak is approximately 20 miles to the west of the project area. Equine Infectious Anemia is a chronic viral disease, with mortality rates of approximately 30%. This disease is spread by biting insects. The West Douglas Herd Area is between the Bonanza Herd and the Piceance/East Douglas Herd Management Area. The West Douglas Herd would
be the stepping stone for this disease to migrate east into the herd management area.

**Environmental Consequences**

Wild horses will be subject to stress during the course of the removal operation. All operations will be conducted in accordance with BLM policy, the intent of which is to insure both human safety and to minimize stress and physical injury to horses. Applicable mitigation measures that are intended to reduce adverse impacts to horses are listed in the Removal Plan. Stress on horses is inherent in gathering, transport, holding and processing operations. Good judgement, proper facilities and equipment, and experienced BLM and contract personnel will limit the negative impact of stress and physical injury to wild horses.

Within the Herd Area, implementation of the proposed action is intended to arrest the accelerated rangeland degradation which is currently occurring. The remaining horses will continue to use the area on a year-round basis which is detrimental to forage base. Because of the extent of degradation of the Texas Creek area a threshold may have been crossed where even a few horses creates a severe burden on the plant community and improvement in condition and production would be very slow.

It is BLM policy to coggins test all gathered horses for Equine Infectious Anemia. If this disease is found emergency measures can be implemented to prevent spread into the Piceance/East Douglas Herd Management Area. Colorado state livestock law require quarintine and destruction of infected horses at the direction of the State Veterinarian.

**Livestock Management**

**Affected Environment**

The project area includes three grazing allotments, the Twin Buttes, Bull Draw and the Evacuation Creek Allotment. The Twin Buttes and Evacuation Creek allotments are year-round cow/calf operations. Twin Buttes and Bull Draw allotments are within the West Douglas Herd Area. The Evacuation Creek allotment is outside of the Herd Area. The Twin Buttes and Evacuation Creek allotments have Allotment Management Plans. One of the major objectives of these plans is to improve rangeland conditions by allowing growth or regrowth of the key forage species. These plans have grazing systems designed to meet the plant growth requirements. Bull Draw allotment is used during the period November 15, to March 30, which gives growing season rest every year.

There will be horses until their removal, livestock must be managed so as not to exacerbate the current problems. To this end livestock grazing periods have been changed to allow for regrowth of forage species. Forage utilization limits have been continued for litter retention and to provide for other users. Rangeland improvements in the form of prescribed fires and stock ponds have been proposed to draw livestock onto currently under-utilized areas.

The Standards for Rangeland Health identified the area on the west side of the Texas Creek pasture and the Evacuation creek allotment as having problems with indicators for the soil and vegetation standards relating to wild horse use. These problems are related to the increase in horse numbers and the year-round use of the forage resource. On the Twin Buttes allotment livestock use has decreased on the west side of the Texas Creek pasture, because of the lack of forage. This was particularly true during the drought years of the 1990's. Cattle use has decreased from 700 Animal Unit Months to 300. Horse use has increased from an estimated 77 Animal Unit Months to 770. The time frame on this analysis is 1986 to 1996.

**Environmental Consequences**

Implementation of the proposed action is intended to arrest the accelerated rangeland degradation which is currently occurring. The remaining horses will continue to use the area on a year-round basis which is detrimental to forage base. Because of the extent of degradation of the Texas Creek area, the rangelands may have already crossed a threshold where even a few horseson a yearlong basis creates a severe burden on the plant community and improvement would be very slow or non-existent. Productive plant communities are the basis of a sustainable livestock operation. Unproductive plant communities which lack resilience directly effect the flexibility of the
livestock operation and increase the opportunity for catastrophe.

The plant communities of the Texas Creek area are highly degraded both in terms of composition and cover. Much of the area is dominated by cheatgrass a non-native annual grass which as a result of its ability to start growth early in the spring has a competitive advantage over the native perennial. the degraded plant communities are expected to recover a 5-10 year period if the phenological requirements growth and reproduction of the preferred plant species can be met.

**Cultural and Historical Resources**

**Affected Environment**
The area of the proposed gather contains some of the highest known site densities in the RA. Research has also shown that the sites, ranging from archaic in age up through the historic period, can be very significant in terms of the history of the area and the nation in general. Resources present include camp sites, prehistoric roads and trails, early mining/mineral development in the area, prehistoric tool stone quarries and rock art.

**Environmental Consequences**
Reducing the numbers of horses in the area would have an overall beneficial impact on cultural resources. Reducing horse numbers reduces the concentration of horses in a given area which reduces the trampling and artifact breakage on a site. Reducing the numbers of horses also benefits standing structure to some degree by reducing the amount of rubbing/scratching on the structure which hastens the collapse of the structure such as historic cabin or wickiup. Reducing horse numbers and reducing the rate at which the area is devegetated contributes to better soil stability and reduces the loss of artifacts and feature context due to being washed away by water or blown away as fugitive dust in high wind situations. Reducing erosion rates also reduces the rate at which standing architecture is undermined slowing the rate at which structures might collapse.

**Hazardous Materials**

**Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**
During processing of gathered horses, vaccines, syringes and needles and liquid nitrogen will be used. These materials are hazardous and will be handled accordingly by all BLM personnel. Volunteer personnel will not be permitted to handle hazardous materials. Liquid nitrogen used in the freeze branding of horses during processing is a hazardous material. Personnel involved with its handling and transport will be briefed on its use, proper safety precautions, etc. A copy of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for liquid nitrogen will be attached to the container.

**Wilderness Study Areas**

**Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**
The project area contains the Oil Spring Mountain Wilderness Study Area. Oil Spring Mountain is a use area for wild horses. The majority of use is during the summer and fall until snow depths force the horses into the lower elevations of Texas Creek.

**Floodplains, Wetlands, Riparian Zones, and alluvial Valleys**

**Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**
Covered in the analysis of the standards for rangeland health.

**Noise**

**Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**
Because the proposed action involves the use of a helicopter, some loud noise will occur. However no lasting
impact is expected.

**Recreation**

**Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**
The region provides significant recreational opportunities to the local population year round and tourists during the hunting season. The grazing program probably does not play any part in the amount of use, but as resource conditions improve the quality of the experience should increase. Outside of the Oil Spring Mountain ACEC and areas around Texas Mountain the area is heavily impacted by oil and gas development.

The following items will not be affected by the proposed action, or will be indirectly improved through benefits associated with improvements to soil and vegetation:


**Consultation and Coordination**

During the planning and preparation of this document, affected interests including agencies and representatives of state and local governments have been intensively consulted.

The proposed removal is consistent with and is an integral part of, the **WRRA Wild Horse Program Analysis and Operational Plan**, August 26, 1997. A record of these consultations is available at White River Resource Area headquarters in Meeker.

**Public Participation**
The following individuals participated in preparation of this document.

Twin Buttes Ranch Company- Davie D. Robertson, Cheryl Robertson, Scott Robertson, Owen Robertson

Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Coalition- Toni Moore

Colorado Department of Agriculture, Section 8 Team, (Rangeland Assessment and Livestock Management recommendations)

Thomas A. Kourlis, Commissioner
Warren Gore
John Raftopoulas
Roy Roath, CSU Extension Specialist
Mark Cady, Colorado Division of Wildlife

On June 22, 1998 the White River Resource Area hosted a public hearing to discuss the use of motorized equipment and helicopters during the gather of wild horses and a public meeting to discuss gathers planned for Colorado in the 1998 calendar year. On July 20, 1998 notes from this hearing/meeting were sent each of the attenders.

The following individuals have submitted comments for inclusion into this document, or for consideration during the planned West Douglas gather and subsequent adoption:

Barb Flores
Toni Moore
Dave Hillberry
Jon D. Hill
A total of thirteen comments were documented during the April 22, 1998 public meeting hosted by the White River Resource Area. These comments have been grouped into the following categories:

1. Livestock Grazing
2. Minimal Feasible Level of Management for Wild Horses
3. Equine Infectious Anemia
4. Aerial Inventory
5. Relationship Between the 1996 Gather Plan and the 1998 Gather Plan
6. Gelding Older Studs and Returning Them to the Range
7. Long Term Management of the West Douglas Herd Area

Each of the comments have been considered for content and applicability. One of the recommendations will be followed during the planned gather operation; namely, only those horses removed for adoption will be tested for Equine Infectious Anemia. Refer to Attachment "D" for a summary of the comments and responses to these comments.
Decision Record

Finding Of No Significant Impact
This 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.

Decision and Rationale
It is my decision to implement the proposed action of this Environmental Assessment. It is my decision to implement the above decision in full force and effect in accordance with 43 CFR 4770.3(c). This decision is considered in effect until the actions included in the Proposed Action of the Removal Plan have been completed.

This decision may be appealed within 45 days of issuance of this decision. Appeals are to be directed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4, in conjunction with 43 CFR 4770.3(c). The appellant has the burden of proof to show that the decision being appealed is in error. If you wish to file a petition for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. Please refer to the enclosed form 1842-1 for additional information.

Your appeal must also be filed with the Bureau of Land Management, White River Resource Area, 73544 HWY 64, Meeker, Colorado, 81641 within the same 45 day period described above.

If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that the stay should be granted based on the following standards:

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

The rationale for this decision to remove wild horses from the West Douglas Herd Area is based on the Standards For Rangeland Health and Rangeland Evaluation of Texas Creek Pasture Assessment 1996, which documented that a thriving ecological condition is not being maintained, and that removal of horses is required to begin restoration of these rangelands.

The decision to remove wild horses from outside the West Douglas Herd Area complies with Sec. 10 of Public Law 92-195, The Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (as amended), and 43 CFR 4710.4 which mandates that wild horse distribution be limited to the areas where they existed in 1971. The horses currently located on the Evacuation Creek Allotment are outside of the West Douglas Herd Area and must be removed. This decision is in conformance with the White River Resource Area, Resource Management Plan of 1996.

Rationale for Full Force and Effect
The rationale for placing the proposed alternative into full force and effect is based on the following:

1. Protection of key forage plant species from the overuse attributed to wild horses. The two year delay in action resulting from an appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals would allow continued negative impacts by wild horses to the forage plant species relied upon by wild horses, wildlife and livestock. These negative impacts will increase in proportion to the herd recruitment rate which is greater than 20% annually.
2. Removal of horses outside of the West Douglas Herd Area complies with 43 CFR 4710.4.
3. Completion of the planned removal in a timely, cost efficient manner, is an action which benefits the taxpaying public. Due to a combination of topography, vegetation cover and wild horse behavior, capture operation costs are above average. Considering these high costs along with increasing horse numbers (20%/year), delay of the planned removal will escalate future removal cost to a degree that they become unaffordable.

**Mitigation Measures**
The mitigation measures described in the proposed action relating to the safety of the wild horses, capture crew and public will be adhered to. The mitigation measures for the care and management of wild horses will be adhered to.

**Remarks**

**Compliance Plan**
Compliance with this plan will be the responsibility of the Area Manager, White River Resource Area.

**Signature of Preparer**  Robert J. Fowler  
**Date Signed**  7-24-98

**Signature of Environmental Coordinator**  Larry M. Shultz  
**Date Signed**  7-28-98

**Signature of Authorized Official**  John J. Mehlhoff  
**Date Signed**  7-24-98

**Attachments**
A. Colorado's Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health  
B. Texas Creek Rangeland Analysis 1996  
C. Form 1842-1  Appealing a decision of the Authorized Officer  
D. Comments to the West Douglas Gather Plan 1998

**APPENDIX  " D "  Comments to the West Douglas Gather Plan 1998**

A total of thirteen comments were documented during the April 22, 1998 public meeting hosted by the White River
Resource Area. These comments have been grouped into the following categories:

1. Livestock Grazing
2. Minimal Feasible Level of Management for Wild Horses
3. Equine Infectious Anemia in Wild Horses
4. Aerial Inventory
5. Relationship Between the 1996 Gather Plan and the 1998 Gather Plan
6. Gelding Older Studs and Returning Them to the Range
7. Long Term Management of the West Douglas Herd Area

1. Livestock Grazing

Comment: One party asked if any management changes had resulted from the section 8 consultation/coordination.

Response: The White River Resource Area recently completed a "section 8" consultation with the Colorado Secretary of Agriculture, regarding the Twin Buttes Allotment Management Plan. Section 8 refers to the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978. The final recommendation from the Secretary's consultation group is available for review. Recommendations resulting from this consultation have yet to be implemented. In accordance with the current grazing regulations, affected interests will be invited to participate in our effort to finalize the allotment management plan. We anticipate initiating this consultation process immediately following the current summer/fall field season.

Comment: Have cattle trespass problems in the Herd Area been addressed?

Response: During the section 8 consultation, a difficult problem associated with unauthorized livestock grazing near the head of Missouri Creek was evaluated. The permittees involved are aware of the situation and appear to be working on a solution. Conflicts with wild horses have not been identified in this area.

Comment: The Cottonwood Pasture is not meeting the standards and guidelines for grazing.

Response: The health of the Cottonwood Pasture has been addressed as a concern related to livestock grazing. The seasonal timing of livestock use has been the focus of this concern. Page 11 of the gather plan addresses this issue in detail.

2. Minimal Feasible Level of Management for Wild Horses:

Comment: Gelding older studs prior to their release back into the Herd Area, and age selective removal of younger animals from the herd are in violation of the "minimal feasible level" clause contained in PL-92-195.

Comment: Genetic viability of the herd will be endangered by 1) gelding select, older studs and returning these studs to the range and 2) with the removal of each mare captured during the gather.

Response: Horses will be removed from West Douglas by random gate cut. Age and sex of gathered animals will not be deciding factors of removal.

Older studs will not be gelded and returned to the Herd Area. Older studs will be removed and transported to Canon City for placement through adoption.

3. Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) in Wild Horses

Comment: All the horses captured during the gather should be tested for EIA in order to assure there is no
transmittal of EIA to domestic stock in Colorado.

Comment: Only the horses removed for adoption should be tested for EIA - testing 77 horses will result in the adequate sample size needed to determine the existence of EIA in the herd.

Note: Each individual who expressed concern over EIA agreed to support the Colorado State Veterinarian Association's recommendation regarding the number of animals which should be tested for EIA during the upcoming gather.

Comment: One individual stated that the BLM Code of Federal regulations contains guidelines for controlling EIA, and asked if the BLM was adhering to its own regulations.

Response: The Colorado State Veterinarian Association recommended testing only those animals held for adoption. The State Veterinarian representative stated that testing 77 animals should result in the adequate random sample size needed to ascertain the presence of EIA in the herd.

The CFR source quoted by the individual as pertaining to BLM's EIA regulations was not correct, and could not be located.

A member of the Colorado State Veterinarian Association was asked whether an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) relating to EIA is in existence. The member stated that he is not aware of any such MOU.

4. Aerial Inventory

Comment: Concern was raised by one individual that the initial (March 26, 1974) aerial census conducted over West Douglas Herd Area did not inventory the entire area used by the herd in 1974 and that, subsequently, the current Herd Area boundaries are not accurate. The individual felt that, had the original boundaries been accurately mapped, horses now considered outside the boundaries would be inside the management boundaries.

Response: Horses in the area now corresponding to the West Douglas Herd Area were first inventoried in 1974. Formal interpretation of the wild horse habitat in the West Douglas vicinity began almost immediately following the March, 1974 aerial inventory during a series of public meetings. Data analysis and public input from these meetings resulted in establishment of the Herd Area boundaries as currently defined.

5. Relationship between the 1996 and 1998 Gather Plans

Comments: One party stated that, since gelding was not analyzed in the 1996 Gather plan, horses cannot be gelded during the 1998 gather project.

Response: The 1996 White River Resource Area Wild Horse Gather Plan did not address gelding select, older studs during the 1996 capture operation. No studs captured during the 1996 project were gelded. Gelding and returning select, older studs back into the Herd Area is addressed in the 1998 West Douglas Herd Area Wild Horse Gather Plan/Environmental Assessment.

6. Gelding select, older studs and returning them to the range

7. **Management of the West Douglas Herd Area.**

*Comment:* An individual asked when the decision had first been made to zero out the Herd Area.

*Comment:* BLM does not have the authority to not manage populations within Herd Areas.

*Response:* The decision to not manage wild horses in the West Douglas Herd Area initially was made by White River Resource Area in 1978. This decision has carried through subsequent planning documents, the most recent, and current document being the 1996 White River Resource Management Plan.

Under Sec. 3 (b) (2) (ii) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, the Secretary is directed to consider "information contained in any land use planning completed pursuant to section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976." In the White River Resource Area the planning process was used to define the term "where presently found" as referenced in the first paragraph of the act. Initially the land use planning analysis indicated that the West Douglas area did not contain habitat associated with the distribution of horses in 1974 census. That habitat was evaluated but not selected in 1975. Only 9 horses were found in the West Douglas Herd Area in 1974. Now that horses are occupying the area in large numbers, they have demonstrated a pattern of habitat selection and distribution that makes managing a viable herd environmentally prohibitive.