

Please note that this environmental assessment is being developed. Notations in bold print are designed to clarify the status of the information provided. The attachments are available upon request. Your comments are welcomed.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD

NUMBER: CO-200-2001-0052EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC-63471

PROJECT NAME: Realty - Boulder Land Exchange, Ward Unit

ECOREGION/PLANNING UNIT: Boulder County

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: **(Will still be minor changes per new plats)**

Selected Lands (Federal):

All lands are in the 6th PM., Boulder County, Colorado

T.1N., R.71W.

Sec. 5: Lots 49, 50, 51, 53, 88, 92, 93, 94, 97, 98

(Lots 97 and 98 formerly identified as the area occupied by former Democratic, Columbia and Delaware lode claims)

Containing approximately 28.91 acres

Sec. 6: Lots 64, 66, 68 through 75

Containing approximately 70.70 acres

Sec. 8: Lots 188, 189, 190, 191

Sec. 9: Lots 25, 26

(Formerly identified as the area occupied by former Compromise, Protection, Protection No. 2 and Washington lode claims)

Containing approximately 16.53 acres

Sec. 15: Lot 3

Containing approximately 20.32 acres

Sec. 17: Lot 86

(Formerly identified as area occupied by former Slope lode claim)

Containing approximately 0.82 acres

Sec. 21: Lot 49

Containing approximately 6.21 acres

T.1N., R.72W.

Sec. 6: Lots 96 through 111, 113 through 127, 129, 130, 137, 138, 139, 141 through 151, 153 through 163, 165, 168, 171 through 175, 177, 178, 179

(Lot 168 is a portion of former lot 164; lots 171 through 175 are corrections to the survey plat; lot 177 is a portion of former lot 136; lot 179 is a portion of former lot 112; lot 178 is a portion of former lot 135)
Containing approximately 187 acres

Sec. 7: Lots 49 through 58, 60 through 91, 93 through 106, 108 through 117, 120 and Tract B

(Lot 108 is a portion of former lot 107)
Containing approximately 185 acres

Sec. 11: Lot 35

Containing approximately 7.09 acres

T.1N., R.73W.

Sec. 1: Lots 73 through 96, 98, 100 through 104, 107 through 109, 113, 115, 116

Containing approximately 134 acres

Sec. 12: Lots 5 through 8, 14, 17 through 30, 32, 34 through 40, lots 42, 44, 46, 51, 55, 57, 58, 60, 62, 63, 64

(Lot 60 formerly identified as a portion of lot 12; lot 63 formerly identified as lot 11; lot 62 created to correct error in survey plat; lot 55 a portion of former lot 41; lot 58 is a portion of former lot 45; lot 64 formerly identified as a lot bounded by the Shamrock lode, Mineral Survey (MS) 111500, the Crescent lode, MS 11500A and the Captain Jack lode, MS 11231)

Containing approximately 129.6 acres

Offered Lands (non-Federal):

All lands are in the 6th P.M., Colorado

Teller County

Gaffney:

T.15S., R.70W.

Mineral Surveys (MS) 11077, 12596, 11299, 14598, 14886, 10559, 18375, 14552, 13188, 13244, 13164, 18890, 11524, 14597, 17087, 14713, 18409, 10920, 14144, 17436, 9299, 15521, 12299, 9889, 15393, 14493, 11321, Binder Lode of MS 18892, Gold Valley Placer #2 of MS 8892, portion of MS 11686, all in Secs. 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34 and 35;

Sec. 27: Lots 1 and 5

Containing approximately 485 acres

Boulder County

Caribou Flats:

T.1S., R.73W.

MS 14284, and portions of Iron King Lode and the Iron Wonder Lode and all of the Iron King No. 2 Lode of MS 16776; all in Sec.s 7 and 8
Containing approximately 165.03 acres (Caribou Flats)

Highway Parcel:

T.2N., R.72W.

Sec. 17: N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$

Containing 80 acres (Highway Parcel)

Offered Equalization Parcels (non-Federal):

Boulder County

T.1N., R.73W.

Parcel 1: MS 13845 A in Sec. 2, known as Tionesta Lode
Containing approximately 5 acres

Parcel 2: MS 12846 in Sec. 11, known as the Colene Lode
Containing approximately 4.90 acres

Parcel 3: Diana and Diana #3 Lodes of MS 17356 in Sec. 11
MS 9264, known as the Highline Lode, and Gold Crown, Gold Crown #3 and #4
and Extension, Majestic, Majestic #1 and #2 and Extension of MS 10885; in Sec.
11 and 12
Containing approximately 54.77 acres

T.1S., R.73W.:

Parcel 4: MS 15515 A & B, in Secs. 6 and 7, known as the Grotto, LaPaz, Trail
Lodes and the Trail Millsite
Containing approximately 17.76 acres

Parcel 5: MS 16702 in sections 7 and 8, known as the Dewey No. 2 Lode
Containing approximately 5.133 acres

PROPONENT: Boulder County

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background: The history of the subject public lands began with the creation of the Gold Hill and Ward mining districts in Boulder County, Colorado. These two mining districts were subject to considerable prospecting and mining activities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As a

result, the public lands included in these two districts were excluded from the Roosevelt National Forest when it was established. Over the years, a significant portion of the land left the public domain through the mining law, resulting in a highly fragmented pattern of public land ownership, now administered by the Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO) of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The lands remaining in public ownership consist of numerous parcels, ranging in size from 0.01 acres to approximately 150 acres.

BLM's Northeast Resource Management Plan (NERMP) approved in 1986, in part, reviewed and analyzed approximately 5200 acres of public lands scattered throughout Boulder County, and determined they should be disposed of because they cannot be effectively managed as part of the public domain. Since that date, a number of public entities including the Town of Ward, City of Boulder, Boulder County and the Sunshine Fire District have applied for and received lease/patent for approximately 1700 acres under the Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act (Act of June 14, 1926, as amended; 43 U.S.C. 869;869-4). Several smaller parcels of land have been disposed of through sale or exchange.

The majority of the remaining BLM land in Boulder County is located within two disposal units, identified in the NERMP, that correspond with the two mining districts - the Ward Unit, Management Unit 602, containing 780 acres; and the Gold Hill Unit, Management Unit 603, containing between 2100 and 2300 acres. These lands are located in the mountainous areas west of the City of Boulder and consist of highly fragmented parcels intermingled with patented (privately owned) mining claims. The Ward area parcels are located adjacent to the south and east sides of the Ward town limits as well as north of Brainard Lake Road, while the Gold Hill parcels are mostly east and south of that community.

In 1999, the County proposed to acquire for fair market value, through exchange, the remaining BLM lands in the Ward and Gold Hill Units, with the exception of lands previously identified for transfer under the R&PP Act, or other disposal. They would acquire these lands utilizing sales tax revenues identified for this purpose. The County proposes to retain those lands it acquires in the exchange that lend themselves to open space uses; it would dispose of the remaining lands to adjacent landowners in a manner that would prevent creating additional building sites. It is proposed that this larger project be accomplished through several individual transactions.

On August 30, 2000, the Boulder County Commissioners, Forest Service, and BLM signed an Agreement to Initiate (ATI) a land exchange. In this exchange, BLM land in the Ward and Gold Hill Units will be exchanged for land in Boulder and Teller Counties. This exchange is the first of several anticipated proposals from the County and focuses primarily on disposal of lands in the Ward Unit for acquisition properties that had already been prioritized for acquisition by BLM and the Forest Service. The BLM lands in the Ward Unit are surveyed and free of unpatented mining claims, allowing the BLM and County to approach this exchange proposal as a "prototype" for resolving issues associated with subsequent disposal actions within the county. The County has contributed substantially toward the survey of lands in the Gold Hill area to be included in proposed future exchange proposals or other disposal actions anticipated to take

place over the next 3 to 5 years. This environmental analysis will focus primarily on the current exchange proposal involving lands in Boulder and Teller Counties.

Issues identified by the public regarding the disposal of the BLM lands in the Ward and Gold Hill areas included access issues, proposed resolution of residential trespass, and the treatment of valid unpatented mining claims. It was determined that the BLM would continue to resolve residential trespass separate from any exchange actions that may be pursued with the County. Lands that have been determined to contain such trespass will be excluded from exchange proposals. Likewise, lands that are encumbered with valid unpatented mining claims will not be included in the exchange proposals.

Access is a critical issue in the entire county. The land tenure pattern in the subject area intensifies the issue for many landowners potentially affected by the exchange. In order to provide an opportunity for these landowners to apply for access across the BLM lands, the Notice of Exchange Proposal contained the following language: "Persons seeking rights-of-way across these lands may apply to the Royal Gorge Field Office of Bureau of Land Management until February 1, 2001. Right-of-way applications received after that date will not be processed for lands included in this exchange." This notice was published in two local papers once a week for four weeks and was sent to a list of adjacent landowners and users of these lands. Right-of-way applications received by the deadline will be processed. **(This processing is still taking place)**

PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action is to complete a land exchange with Boulder County pursuant to Section 206 of the Act of October 21, 1976 as amended, 43 U.S.C. 1716. The County would convey to the United States of America the offered private land (non-Federal lands) and the BLM would convey to the County the selected BLM lands (Federal lands). Equalization of values will primarily be accomplished by adding or deleting lands, as needed, from the list of selected lands or offered equalization parcels. **(Exact action will be described in final EA after remaining appraisals are complete)**

The County will acquire from BLM most of the public land in the Ward Unit that has not been identified for transfer under R&PP or other disposal, consisting of approximately 648 acres, and several parcels in the Gold Hill Unit, consisting of approximately 150 acres. In return, BLM will acquire certain land in Teller County, Colorado, consisting of approximately 485 acres, to be administered by BLM. BLM will also acquire two parcels of land in Boulder County, Colorado, consisting of a total of approximately 245 acres, within the boundaries of the Roosevelt National Forest to be administered by the Forest Service. **(Will add information on equalization parcels in final EA if they are needed)** The proposed exchange includes both the surface and mineral estate for most of the offered and selected lands. For some parcels, minerals will not be acquired on the offered private lands, but the acquiring agency has made a determination that this will not interfere with the proposed surface management of the parcels being acquired.

Patent conveying the federal lands to Boulder County will be subject to a reservation to the United States for ditches and canals and to existing authorizations of record. This will include

rights-of-way, most of which will be converted to a perpetual term prior to conveyance of the lands. Boulder County has developed, in conjunction with BLM solicitors, an easement designed to replace access rights-of-way across the lands, included as Attachment D. Special stipulations will be attached and the easement edited to address the existing authorizations on a case-by case basis. If holders of existing rights-of-way choose to replace their current authorization with easements from the County, these rights-of-way will be relinquished. The patents will be subject to pre-existing rights on existing roads and trails, not of record.

The lands have been appraised and the fair market values determined. The value of the selected federal lands in the Ward area is \$1,904,500. The value of the offered lands in Boulder County are \$104,000 for the Highway Parcel, and \$860,000 for the Caribou Flats Parcel. The value of the offered lands in Teller County is \$1,250,000. **(This leaves the values currently out of balance by \$309,500. The appraisal of 151 acres of federal lands in the Gold Hill area is in progress. Additional lands have been identified for inclusion to equalize values. These lands consist of approximately 85 acres of private lands located in Boulder County, identified for possible acquisition to benefit the Forest Service. These parcels will be utilized, as needed, to equalize final values. If any of these equalization lands are not utilized in the first exchange transaction between BLM and the County, they may be included in future exchanges between the two parties.)**

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: Under this alternative, the selected federal land parcels would not be exchanged to the County, and would remain under BLM management. The scattered public land parcels would remain in U.S. Government ownership for a time, but would provide only minimal public value due to scattered locations among private mining claims and probable access issues, as they do now. Applications for use, such as rights-of-way, would continue to be processed as long as the lands remained under BLM management. Since the Northeast RMP of 1986 determined that these lands should be disposed of, alternative proposals would be considered at a later date. Such an alternative proposal would likely result in the creation of new building units in the subject area.

The Gaffney property would continue in private ownership, but would remain for sale on the open market. Once sold, the area would most likely be developed for homesites. The appraisal for the Gaffney parcel states that the parcel “could legally and physically be split into 30-32 residential lots. All probable uses are financially feasible but the maximally productive use can only be for rural residential development purposes.” The Caribou Flats parcel, Highway parcel and the other Forest Service equalization parcels, are currently owned by Boulder County, so would likely remain in County ownership until an alternate means for them to divest of their ownership to the Forest Service presented itself. While under County ownership, the parcels would be managed through their open space program.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: When the NERMP was approved in 1986 with a recommendation to dispose of approximately 5,200 acres of BLM land in Boulder County, the County committed to several important land use goals with regards to these properties: there

would of no net loss of public lands; the environmental values of the lands would be preserved in perpetuity; and, there would be no creation of new building sites. This current proposal from the County would work toward accomplishing their goals.

Within the larger project, most of the Ward and Gold Hill parcels acquired by the County are envisioned to remain as publicly-owned open space. The County proposes to maintain and protect the retained parcels for their ecological, historical, recreational and scenic values. It is anticipated that these larger blocks of land would remain open with no structural improvements. Small isolated parcels and slivers of land between claims which are often without access would likely be sold to adjacent property owners. Conservation easements would ensure that no new building lots are created with the transactions. It is estimated that 50-70 potential units of development will be extinguished with the county's larger proposals for acquisition of BLM parcels. It is estimated that at least 16 potential units of development will be extinguished with this first exchange. This exchange will also result in the preservation of key parcels to be acquired and managed by the USFS and BLM.

The BLM will move toward the goal of the NERMP by decreasing management responsibilities in Boulder County while acquiring exchange parcels prioritized for acquisition by the BLM and Roosevelt National Forest.

BLM has identified private property in Teller County, the Gaffney parcel, which will help consolidate the agency land holdings into larger management blocks. This land will be purchased by Boulder County and exchanged to BLM. Acquisition of the Gaffney parcel is consistent with BLM's land use planning for the area, as it is located within a consolidated block of public land identified in the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan (RGRMP) as category II lands, or lands for retention and long-term management. These patented mining claims are also located in the Gold Belt Tour Byway planning area. Exchanges to acquire private property in this planning area are encouraged when the acquisition will enhance BLM's ability to manage its natural resource programs, as the acquisition of the Gaffney property will do. The area contains excellent wildlife habitat for mule deer, elk, turkey and bear and provides access a large block of public lands.

The exchange will allow the USFS to assume management of approximately 245 **(Will adjust in final if additional equalization parcels are included)** acres of mountain inholdings surrounded by National Forest System land and containing important wildlife habitat. The Caribou Flats and Highway parcels have been identified as acquisition priorities by the Boulder Ranger District of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests. The acquisition of both parcels will reduce Forest Service administrative costs and improve management efficiency by consolidating federal land ownership. Both parcels also have important natural resource values that will benefit Forest Service programs. The Caribou Flats parcel is within an elk calving area and has potential habitat for lynx, a federally listed species. The tract is specifically identified for acquisition in the 1997 Revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the Arapaho and Roosevelt Forests and Pawnee National Grassland Land (Chapter 2, Caribou Geographic Area

under “Goals and Desired Conditions”) and Resource Management Plan. The Highway parcel provides winter range and effective habitat for elk, is within the potential foraging area for lynx, and will be managed as part of a larger block of National Forest System land. Its acquisition is consistent with the Revised LRMP (in Chapter 2 under the “James Creek Geographic Area”) for consolidation of landownership patterns and facilitating scenic corridor preservation along the Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway.

(The Boulder Ranger District, if necessary to equalize values in this exchange, has identified five parcels for acquisition. These parcels all possess important natural resource values, consolidate land ownership patterns, enhance recreational opportunities and their acquisition is consistent with the Forest Service management plan.)

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The proposed action is subject to the following plan:

Bureau of Land Management:

Name of Plan: Northeast Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: September 16, 1986

Decisions:

Chapter 1, pg. 1: The general philosophy and overall emphasis of the plan is to change the ownership and management, within current policies, of all BLM administered surface estate to more appropriate entities or individuals for the purpose of improving management efficiency.

Chapter 2, pg. 7: Land status adjustments may be made by exchange, transfer, or sale (or other available methods).

Name of Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 5/13/96

Decision Number: 5-66, 5-67, Land Ownership Adjustment Map; for the Gold Belt Subregion #5

Decision number 5-66: Land ownership adjustments will be made with the following guidance: Exchange could be used when the result is clearly in the best interest of the public and management will be improved; identified parcels for acquisition or retention will provide values for public use and have access

Decision 5-67: Land ownership adjustments include: 108,661 acres for retention

or exchange. These areas are shown on the Land Ownership Adjustment Map.

National Forest:

Name of Plan: Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest and Pawnee National Grassland Land and Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 11/19/1997

Decision Number: All of the Forest Service acquisition parcels fall within the following Geographic Areas as outlined in the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland 1997 Revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan. Each Geographic Area defines specific goals and desired conditions regarding landownership adjustment:

Caribou Geographic Area (Chapter 2, page 64): “Consolidate landownership patterns. Priorities for consideration are, “...acquisition of isolated patented mining claims in the ..., Caribou Flats and Caribou Park areas.” (Caribou Flat parcel and Equalization Parcels 5 and 6).

James Creek Geographic Area (Chapter 2, Page 73): “Consolidate landownership patterns with emphasis in Intermix Management Areas. (Highway Parcel)

Brainard Geographic Area (Chapter 2, page 61): “Pursue land acquisition to consolidate landownership on an opportunity basis.” (Equalization parcel 1 and northwest portion of parcel 4)

Niwot Ridge Geographic Area (Chapter 2, page 94): “Consolidate landownership patterns.” (Equalization Parcels 2, 3, 4).

The proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with these plans (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

Boulder County:

Acquisition of the BLM lands by Boulder County meets a number of goals and policies in the County Comprehensive Plan including:

1. preservation of mountain rural character, community buffering and growth management objectives;
2. preservation of publicly-managed open space lands;
3. preservation of important wildlife habitats, environmental conservation areas, scenic vistas, and historic/archaeological sites;
4. protection of wetlands and riparian ecosystems;

5. conservation of groundwater supplies;
6. reduction in risks associated with natural hazards; and
7. development of recreational uses consistent with management objectives for the properties.

Standards for Public Land Health: The Standards are addressed in the appropriate Affected Environment/Environmental Consequences sections. The following table is a summary of those two sections. Project areas have been assessed for all Standards, however, not all Standards necessarily apply to all acres in the project area. "NA" denotes where a Standard does not apply and does not influence overall land health. Depending on the action analyzed, completion of this chart may be required, optional, or not required. Also, in completing this chart, either acres or checkmarks are acceptable in the appropriate row-column depending on the action analyzed.

	Current Situation			With Proposed Action	
	Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Not Achieving	Causative Factors	Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Not Achieving
Standard 1	X*			X*	
Standard 2	X**			X**	
Standard 3	X			X	
Standard 4	X			X	
Standard 5	X			X	
Total Acres					
Total number of acres in project area:					

* No actual soil survey for health standards was completed, however most soils not directly adjacent existing roads and trails are in good conditions. This action covers a wide variety of soil types spread over a large area. The assumption is made that Boulder will continue to provide at least some protection against soils erosion on parcels coming under county management. Acquisition parcels will aid meeting health of land standards in Teller County.

**This action is very broad and covers many small riparian strips or pockets rather than a contiguous large area, the rating is an overall rating. Most pockets are isolated, small, and generally in recovery from disturbance years ago. Acquisition parcels are more significant with respect to connectivity, and are meeting BLM Land Health Standards.

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 302 OF FLPMA

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/MITIGATION MEASURES:

SETTING: SELECTED (FEDERAL) LANDS:

Ward Parcels: The Ward unit is bounded by the Roosevelt National Forest on the west, south, east and ½ of the north sides. Numerous private patented mining claims exist on all sides and within the project area. Boulder County open space near Duck Lake is found on the north side. The Town of Ward lies in the center of the project area. The Ward Wildlands BLM parcels acquired through a recent R&PP project by the Town of Ward, are west of the town and south of Brainard Lake Road.

The Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway bisects the area from northeast to southwest. Additional local roads within the project area include Left Hand Canyon Drive, Brainard Lake Road and Gold Lake Road.

The Ward area ranges in altitude from approximately 7600 feet to 9920 feet, encompassing both Montane and Subalpine life zones. The lower elevations consist primarily of ponderosa pine ecosystems on the warm south-facing slopes and Douglas fir ecosystems on the cooler north-facing slopes. Mountain meadows and exposed ridges are present along with mountain riparian ecosystems. Aspen and lodgepole pine are common.

The Subalpine life zone is marked by dense, moist forests of Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir that form more homogenous forests than those of the montane. Lodgepole pine, aspen and limber pine ecosystems are often present.

With the exception of the extreme northwest corner, the project area is part of the upper watershed for Left Hand Creek. Chipmunk Gulch, Peck Gulch and Spring Gulch are tributaries to Left Hand Creek. Meanwhile, the ridge line north and west of Duck Lake separates the Left Hand and St. Vrain Creek drainage basins.

Prominent natural features in the project area include Duck Lake, Grassytop Mountain Natural Landmark, and the meadow wetland in Section 6, T1N, R72W.

The lands included in this current exchange are located to the south and east of the Ward town limits as well as north of Brainard Lake Road.

More specific land descriptions follow:

Ward Section 6, T1N, R72W

The large parcel in the NW1/4 of this section is bisected by the Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway and some utility lines. The forest is predominately lodgepole pine but a grass/sedge wetland lies on a flat portion between County Road 103 and the Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway. Aspen and willows line the north and east edges of this wet meadow area. There are fences and corrals on or near the north edge of

the parcel.

The remaining scattered parcels in Section 6 are interspersed with roads, private developed and undeveloped parcels, and are primarily forested with lodgepole pine.

Ward Section 7, T1N, R72W

These parcels are generally on a south-facing ridge or slopes adjacent to it. Private property and some residences generally intersperse the northern parcels. On the more southern aspects, ponderosa pine forests dominate, while other aspects of the forest tend to become lodgepole pine and limber pine. Some of these lands include the wetlands associated with the drainage downstream from Ward. Some of the southern parcels slope steeply to Lefthand Canyon Drive. The southeastern-most parcel is very steep with rock outcrops and includes the Switzerland Trail railroad bed.

Ward Section 1, T1N, R73W

This land is north of the Ward Wildlands R&PP tracts and south of the County's Duck Lake property. Some of the inholdings are developed residential properties. Much of this land can be accessed from the Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway and adjacent Forest Service land to the west. The County can legally access more of the lands due to access for Duck Lake and the connections that property provides. This property is primarily lodgepole pine but includes pockets of Englemann spruce, blue spruce, Douglas fir, aspen and subalpine fir.

Ward Section 12, T1N, R73W

SW Parcels

This is property on a east-trending ridge with a relatively level top. The south-facing side is forested with lodgepole pine and limber pine. There are small openings that include aspens and huckleberry. There is a two track crossing the land and the eastern boundary is the Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway. The western line is the Roosevelt National Forest boundary.

W Central Parcels

This is land on a northeast-facing slope of lodgepole pine and aspen bounded on the east by the Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway. The portion east of the highway includes a small segment of Lefthand Creek and a southwest-facing slope.

Gold Hill Parcels: The Gold Hill unit is bounded by the Roosevelt National Forest on parts of the north, west and south sides. Approaching the northern limits of the Colorado Mineral Belt, patented hard rock mining claims can be found throughout the area. Founded in 1859 as Colorado's first mining district, the Gold Hill community is west of most of the unit area and at the junction of Sunshine Canyon Drive, Gold Run Road,

Licksillet, and Gold Hill Road.

The Gold Hill Unit ranges in altitude from approximately 6800 feet to 8480 feet, encompassing the Foothills and Montane life zones. The lower elevations of the area are characterized by juniper woodlands, ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and shrublands. The upper elevations are more densely forested with ponderosa pine and Douglas fir. Numerous mountain meadows are present, as are mountain riparian ecosystems and rock outcrops.

The southwest-northeast ridge line connecting Gold Hill, Bighorn Mountain and Butzel Hill separates the watershed drainage of Left Hand Creek (to the north) and Fourmile Canyon Creek and Fourmile Creek (to the south). Emerson Gulch, Gold Run, and Fourmile Creek join Boulder Creek 2 miles west of Boulder, while Fourmile Canyon Creek connects to Boulder Creek near Valmont, east of Boulder.

Prominent natural features in the area include Monument Hill, Logan Hill, Melvina Hill, Bighorn Mountain Natural Landmark, and Butzel Hill.

Seven parcels have been identified for disposal to Boulder county on the eastern, northern and western borders of the Gold Hill Unit. More specific land descriptions follow:

Parcel A (T. 1 N., R. 71 W., Sec. 5)

Southern Piece: This land is on a north-trending promontory with great views across, up, and down Lefthand Canyon. This is a rocky outcrop with steep side slopes to the east and west at an elevation of about 7,700 feet. The top of the site is rather exposed and as a consequence relatively dry and open with tufts of blue gramma grass, yucca, and small hedgehog cacti. The slopes consist of a woodland of ponderosa pine, rocky mountain juniper, and Douglas fir; some of the Douglas fir trees show signs of “bannering” from stiff winter winds. This remote piece does not show signs of recent human use. Boulder County ownership nearly surrounds the parcel.

Northwestern Piece: This small piece includes a very small segment of Lefthand Creek and the attendant riparian vegetation of cottonwoods, aspens, and willows. The remainder of this piece is the steep toe of a north-facing slope with dense Douglas fir and ponderosa pine at about 7000 feet. This site is adjacent to an outdoor riding arena and other developments along the creek. Boulder County ownership is adjacent on the south.

Northeast Piece: This part of the parcel consists of lands broken up by private, undeveloped mining claims. The western parts of this piece are on a very steep west and northwest facing rocky slope. Elevation ranges from 7,500 to 6,800 feet. There are extensive prospect pits and jeep trails that lead from the adjacent residential areas on the south to Lee Hill Drive on the northeast. The vegetation is predominantly ponderosa pine and Douglas fir with some very dense “dog-hair” Douglas fir stands that have had some

spruce budworm mortality.

Parcel B (T. 1 N., R. 71 W., Sec. 6)

This is a very steep and rocky slope between Sunshine Canyon Drive and Lefthand Creek, falling about 1000 feet in less than one-half a mile. There are two steep drainages that provide some texture to this north-facing slope of ponderosa pine and Douglas fir. While Sunshine Canyon Drive may touch the southern edge of the property and Lefthand Canyon Road touches the northern edge, due to its topography, the site is virtually inaccessible. It is interspersed by several undeveloped mining claims as well. There is extensive evidence of mining including old roads which traverse portions of the property. There are residences adjacent to the parcel along Lefthand Creek. One piece of the parcel is north of Lefthand Canyon Drive and is forested with ponderosa pine. Elevations range from 8,200 to 7,150 feet above sea level.

Parcel C (T. 1 N., R. 71 W., Sec. 8, 9)

This parcel has no public access. Using County Road 83 to access the private road for the Whispering Pines subdivision and then driving to the end of that road, it is possible to get near the north part of this parcel. Most of this land is a rocky and dry south-facing slope of ponderosa pine. A small leg of the parcel includes a more dense north-facing slope and a small ephemeral drainage. The northwestern portion is adjacent to an existing residence. Elevations range from 7,000 to 6,800 feet.

Parcel D (T. 1 N., R. 71 W., Sec. 15)

This, primarily north-facing, parcel can only be accessed through private land from Sunshine Canyon Drive. The parcel is very steep with dense Douglas fir and ponderosa pine stands throughout most of it. There are sections with openings and small areas of forest clearing (for fuels management it appears). There is a small, uninhabited shack assembled from old wood pallets. Elevations range from 6,800 to 6,550 feet.

Parcel E (T. 1 N., R. 71 W., Sec. 17)

This very small parcel has no public access. It is likely forested with dense ponderosa pine and Douglas fir.

Parcel F (T. 1 N., R. 71 W., Sec. 21)

This small parcel is along Fourmile Canyon Drive, with both the road and Fourmile Creek running through it. The parcel is a very steep section of the canyon with the road cutting through the northern portion. The south-facing slope is dominated by ponderosa pine and includes Oregon grape and blue gramma and other grasses in openings. The stream corridor is primarily Douglas fir, rocky mountain juniper, and cottonwoods. More mesic shrubs and plants are present as well including alder and birch and horsetail. The north-facing part of the property is steep with a dense Douglas fir forest. Aside from the road, there are other cultural features including a powerline and debris from car accidents including a junked car. There is an active social trail along the historic bed of the

Switzerland Trail railroad. Elevation is about 6,200 feet for the parcel.

Parcel G (T. 1 N., R. 72 W., Sec. 11)

This small parcel lies immediately east of the Trojan Ranch. A private residence lies immediately to the north and fence lines confine the east and south sides. The parcel seems to receive heavy social use, and includes a small rock amphitheater and trails that appear to be related to the programs of the Trojan Ranch. In general, the site is rocky with a mix of trees, including some large Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, and limber pine. Elevation is about 8,500 feet.

OFFERED (NON-FEDERAL) LANDS:

BLM ACQUISITION (NON-FEDERAL) PARCELS:

Gaffney Parcel: The parcel identified for acquisition by the BLM in this exchange is known as the Gaffney parcel. This parcel contains approximately 485 acres of land made up of a number of individual patented mining claims that are adjacent to or surrounded by lands administered by BLM's RGFO.

Located approximately one mile southeast of the town of Cripple Creek, the area is at the upper end of two creeks, Pony Gulch and Long Hungry Gulch. The parcels range in altitude from about 9300 feet to 8500 feet, with broad meadows and stands of aspens, ponderosa pines, fir and spruce. Several ranch roads cross the area. The primary use of this area is currently livestock grazing. Due to the intermingled public/private land ownership within the area, the private and public land are grazed together. Jack Gaffney of Cripple Creek holds the Pony Gulch grazing permit for the parcel. Currently, 78 cattle are authorized to graze on the public and private land within the allotment for the period of 5/1 to 6/30 annually.

Soils on the parcel are primarily Cathedral very gravelly, sandy loams or Rogert very gravelly, sandy loams. There are numerous rock outcrops inclusions within these soil types. These tend to be shallow, well drained soils with an effective rooting depth of 6 - 20 inches. Due to the shallow depth to bedrock, these soils are poorly suited for homesite development. Permeability of these soils is rapid and available water capacity is low. Runoff is rapid and the hazard of water erosion is high to very high. Ecological sites included with these soil types on the parcel include Pinyon/Juniper, Dry Shallow Loam, Shallow Pine and Shallow Loam sites. Common herbaceous species in the area include Arizona fescue, Mountain muhley, Blue gramma, Parry oatgrass, Western wheatgrass, Prairie junegrass and sun and elk sedges. Common shrub species in the area include Mountain mahogany, Gamble's oak, fringed sage, currant and bearberry. Recent inspections of the area indicate that plant distribution, plant vigor and species diversity appear appropriate for the sites. There is little evidence of excessive runoff rates or undue amounts of upland soil erosion. Land health assessments in the vicinity of Pony

Gulch and Long Hungary Gulch were completed in September of 2001. These assessments indicated that the public lands in these areas are currently meeting all applicable standards for public land health.

The parcel includes two riparian areas along Long Hungary Gulch and Pony Gulch. Recent inspections of these areas indicate that there is a diverse age-class distribution of riparian vegetation and that the stream bank vegetation is adequate to protect the banks and dissipate energy during high flows in these areas. The stream systems appear vertically stable and in balance with the water and sediment being supplied by the watershed (no excessive erosion or deposition). Both of the riparian areas within the parcel are considered in Proper Functioning Condition with an upward trend and are currently meeting riparian Standards for Public Land Health. The area contains excellent wildlife habitat for mule deer, elk, turkey and bear.

The BLM would be acquiring any and all water rights associated with the Gaffney parcels, including decreed water rights and water use permits in Colorado Water Division 2 for three wells and seven springs.

FOREST SERVICE ACQUISITION PARCELS:

Caribou Flats: One of the two primary parcels identified for acquisition by the Forest Service in this exchange is the Caribou Flats parcel. The Caribou Flats parcel consists of approximately 165 acres of land that is surrounded by existing National Forest System lands. Walsh Environmental Scientists and Engineers performed a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment of the property, and much of the following information comes from this 1999 study. The site is generally flat, sloping gently to the east. The southwest corner of the property slopes steeply down to the North Fork of Middle Boulder Creek, but most of the site lies in the upper drainages of Coon Track and North Beaver Creeks. Site elevation ranges from 10,100 to 10,300 feet above sea level. While there aren't any large open water bodies on the property, there are considerable wetlands on the north, northeast, and southeast parts of the site. The extensive willow/herbaceous wetlands on the northeast side of the property are designated as significant in the County's Comprehensive Plan. Due to the exposure and high elevation of the site, much of it remains in open meadows. Subalpine firs, Englemann spruce and limber pines dominate the forested areas of the site, County Jeep Road 128J traverses north-south through the property, linking Elora and the Caribou townsites. In 1999, a small cabin, outhouse, and shed were on the property, but the owner at the time planned to remove all of those but the cabin. According to the previous owner, while there are several prospecting pits, this site was not mined. The land has been grazed in the past and in 1904 the property was burned in a forest fire. There were no environmental hazards or concerns discovered on the property at the time of the study.

Highway Parcel: The second primary parcel identified for acquisition by the Forest

Service in this exchange is the Highway parcel, consisting of approximately 87 acres of land that is mostly surrounded by existing National Forest System land. In 1999, an environmental site assessment was completed on the parcel. This study indicated that the property did not have any environmental hazards. The study also generally described the property: a steep north-facing slope of rock outcrops and dense pines. There are a significant number of dead standing trees as well. Middle St. Vrain Creek lies at the base of the slope on the north edge of the site. Adjacent properties to the north include cabin residences. Elevations range from 8,600 to 8,350 feet above sea level. There are no structures on the property which is bordered by National Forest System lands on the east and south. There appears to be little human use or direct impact on the property, probably due to its steep slopes.

Equalization Parcels: Five additional parcels have been identified for potential acquisition to benefit the Forest Service, if needed, to equalize values in the exchange. Acquisition of these parcels meet the intent of the Revised LRMP by consolidating landownership patterns and reducing the need to survey and post National Forest System lading. The following property descriptions primarily come from Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessments conducted by two different companies, Alist Engineering Group in September, 2000 (for Parcels 1 and 2) and by Professional Service Industries, Inc., February, 2001 (for Parcels 3, 4 and 5).

Parcel 1 (Tionesta Lode): This parcel is approximately 5 acres and primarily surrounded by existing National Forest System land. The parcel is located approximately one mile west of the town of Ward, Colorado and accessed from Colorado Highway 72. The parcel is heavily forested and slopes moderately to steeply down to the north-northeast. Site elevation ranges from 10,120 feet above sea level on the western portion to around 9,880 feet on the east portion. While there is evidence of exploration pits, this site was not mined. There were no environmental hazards or concerns discovered on the property at the time of the study. The benefits of acquiring this parcel are to help to protect the view shed from Brainard Lake Road (by not being developed), and eliminating the need to provide access (new road construction) if held in private ownership.

Parcel 2 (Colene Lode): This parcel is approximately 4.90 acres and primarily surrounded by existing National Forest System land. As with Parcel 1, this site is located approximately one mile west of the town of Ward and accessed from Colorado Highway 72. This parcel is heavily forested and slopes moderately to steeply down to the southeast. Site elevations range from 9,760 feet on the south-central portion to 10,040 feet on the west portion. A shallow drainage bisects the parcel from north to south near the center of the site. While there is evidence of exploration pits and small piles of waste rock, this site was not mined. There were no environmental hazards or concerns discovered on the property at the time of the study. The benefits of acquiring this parcel are similar to those of Parcel 1.

Parcel 3 (consists of several patented mining claims listed on page 3): These parcels are approximately 54.77 acres and located between Parcels 1 and 2. This site is surrounded by National Forest System land and is located one to two miles west of the Town of Ward. Access is generally from the Sourdough trail of the Brainard Lake Road. These parcels range in elevation from 10,680 at the western parcels and from 9,600 to 10,150 feet at the eastern parcels. The parcels are heavily forested and slope moderately down to the southeast. There were no environmental hazards or concerns discovered on the property at the time of the study. The benefit of acquiring these parcels will be the addition of riparian habitat to the surrounding National Forest System land.

Parcel 4 (consists of several patented mining claims listed on page 3): These parcels consist of four mining claims located in an undeveloped, mountainous area surrounded by National Forest System land. Three of the claims are adjacent to each other, covering 15.05 acres and the fourth claim is approximately 100 feet south of the other three, covering 2.706 acres for a total of 17.75 acres. The parcels are located south of Bald Mountain and range from 10,000 to 10,600 feet above mean sea level. The parcels slope steeply downward to the southwest. The three northern claims are located on a hillside, partly open and partly forested. The south claim (Trail Millsite) is located on a mostly very steep, rocky, southwest-facing slope. An old mine tunnel (estimated at 750 feet) is located on the Trail Millsite, however, it is collapsed and inaccessible and therefore not considered to be a safety hazard. There were no environmental hazards or concerns discovered on the property at the time of the study. One of the benefits of acquiring this parcel is acquisition of a non-system trail (though very popular route) that accesses Bald Mountain. This parcel is also in the vicinity of the Caribou Flat parcel acquisition.

Parcel 5 (Dewey #2 Lode): This parcel is approximately 5.133 acres and entirely surrounded by National Forest System land. The parcel is located west of Caribou Hill at the top of a rocky, open ridge, sloping down to a stand of trees at the west end. The parcel sits at an elevation of 10,360 to 10,300 and slopes downward to the north and south from the ridge top. Four-wheel drive roads lead up to and pass by the property and are currently used for outdoor recreation purposes. There is an old mine shaft approximately 10 feet deep but it is collapsed and not considered an environmental hazard. Benefits of acquiring this parcel are to eliminate any potential access needs (new road construction) if held in private ownership and its proximity to the north of the Caribou Flat parcel acquisition.

The offered lands located in Boulder County, to be acquired for the benefit of the Forest Service, are currently under county ownership. These lands were purchased and are being managed as Boulder County Open Space. The Caribou Flats parcel, the Highway parcel and the potential equalization parcels are being managed for their ecological, historical, recreational, and scenic values. Because no management plan has been drafted for the Highway parcel and because of its difficult access, this county open space property is not open to public use at this time. Because a public county jeep road traverses through the Caribou Flats parcel, there is public access and use

of this parcel, however, it too has no management plan. Boulder County Open Space rules and regulations currently cover these properties and they are regularly patrolled by county law enforcement specialists or Boulder County Parks and Open Space Sheriffs. In both alternatives, the management of the parcels will be consistent with the primary goals of both the Boulder County Open Space Department and the Revised 1997 LRMP for the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests. However, there are some differences between the two organizations' management of lands they own. First the County can keep a property closed to public access for various reasons including sensitive resources, and commonly properties are kept closed until a management plan for their public recreational use is approved. Other important distinctions include policies on hunting, camping, off-trail use, motorized access, pets, and night-time use. The County does not allow hunting, camping, or night-time use on any of its owned properties. The County allows neither motorized use on any trails nor off-trail motorized use. Most county trails are multiple use--open to mountain bicyclists, equestrians, and pedestrians--but some are closed to mountain bikes. Off-trail use is discouraged through sign age and brochures and on some properties (or portions of properties) off-trail use is prohibited. Pets must be leashed at all times on Boulder County Open Space. Future county management would likely include a continuation of the current situation. Once acquired by the Forest Service, these lands will be managed according to the Forest Plan Geographic Areas the parcels fall within. Typically, this would allow general Forest camping, hunting, night-time use, off-trail pedestrian use and pets off-leash. The National Forest System lands are open to the public and use unless specified for closure or restriction in a Forest Supervisor's order. Motorized use will be restricted to existing roads and trails. Any subsequent action affecting these lands, once under Forest Service management, would be analyzed in an environmental analysis before these actions take place.

In the case of the Caribou Flats parcel, since it is surrounded by Forest Service land any differences in County management neither do nor would not result in any variance of impacts to the affected environment. Because of the Highway parcel's extreme terrain and difficult access it is not anticipated that transfer to the Forest Service will increase public use or change management of the lands and will contribute to protecting scenic values and wildlife. It is assumed that there are no impacts to the elements being analyzed in this document under either alternative, in respect to those offered lands now under County ownership that will be acquired by the Forest Service, unless specifically addressed.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY:

Proposed Action: The majority of the selected BLM lands will remain as publicly-owned open space and few, if any, new trailhead are being contemplated; also, the small parcels sold as private property will not create new building lots, thus the proposed action will have no negative implications for air quality. No mitigation is needed. Air quality will not be impacted negatively in the parcel to be acquired by BLM (Gaffney).

No Action Alternative: With BLM retention of the selected lands, and subsequent disposal to private property, the development of homesites on the parcels would necessitate the creation and/or extension of dirt access roads and driveways. These would include sites with very steep and difficult terrain that would be difficult to successfully revegetate. The additional areas of dirt roads and drives and, importantly, the added vehicle trips would cause greater air impacts from dust and exhaust than the proposed action. These impacts would also apply to development of the offered Gaffney property should it be developed for homesites.

Name of specialist: M. Gaylord, 06-25-01

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Proposed Action: Within the Area of Potential Effect (“APE”), as defined by a programmatic agreement among the BLM, the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (“SHPO”), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (“ACHP”), and Boulder County, BLM has recorded and evaluated a total of 20 historic sites and 58 historic isolated finds. Six of the sites are individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (“NRHP”), and one is an NRHP-eligible historic district. Several other historic districts are present in the APE, and it is likely that more NRHP-eligible sites are also present.

In the programmatic agreement referenced in the previous paragraph, the parties have agreed that, since Boulder County is a compliant Certified Local Government (as part of the National Park Service program), and maintains an active historic preservation program, the BLM will conduct a limited reconnaissance survey (rather than an intensive inventory) of the APE lands. BLM will also supply Boulder County with documentation regarding previous inventories, sites recorded, and management recommendations. Once lands are patented to Boulder County, it will conduct intensive inventories, record and evaluate any sites found, and landmark appropriate historic properties. Boulder County will also consider BLM’s management recommendations when determining its own management strategies for the historic properties.

The Forest Service acquisitions could both negatively and positively impact cultural resources. Sites on lands currently managed by Boulder County are subject to greater access restrictions than they would be under Forest Service management. However, because Colorado’s historic preservation laws are weak and limited, and the federal preservation laws that would govern Forest Service management are much stronger, cultural resources might be better protected legally.

No Action Alternative: Although the BLM would conduct Section 106 activities if it retains the relevant parcels, historic properties might be impacted and could require mitigation. Furthermore, management of the historic properties that BLM would retain would continue to be difficult, due to distance and potential access problems.

Name of specialist: Monica Weimer, September 5, 2001

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

Proposed Action: Although there may be select individuals who qualify, there are no minority or low-income populations in or near the acquisition and disposal parcels of the exchange area. As such, the proposal will not have a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effect on minority or low-income populations.

No Action Alternative: Same as the Proposed Action.

Name of specialist: Pete Zwaneveld, BLM 06/25/01

FLOODPLAINS, WETLANDS and RIPARIAN ZONES (includes all information related to Standard 2):

Proposed Action: The project lands in Boulder County are mostly upland, however, there are a number of intermittent draws and segments of Left Hand Creek, Fourmile Creek, and Gold Run traversing the areas. For the most part, they are typical mountain riparian ecosystems, but they contain only minor wetland values along the streams because there is no/little floodplain development. Most of the watercourses in the watersheds of this project are ephemeral streams, drainages, and washes which flow only during events that produce surface runoff. In larger drainages that may run for longer periods of time or that may have some groundwater associated with them, riparian vegetation can be present.

The watersheds of the project area have been affected by human development over the last 150 years. During the time of mineral development in the area, there were many mining scars on the landscape and many forest areas were cut to supply wood to mining activities. In the years since, vegetation recolonized most cut areas, but where tailings piles and mining overburden left subsoil on the surface, natural reclamation lags. Wetlands were identified from the National Inventory of Wetlands completed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1975 and a county-wide wetlands survey completed in 1993 for Boulder County by Wright Water Engineers. In the Ward exchange area, the wetlands identified on BLM lands include part of a substantial willow and emergent wetland on the west side of Duck Lake and a narrow riparian corridor wetland of willows and shrubs following the Left Hand Canyon Drive south out of Ward. The Duck Lake wetland is listed (by USFWS) as Palustrine, Open Water, Semipermanent (POWF) and Palustrine, Scrub/Shrub//Emergent, Seasonal (P SS/EM C). Somewhat rare in the county for its size, the willow carr (*salix spp.*) is quite dense and towers to 20 feet tall away from the waters edge. The Left Hand Canyon Road wetlands are also listed as P SS/EM C and consist of isolated patches of willows, aspen, shrubs and wetland grasses.

One riparian wetland area likely on BLM lands was identified in the Gold Hill area along Gold Run Road, downstream of Summerville. The narrow streamside corridor of approximately 50 feet wide by 300 feet long has a permanent surface water presence and contains narrowleaf

cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*), willow (*Salix spp.*), shrubs, and grasses. In general, these areas have stabilized but are often bare soil still. However, these areas do not comprise a large percentage of the overall project area and any sedimentation and mining runoff from them has usually only localized effects that do not affect the watershed as a whole. More recent residential development, particularly the proliferation of roads and driveways on adjacent private lands has altered surface runoff patterns, often concentrating overland sheet flows through borrow ditches and culverts. This has also exposed runoff to bare surfaces and therefore has increased sedimentation during runoff events. In some parts of the larger project area off-road vehicle use has severely damaged wetlands and downstream waters.

The proposed action should not worsen runoff and sedimentation rates since it is unlikely that any new activities that result in erosion or bare soil will occur. In fact, future management will be more likely to make changes to decrease erosion and sedimentation by improving the drainage and erosion control of existing roads and trails, not adding any new ones without using best management plans to limit erosion and sedimentation, and enforcing restrictions on off-road vehicle use. The proposed action does not alter the condition of the riparian or wetland resources since the future use will be for the lands to remain as public open space. Additionally, the extent of the BLM parcels with riparian and wetland resources on them is small in size and number and qualitatively insignificant relative to the total acreage of the project.

The Gaffney parcel as described has significant portions of two tributary perennial streams to the Four Mile Creek watershed north of Canon City (Pony and Long Hungry Gulches). In spite of heavy mining activity in the Cripple Creek Region, these streams are in very good condition and were rated as functional during BLM assessment work; other streams nearby are not. These two sub-watersheds were heavily worked in the 1950's-60's with respect to stock ponds/erosion control structures and there are many standing water wetlands in addition to the riparian environments. Acquisition of these parcels will go a long way in protecting the Four Mile watershed from the negative effects of development in steep watersheds with erosive soils. There is high public benefit to the acquisition of these parcels.

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative has the potential to create new homesites around the federal lands and the Gaffney parcel, and would likely lead to the further expansion of the road network and thereby compound negative effects to surface water such as increased sedimentation and higher and faster runoff rates. These can affect surface water quality and the stability of riparian vegetation and the floodplain. Current County land use regulations would help Boulder County prevent development of the BLM lands in a manner that would significantly damage these water and land resources. However, minor impacts due to direct or indirect development impacts could be possible. Under this alternative no new floodplain resources would be gained in public ownership and development on the Gaffney parcel is probable.

Name of specialist: Dave Gilbert 12/12/01

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES:

Proposed Action: Both the Ward and Gold Hill project areas have been monitored for noxious weeds by the Weed Management District of Boulder County. In the Ward area, there are some spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*) occurrences and isolated sites of leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) and Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). Gold Hill has had populations of leafy spurge found west and south of town. A new escaped cultivar and potential threat to native ecosystems is Bighead knapweed (*Centaurea macrocephala*), which has been found in the Wallstreet area and Left Hand Canyon.

Boulder County has an active noxious weed program with an Integrated Pest Management approach to curtailing outbreaks before they become significant landscape problems. The proposed action will not have any effect on the spread of noxious weeds. Overall, more frequent monitoring and aggressive management of noxious weeds will be gained by the proposed action.

The Gaffney property consists of ecological sites that are prone to infestation by yellow toadflax and Canada thistle. No weeds are known to exist on the Gaffney property. The proposed action would not affect weeds in any way, but if weeds already exist on the property, BLM would incur the costs of controlling those weeds.

No Action Alternative: Retention by the selected BLM lands would likely mean that lands would not be actively managed for weeds and current infestations would continue to spread. Private development of these lands following federal sale or exchange could result in increased spread of weeds as areas are disturbed for housing sites and driveways. However, with privatization, increased management of the parcels could be expected and this could mean greater weed management. There would be no effect on to weeds on the Gaffney property in the no action alternative.

Name of specialist :Thomas Grette 8/6/01

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS:

Proposed Action: BLM has consulted a total of 16 tribes (see Attachment A), and the Comanche, Rosebud Sioux, Northern Arapaho, Northern Ute, Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribes indicated further interest. The six interested tribes were asked for initial input to the programmatic agreement (see Cultural Resources, above), and for a review of the latest draft. No tribe indicated concern about any specific geographic location, and BLM addressed the methodological issues that were identified. As stipulated in the agreement, BLM will conduct a reconnaissance inventory of lands in the APE that have a high probability for prehistoric sites and traditional cultural properties, and will conduct further consultation if any sites of possible interest to the tribes are found.

Native American religious concerns on the Forest Service acquisition parcels could be impacted both negatively and positively. Boulder County access restrictions are much more stringent than

Forest Service ones, thus providing protection to any relevant sites or locations located on the subject parcels. However, federal laws concerning coordination with tribes and the management of sites of interest to them are much stronger than Colorado state laws. Therefore, under federal (Forest Service) management, Native American interests would be better protected from a legal standpoint.

No Action Alternative: If it were to retain the subject lands, BLM would continue to conduct Native American consultation for specific undertakings as necessary and appropriate. However, as with cultural resources, management of the retained lands would continue to be difficult, due to distance and potential access problems.

Name of specialist: Monica Weimer, September 5, 2001

PRIME AND UNIQUE FARMLANDS:

Proposed Action: There are no Prime or Unique Farmlands involved in the proposed action or the alternative.

No Action Alternative: N/A

Name of specialist: Thomas Grette 7/30/01

SOILS (includes all information related to Standard 1):

Proposed Action: No specific site survey of the soils in the Ward or Gold Hill project areas was completed to determine overall landscape conditions for meeting health of the land standards. In general, the soils occur both in cold climatic zones on steep mountainous topography and in the milder climatic zones of the foothills. The soils range from shallow to very deep. They can contain considerable rock fragments, and are formed primarily from igneous and metamorphic rocks. The soils support a variety of subalpine, montane and foothill forested and meadow vegetation.

The soils map units identified for the Ward area in the USFS Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (1997) for the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests indicate 1. Vanet-Ratake family soils, 2. Bullwark-Catamount family soils, 3. Rogert family soils, 4. Leighcan family soils, and 5. Granile-Catamount soils are found.

The subalpine soils on the accompanying map, included in Attachment C, are referenced to families 4. & 5. They are characterized by shallow dry, rocky soils with a short growing season and slow growth rates for vegetation. Permeability is moderately rapid and runoff is medium. The montane soils are referenced to families 2. & 3. These include montane forest land and non-timbered benches where soils can be shallow and dry. The montane dry soils (family #1) are also shallow and dry with a rubbly surface, supporting scattered ponderosa pine on lower south-facing

slopes.

The soils map units for the Gold Hill area are also illustrated on the accompanying map, included in Attachment C. They include the Peyton-Juget unit (grassy areas), Juget-Rock unit (benches and south-facing slope woodland areas), and Ferncliff-Rock unit (north-facing slope forested areas).

The soils of these project areas have been impacted by various activities including mining, timber harvesting, fire suppression, fuels management, grazing, recreation, transportation, urbanization and all indirect actions, including inadequate reclamation, associated with each of these.

Maintaining the integrity of soil resources is a key to providing for basic, healthy ecosystem processes and functions. The proposed action is to maintain the BLM parcels as open space. Livestock grazing is not contemplated, but fuels management or prescribed fire may occur in select areas close to the historic communities. In areas where a trail system is contemplated, the network of old two-tracks will be utilized as much as possible rather than blazing new trails.

BLM currently has existing and occasional new applications related primarily to road construction, and other occasional surface disturbances such as mining operations. Existing ROW's and new applications for all activities on public lands (BLM) carry requirements related to protection of soils and control of sedimentation and erosion. BLM also has responsibility related to certain catastrophic events such as fire (related to control of sedimentation). Activities permitted or instigated by Boulder County in management of open space will require similar management. Those lands which are sold into private ownership will have soils disturbances managed by the private landowner in compliance with conservation easements held by Boulder County.

Decisions related to soils management on those offered (private) lands in Boulder County under Forest Service management would be in accordance with the Forest Management plans, and Forest Service regulations. Lands in Teller County proposed as offered lands have no pre-existing major soils concerns which BLM is aware of. Management on these lands would be in accordance with Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan, and appropriate regulations related to activities allowed under the plan.

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would likely continue the BLM's current practice of low oversight and no or little management initiatives for the parcels. While lands remain as public lands under BLM management, surface disturbances and vegetation removal will likely only occur as a result of ROW applications or for local government permits, or as a result of a catastrophic events such as fire. Eventual disposal of the public lands to private individual ownership would result in soils management by the private land owner. In some cases, this may result in additional building sites, and private access routes which may or may not be built to specifications that would result in best sediment and erosion protection. If such private ownership resulted in additional building sites and access roads totaling more disturbance

than planned hiking trails, facilities, and roads to be constructed by the County for the open space areas, and the disturbances which could occur on the lands Boulder County plans to sale into private ownership, then an overall slight increase in sedimentation could be expected.

No Action Alternative: In the no action alternative, the selected lands for the Forest Service and BLM may or may not be acquired at a future date. It is possible that these lands both in Boulder County (to be acquired by the Forest Service) and those other specified lands to be acquired by BLM could be part of other future exchanges not related to the public lands in Boulder. It is likely, however, that future Forest Service and BLM ownership of these lands would be, at the least, substantially delayed and possibly always remain in private ownership.

Name of specialist: Ernie Lee Gillingham; reviewed 08/06/01

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (includes all information related to Standard 4):

Proposed Action: The Colorado Natural Heritage Inventory Program has documented historic Boreal Toad (*Bufo boreas boreas*) occurrences in the Left Hand Creek drainage, northeast of Grassytop Mountain in the Ward area of Boulder County. Listed as an endangered species in Colorado and "warranted but precluded" at the federal level, the Boreal Toad is Colorado's only alpine species of toad. This noted location is close to, but not on BLM project lands. There are no other BLM records of T & E species or their habitat for the areas in this proposal. Furthermore, the proposal is designed to protect wildlife habitat in perpetuity which will benefit T & E species should they become documented at some point in the future. Acquisition of the Gaffney parcel will not affect T&E species management for these areas, as BLM has no records of T&E species for this parcel.

No Action Alternative: Retention of the lands by the BLM would not result in any changes that would affect T & E species in the area. Privatization and development would not likely have significant negative affects on T & E species since the Boreal toad is the only sensitive species in the area, its presence hasn't been confirmed recently, and it occurs on private land. Development of the parcels would likely have some impacts on vegetation--clearing and removal--that could have some small losses on wildlife habitat. Since there is so little wetland and riparian vegetation on these parcels, affects on the Boreal toad would likely not occur anyway.

Name of specialist: Erik Brekke, 8/8/01

VEGETATION (includes vegetation information related to Standard 3):

Proposed Action: Dominant vegetation cover types have been mapped for both of the federal property groups in Boulder County using Landsat satellite imagery. Only the major conifer types are estimated since they account for 83% of the forested cover. The primary agent of change is forest growth, followed by insect and disease infestations, next to fire, and last by thinning/fuels

reduction programs.

The arrangement and distribution of vegetation varies within and between forest types. High elevation spruce-fir forests in the Ward area comprise the most uniform and connected pattern except where late 1800s and early 1900s fires were set purposefully by miners to clear the forests. Spruce-fir ecosystems are extremely important today as snow collection areas. Medium elevation lodgepole pine forests vary from highly uniform to patchy dependent on any recent fires or forest management activity. Low elevation ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests, particularly in the Gold Hill area, are mostly patchy and broken due to human development and use of the land, insect epidemics, and fire and fuels management programs.

In general, the dominant vegetation coverage for the project areas combined includes 56% Ponderosa Pine/Douglas Fir cover; 21% Engelmann Spruce/Subalpine Fir/Lodgepole Pine cover; 10% Riparian/Aspen; 7% Open Grassland; and 6% Shrub/Woodlands.

Patterns associated with vegetation composition are expected to change little with any alternative in this proposal. Potential vegetation treatments could, however, create different structural patterns. For example, with the significant increase of new, large residences on mining claims in the Gold Hill area, there has been a renewed effort to clear defensible space around individual homes as well as create fuels management buffer zones around the historic Gold Hill town site. The town of Ward has similar concerns with wildfire which will need to be addressed in a management plan for the project lands.

No Action Alternative: Development would result in vegetation removal for driveway and house site construction. Also, mountain homeowners are often performing wildfire mitigation and fuels reduction projects on their property often resulting in the thinning of forested stands of vegetation.

Name of specialist: Thomas Grette 7/30/01

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID:

Proposed Action: The proposed action will not result in the use, generation, storage or disposal of regulated or hazardous wastes. Given that both the Ward and Gold Hill areas involved in the land exchange have been subject to historical mining and residential use has been/remains interspersed with the BLM parcels, it is possible that adjacent lands have had hazardous or regulated materials used, stored or disposed of on them.

Conveyance of these parcels to local government may include greater oversight of illegal dumping activity which can be a problem in isolated areas of the county. Phase One, Environmental Assessments are generally completed by the County prior to purchase of open space lands.

Phase one Environmental Site Assessments have also been completed on the Gaffney acquisition

parcel. The parcel is suitable for acquisition with no outstanding hazardous materials issues.

The parcels identified for Forest Service acquisition have been reviewed by Forest Service staff and hazardous materials reports have been prepared verifying there are no concerns.

No Action Alternative: Privatization of these parcels will not likely change the disposition of past mining waste or trash nor would it change the potential for future dumping or waste problems.

Name of specialist: M. Gaylord, 06-25-01

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE OR GROUND (includes all information related to Standard 5):

Proposed Action: Implementation of the proposed action will have no negative effects on water quality in the area. Continued county acquisition of undeveloped private mining claims between BLM parcels could eliminate additional septic leach fields. Over the long term, the water quality of local streams could show improvement as a result of more intensive management by a local government entity.

Water quality in the proposed acquisition parcel, Gaffney parcel, is currently good. Implementation of the proposed action will not result in negative impacts to either parcel.

No Action Alternative: Development has the potential to negatively affect both surface and ground water. Surface water degradation often results from house and driveway construction and drainage improvements. Typical mountain driveways intercept and concentrate runoff which as it flows along roads acquires sediment. Large fill and cut slopes also accompany many mountain house and road sites. With proper revegetation, sedimentation from these sources can be minimized. However, in the short-term following construction and prior to revegetation establishment, these bare surfaces often shed sediment in precipitation events. Finally, development will necessitate additional septic leach fields which can have a negative affect on both ground and surface water if not properly maintained or installed. While none of these effects should be significant, their overall impact on the area would likely be to slightly degrade the water quality of the area.

Name of specialist: M. Gaylord, 06-25-01

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

Proposed Action: The project area, both selected and offered lands, do not contain any of these special designations and, therefore, there will be no impacts.

No Action Alternative: Same as the Proposed Action.

Name of specialist: Pete Zwaneveld, 08/20/01

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes wildlife information related to Standard 3):

Proposed Action: The lands in the Ward and Gold Hill project areas are mostly upland, however there are two perennial and numerous intermittent drainages which support limited aquatic wildlife species. The 1995 Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan assessed the watershed condition for Left Hand Creek and Fourmile Creek, the two significant perennial streams within the project areas. The Left Hand Creek watershed (the Ward area and north Gold Hill project area) is rated in Condition Class II (at risk). The watershed is functional, but the condition is only fair. The trends vary by specific area but are downward, at risk of degradation, or not yet fully recovered from past damage due to mining. Recovery is feasible naturally with added protection over time or capital investments. Overall, aquatic life in the watershed is measurably impaired because of metals pollution. However, brook, brown, rainbow trout and longnose dace are probably present in perennial streams, even though streams are degraded by past mining, residential development, and roads. In some isolated areas, tiger salamanders, northern leopard frogs, and western chorus frogs are likely present. It is unlikely that Boreal toads are present on any of the parcels. BLM retention could lead to added residential impacts. County acquisition should not worsen the current situation.

Fourmile Creek (the Gold Hill area) is designated as a Class III watershed (non-functional). The watershed is in poor condition and dysfunctional for aquatic species. Recovery would require substantial capital investments and landscape level changes in land management. Since the discovery of gold at Gold Run in 1859, this watershed still shows the effects of the associated placer and lode mining activities that occurred over the past century as well as the urbanization of the mountains over the most recent 30 years.

Primary stream characteristics which can be used to describe the health of the aquatic ecosystems in these mountain streams include the amount of woody debris within the stream channel, pool and riffle frequency, water quality and quantity. Variability of each of these characteristics is quite high under natural conditions, even without human intervention.

For the most part, the BLM parcels subject to this proposal are adjacent to and not within the actual stream corridors for Left Hand and Fourmile Creeks. Therefore, the proposed action will have more indirect benefits by preserving the habitat quality of watershed lands than direct benefits to aquatic habitat and wildlife. For those few public parcels through which the creeks flow, the aquatic habitat and wildlife will benefit from the long term protection offered by this action.

The Gaffney parcel as described has significant portions of two tributary perennial streams to the Four Mile Creek watershed north of Canon City (Pony and Long Hungry Gulches). In spite of heavy mining activity in the Cripple Creek Region, these streams are in very good condition and

were rated as functional during BLM assessment work; other streams nearby are not. These streams are not known to hold fisheries, but are important to a host of other aquatic wildlife. In addition to the streams, these two sub-watersheds were heavily worked in the 1950's-60's with respect to stock ponds/erosion control structures and there are many standing water wetlands. These ponds now in-habitat a variety of aquatic wildlife. Acquisition of these parcels will go a long way in protecting the Four Mile watershed from the negative affects of development in steep watersheds with erosive soils. There is high public benefit to the acquisition of these parcels.

No Action Alternative: Due to the paucity of aquatic environments on these parcels, it is unlikely that development would have any significant direct impacts. However, as drainage basins are increasingly roaded and developed, water quality impacts could increase and consequently affect aquatic wildlife.

Name of specialist: Dave Gilbert 12/12/01

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes wildlife information related to Standard 3):

Proposed Action: The numerous tracts of public lands in this proposal are generally small, isolated, scattered and surrounded by private lands, most of which are mining claims. Management of these parcels by BLM has been almost nonexistent.

The variety of vegetation type and structure, topography, elevation and climate provides habitats for many species of animals. Vertebrates which include birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish represent the majority of the known wildlife species within the project areas, although the Natural Heritage Inventory Program also maintains lists of invertebrate species of concern.

Almost 700 species of vertebrates are known or likely to occur within Colorado, and about 350 species are estimated to reside or spend time during at least part of their life cycles in the Roosevelt National Forest surrounding/adjacent to the project areas. No site-specific surveys have been completed for the affected parcels.

Beginning in 1982, the Indian Peaks Four Season Bird Counts originated in order to inventory the avifauna of western Boulder County. They have provided information about species presence, relative abundance, and trends occurring in the mountain landscape. A total of 200 bird species have been documented in the vicinity of the project areas, which is about ½ of all known to occur in Colorado. There is an average of 37 species found in winter; 82 during spring migration; 98 breeding species; and 81 during fall migration. The winter species counts are cyclic based on seed/cone crop, the spring and fall counts are mirrors of migration influenced by weather patterns, and the breeding season nesting successes appear to be increasing with the overall higher temperature and lower precipitation weather patterns.

There are avian species of special concern which are known to occur in the project areas. These species are rare, appear to be declining and/or are restricted in distribution to a few locations or

habitats. They include:

northern goshawk	loggerhead shrike
Swainson's hawk	pygmy nuthatch
golden eagle	Golden-crowned kinglet
prairie falcon	veery
flammulated owl	cedar waxwing
long-eared owl	American redstart
boreal owl	MacGillivray's warbler
black swift	western tanager
three-toed woodpecker	fox sparrow
olive-sided flycatcher	brown-capped rosy finch
willow flycatcher	white-winged crossbill

Wildlife species utilize different vegetation and structural stages for feeding, reproduction and cover throughout the year. Of the 129 species of mammals which occur in Colorado, 86 are known or likely to be found within or adjacent to the project areas. Mammals regularly present include the montane shrew, Townsend's big-eared bat, Nuttall's cottontail, least chipmunk, golden-mantled ground squirrel, pine squirrel, deer mouse, bushy-tailed woodrat, southern red-backed vole, coyote, raccoon, pine marten, ermine, mountain lion, bobcat, and mule deer.

Amphibians selected as management indicator species for the adjoining National Forest include the boreal toad, northern leopard frog, and wood frog.

The Roosevelt National Forest has developed a model for estimating the amount and location of undisturbed, or effective wildlife habitat which is buffered from most human disturbance such as regularly used roads and trails. Depending on the terrain and vegetation conditions, wildlife can be affected by human activity anywhere from 100 to 500 meters away.

Effective habitat is estimated to exist on about 67% of the National Forest. However, in the project areas, habitat effectiveness ranges from only 48% in the Brainard Lake geographic area, to 57% in the James Creek area, to 41% in the Sugarloaf area (vs. the range of 39-91% for the entire forest). The patchwork of land ownerships in the project areas coupled with residential development and high road densities generally limits the ability of wildlife to utilize what natural habitat may exist.

The proposed action is designed to preserve and protect wildlife habitat from future development. In both the Ward and Gold Hill project areas, the goal of the County is to add to the existing public lands with additional private lands to create larger tracts of open space and effective habitat. More intensive management of the habitat resources coupled with minimal intrusion for recreational trails should have long term benefits for wildlife.

Acquisition of the Gaffney parcel will serve to improve wildlife management for the future.

Consolidation of public lands in this area will improve our ability to design and implement necessary habitat projects.

No Action Alternative: Development would lead to continued habitat degradation and lessened habitat effectiveness as more houses and roads would fragment these areas.

Name of specialist: Erik Brekke, 8/08/01

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

FOREST MANAGEMENT:

Proposed Action: The BLM lands in the Ward area were inventoried for their forest products in September 1981. There were 249 acres of lodgepole pine classified as operable and productive with a total merchantable (clearcut) volume of 1,606 MBF; 43 acres of Engelmann spruce with a merchantable volume (assuming a clearcut harvest) of 462 MBF; 27 acres of ponderosa pine with a merchantable volume (again assuming a clearcut harvest) of 92 MBF volume; and 12 acres of aspen with no volume noted. Additionally, 253 acres were classified as non productive for forest products due to steep slopes. Similar volumes and species would be expected throughout the Ward area parcels.

About 12% of the major forested types on the adjacent Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest exist as old growth. Two-thirds of the old growth acreage is spruce and fir, 1/3 is lodgepole pine and less than 1% is Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine. The patterns on the project areas are very similar with most of the old growth and "developing" old growth occurring in the high-elevation spruce and fir (Ward area), less occurs in mid-elevation lodgepole pine, and least occurs in low-elevation Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine (Gold Hill area). Remembering that both communities were created as mining camps where almost all available timber was used for fuelwood, mine props or structural lumber the adjacent BLM lands were in all probability stripped of any merchantable timber during the 19th century.

There are no contracts for forest product sales in the project areas. This is unlikely to change with the proposed action since there are minimal marketable products and the goal with the project is habitat preservation.

Boulder County has developed GIS mapping which identifies wildfire hazards in the mountainous region. Fuel type mapping indicates which areas are at most risk should a wildfire get started. The Gold Hill community has been most proactive in using the mapping to identify and plan fuel break areas around the town having worked with the BLM to complete the Gold Hill Area Wildfire Hazard Reduction Plan (EA CO-050-91-NE-07) on June 14, 1991 . Ward is working in that direction also to provide some level of increased protection for the residents of the community. It is estimated the Ward area unit contains 65% closed canopy mixed stands with moderate amounts of down material; 20% closed canopy conifer with sparse ground litter;

10% open conifer or aspen with grass understory; 4% grassland; and 1% dense conifer with heavy amounts of downed material.

The Gold Hill unit contains an estimated 75% closed canopy mixed stand with moderate amounts of downed material; 23% open conifer or aspen with grass understory; 1% closed canopy conifer with sparse ground litter; and 1% dense conifer with heavy amounts of downed material. Maps depicting wildfire fuel types can be found in the appendix.

No Action Alternative: Forest thinning as part of wildfire mitigation for Gold Hill and insect and disease control would be expected. However, it is unlikely that other forest management other than minor firewood cutting would occur.

The proposed acquisition of the Gaffney Properties will increase the acreage of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir in the RGFO that is accentually all restricted from harvest due to steepness of the slope (where mechanical harvesting is not safe).

The proposed acquisition of the parcels inside the National Forest Boundary will not affect Forest Management:

Name of specialist: Jim Cunio 7/5/2001

GEOLOGY AND MINERALS:

Proposed Action: The administration of the mineral estate within this proposal is consistent with the recommendations for those mineral reports therefore no adverse impacts will occur to minerals, geology, or paleontology resources.

The mineral report includes analysis of the mineral estate that is being disposed of. There is much less analysis in regards to the mineral estate within parcels that will be acquired. Additionally the mineral estate underlying parcels that will be acquired may already be retained by the United States or conversely the mineral estate is owned by a third party and will not be included in the exchange. Because of these questions and the exact nature of the exchange, a consultation with the BLM mineral specialist is needed in regards to the mineral estate being disposed and acquired. Such exchanges would need to be consistent with the recommendations within the Ward Mineral Report.

No Action Alternative: Same as proposed.

Name of specialist: Dan Grenard, 8/20/01

HYDROLOGY AND WATER RIGHTS:

Proposed Action: The proposed action preserves the BLM lands as open space and therefore will

have no negative effects upon either hydrology or water rights.

The proposed action will not have negative impacts to the proposed acquisition parcel, Gaffney.

No Action Alternative: Development could certainly affect hydrology by changing surface water flow quantities and qualities and affect ground water through the drilling and use of wells for domestic use. Again, these changes would not likely be significant in and of themselves, but, would certainly add to the cumulative impacts of development in the mountain areas.

Name of specialist: M. Gaylord, 06-25-01

LAND STATUS/REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS/ACCESS:

Proposed Action: No withdrawals or classifications exist on any of the selected federal lands. None of the federal exchange lands are subject to unpatented mining claims. The lands remain segregated under the exchange authority. None of the exchange lands are included in grazing allotments.

Various rights-of-way exist on the parcels, as well as several pending right-of-way applications. BLM is coordinating with Boulder County to develop replacement easements to be offered to the holders of federal rights-of-way before the exchange is finalized. The Notice of Exchange Proposal notified the public that right-of-way applications would be accepted until February 1, 2001 on lands included in this exchange. Applications received after that date will not be processed.

Preliminary title evidence has been obtained for the properties offered in the land exchange. This evidence is summarized below:

Gaffney Parcel: The mineral estate on several of the parcels have been reserved to other private individuals, but BLM has determined that this reservation is unlikely to interfere with its proposed use of the surface. Otherwise, the properties are free of encumbrances.

Caribou Flats: The property is subject to a reservation of minerals to another party, as well as a limited mining easement. The mining easement is structured to protect the surface rights of the current owner of the property and is acceptable to the Forest Service.

Highway Parcel: This parcel contains no encumbrances.

Equalization Parcels: A mining lease encumbers several of the parcels. The County has investigated this lease and is confident it has terminated. The Forest Service has determined that these parcels will be acceptable.

Under the proposed alternative, only currently outstanding right-of-way applications will be processed on the federal lands. Once the private lands are acquired, they will be managed

according to the current land use plans. The acquisition of these parcels will reduce administrative costs and improve management efficiency by consolidating federal land ownership.

No Action Alternative: This alternative would result in the federal lands remaining as such for a period of time. Since the Northeast RMP determined that these lands should be disposed of, alternative proposals would be considered at a later date. The cost to dispose of these lands would increase with the number of transactions processed. A disposal opportunity that would address larger blocks of land would be preferred, resulting in an increased likelihood of residential development. These disposals could be by exchange, sale or R&PP, if appropriate. While the lands remain in federal ownership, they would be managed under the principles of multiple use consistent with the NERMP. Applications for land use, including rights-of-way, would be processed.

The Gaffney parcel would not be acquired in this alternative and would likely remain on the market and be sold to a developer. The subsequent change in historic use, from ranching to subdivision, would subject it to the adverse effects of urban development. BLM would likely receive applications for access and utility rights-of-way to support this development. The combination of development and the current land ownership would create a situation in which trespass situations could be likely.

Name of specialist: Jan Fackrell 11/28/01

NOISE:

Proposed Action: The proposed action will not result in any significant short term, long term and/or cumulative impacts due to noise over that currently existing.

No Action Alternative: Development would lead to a general overall increase in noise levels due to construction, grading, vehicles, and general residential maintenance activities. However, these increases would not likely be significant in the long-term for the area as a whole. There is no reason to suspect that development would exceed legal noise limits.

Name of specialist: Pete Zwaneveld, 07/11/01

RANGE MANAGEMENT:

Proposed Action: There are no grazing authorizations of any kind on the disposal, public land, parcels. The Ward and Gold Hill project areas are generally not suitable for livestock grazing due to low forage value, substantial intermixed ownership patterns, logistical limitations for livestock access, and difficulty of moving and controlling livestock in these types of areas. Therefore, the no-grazing prescription would not impact other uses or require that other uses be foregone. The Gaffney acquisition parcel will be incorporated into existing grazing allotments resulting in more

orderly range management.

No Action Alternative: The same limitations that deter public grazing of these areas would make grazing by private owners unlikely as well. However, as holdings might be somewhat consolidated and arranged, some private owners could possibly have a few livestock primarily for recreational purposes. There would be no impacts to range management on public lands from this alternative.

Name of specialist: Thomas Grette 8/6/01

RECREATION:

Proposed Action: Both Ward and Gold Hill project areas receive small amounts of dispersed recreation, primarily hiking, from the local residents. Additionally, the Ward area parcels are bisected by the Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway which is traversed by thousands of motoring tourists annually.

The proposed action will increase recreational opportunities in the Gold Hill area as private mining claims between BLM parcels are acquired by the County in an effort to assemble larger blocks of public open space. Once the lands are acquired, it is anticipated that a more formalized non-motorized trail system, with suitable trailhead facilities, will be developed.

The County has had an active Volunteer Naturalist program for 25 years, offering a wide variety of interpretive programs to the public. Many of the larger BLM parcels in both project areas would lend themselves to educational programming opportunities which are not now available.

The Gaffney property is located in an area of mixed private and public lands. Some dispersed recreation occurs in this area, primarily during the hunting seasons. Blocking up the public lands in this area will enhance recreation by eliminating the possibility of inadvertent trespass. Portions of the property may offer opportunities for trails and cooperative actions with Teller County.

No Action Alternative: Privatization and development would eliminate opportunities for increased public use of these lands.

Name of specialist: Pete Zwaneveld, 08/20/01

TRANSPORTATION:

Proposed Action: Both the Ward and Gold Hill project areas are interspersed with remnants of old mining roads/trails, some of which would be suitable for public hiking trails. The existing rights on these roads, whether of record or not, would not be affected by transfer into other than federal ownership.

The acquisition of the Gaffney property will allow public access to the east side of the public lands west of Cripple Creek

No Action Alternative: Since “No Action” on this EA will result in this exchange/sale to Boulder County not occurring, but would still require the public lands to be traded or sold, in all likelihood these parcels would end up in some form of development. Development would require the construction of access roads and driveways to link new house sites with public roads. Privatization and development would prevent opportunities for public trails.

Name of specialist: Jim Cunio 7/5/2001

VISUAL RESOURCES:

Proposed Action: The proposed action would benefit the visual resources through greater monitoring and management by Boulder County, including parcels to be sold which will carry a no-development conservation easement. This will generally preclude those activities which could impact visual resources. Minor development on the publicly held parcels such as trails and interpretive signs will only have minimal impacts to visual resources.

Acquisition of the Gaffney property will consolidate Federal holdings and help to maintain the visual quality of this area. It is unlikely this acquisition will result in any major developments, maintaining the visual character of these areas.

No Action Alternative: Development of these parcels would be subject to the County’s Land Use code, which at this time includes approval standards and criteria to reduce the visual impact of developments. However, given the number and location of these properties, development would have visual impacts on the landscape with driveway scars and houses potentially visible to many adjacent neighbors and visitors to this area.

Name of specialist: Pete Zwaneveld, 08/20/01

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:

Town of Ward
Land Use Coalition
Boulder County Parks and Open Space Department
Boulder County Transportation Department
Boulder County Land Use Department

BLM STAFF INVOLVED:

Roy L. Masinton	Field Manager
Paul Trentzsch	Staff Leader-Renewable Resources
Roger Underwood	Staff Leader-Non-Renewable Resources
Erik Brekke	Wildlife Biologist
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist
Keith Berger	Rangeland Management Specialist
Tom Grette	Rangeland Management Specialist
Diana Kossnar	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Pete Zwaneveld	Planning & Environmental Coordinator
Mike Gaylord	Haz-Mat Coordinator
Dan Grenard	Geologist
Ernie Gillingham	Surface Reclamation Specialist
Jan Fackrell	Realty Specialist
Stu Parker	Realty Specialist
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist
Martin Weimer	Archaeologist

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Cultural Documents

A(1) Native American Tribes Consulted

Attachment B: Maps of Lands Involved

B(1) Map of Ward and Gold Hill planning units as defined by the Northeast Resource Management Plan

B(2) Map of Federal selected (disposal) lands in the Ward Unit

B(3) Map of Federal selected (disposal) equalization lands in the Gold Hill Unit

B(4) Map of offered (private) parcel, Caribou Flats, Boulder County

B(5) Map of offered (private) parcel, Highway Parcel, Boulder County

B(6) Map of offered (private) parcel, Gaffney Parcel, Teller County

B(7) Map of offered (private) equalization parcels, Boulder County

Attachment C: Resource Maps

- C(1) Soils, Ward Area
- C(2) Soils, Gold Hill Area
- C(3) Wetlands, Floodplains and Threatened and Endangered Species, Ward Area
- C(4) Wetlands, Floodplains and Threatened and Endangered Species, Gold Hill Area
- C(5) Wildfire Fuel Types, Ward Area
- C(6) Wildfire Fuel Types, Gold Hill Area
- C(7) Vegetation Cover Types, Ward Area
- C(8) Vegetation Cover Types, Gold Hill Area

Attachment D: Draft Easement

Easement Document Designed to Replace Right-of-way Grants.

Attachment E: Draft Conservation Easement

Conservation Easement to be Placed on Land Subsequently Sold by Boulder County