III. Anthropogenic Influences and Patterns of Settlement related to the Current Cover Types

A. Introduction to Human Uses and Values

This section briefly describes current social and economic conditions and trends in the Ironhorse Analysis Area (IAA), along with a description of the historical human uses and values to explain how the current condition and trends developed. The information for this section was drawn primarily from USFS historical data and a 2003 Economic Review by Colorado's Region 10.

The planning area for the IAA encompasses 64,173 acres, including 7,747 acres of private land and 3,191 acres of BLM land, and includes or is adjacent to the following 8 communities-at-risk as identified by Montrose and San Miguel counties: The Meadows, Ute, Sanborn Park, Upper Dave Wood, Iron Springs Mesa, Gurley Reservoir Area, Norwood, and Nucla.

B. Historical Overview

The historical records for the IAA start in the late 1700s with the Escalante-Dominguez expedition, when the two Spanish priests crossed through the area looking for a route from Sante Fe to the California Missions. At that time, southwestern Colorado was occupied by the Ute tribes, which included the Ute Mountain Utes, the Southern Utes and the Northern Utes.

By the time of this European contact in the 1700s, the IAA and the surrounding area were ecosystems that had evolved with active human use. The Ute tribes consisted primarily of highly mobile hunting and gathering groups who had adapted their lifestyles to the seasonal variation and movement of the regional flora and fauna. Over time, they formed attachments to special places for hunting, fishing, gathering, and ceremonial uses. They also developed noticeable, well-established trails from one place to another. The Utes were very dependent on horses, which they adopted in the 1600s. By the 1800s, there were many horses per family. Therefore, grazing of horses would have been an ongoing activity on the Plateau for over a century prior to the arrival of Euro-American settlers. However, impacts to the range would have been limited or localized because of the highly mobile lifestyle of the Utes.

According to historical accounts from the 1800s, the Utes also carried out prescribed burning in the area, particularly in brushy areas, often in order to clear the line of view for hunting or to defend themselves from attack. A persistent report in historical accounts is that the Utes started large fires for revenge when they were forcibly removed from the area in 1881. (For example, see *The Hell that was Paradox.*) Although these reports have been challenged by recent historians, there is ample evidence of large scale fires in the Rocky Mountains in 1879. In any case,

widespread use of fires by American Indians over long periods would have influenced the fire regime and mosaic of the major vegetation in the IAA.

By the early 1800s, economic markets in centers throughout the West, such as Sante Fe, California, and Texas began to have an influence on the resource uses in the IAA. Throughout the early 1800s, explorers and trappers working the Uncompahgre and San Miguel rivers lived in and around the project area. Because of their small numbers and Spartan lifestyle, they would have had minimal impact on the area, except that they significantly depleted the beaver and other fur-bearing animals from the region. By the late 1800s, however, these markets shaped the economies and resource uses of the communities that sprang up in and around the IAA.

The human uses and values that have had a major influence on the current conditions and trends in the IAA include mining, ranching, farming, and logging associated with early European settlement (1900–1960), as well as the motorized hunting and industrialized recreation that began to replace these economies in the 1970s.

C. Mining

With the discovery of gold and silver in the San Juan Mountains in the 1860s, European migration to the area increased sharply. Not only did miners flock into the region in search of an easy fortune, many settlers followed on their heels to supply the mining camps. The mining towns that sprang up such as Telluride, Ophir and Sawpit created the need for goods and foods, which in turn created the need for transportation systems such as wagon roads and railroads to supply the miners and link them to outside economic markets. The land grants given to the railroad also helped spur development and the establishment of communities as transportation centers.

As the number of European settlers increased rapidly, they came into sharp conflict with the Utes who were being rapidly displaced from their lands. By 1881, the Utes were permanently removed from their homelands and placed on reservations in southern Colorado and eastern Utah. As soon as the Utes were removed, communities sprang up along the river corridors on both sides of the Plateau, and roads and railways were constructed almost overnight. A railroad line was completed through the Uncompahgre Valley in 1881, with Montrose as the railhead. The railhead was later moved to Ridgway in 1887. The Otto Mears San Miguel Toll Road was also completed in 1881, which connected Telluride to markets in Montrose via the San Miguel River corridor and Dallas Divide. The Dave Wood Toll Road was built in 1882, which created a shortcut across the Plateau, connecting Montrose to Dallas Divide, Telluride/Rico, and points south. The Dave Wood Road, still a major route today, passes within 3 miles of the IAA, and at least one of the roads into the IAA was in place prior to the turn of the century.

The IAA has minimal mineralization, so it saw little mining in the early days and limited oil and gas exploration in later years. In the 1960s and 1970s, seismic exploration took place, but no wells or mining roads were developed. In fact, once the infrastructure and major transportation routes for the local communities were in place, the IAA was somewhat buffered from the boom and bust mining economy that fueled towns such as Telluride. However, as the mining economy waned in the 1960s and 1970s, the shift to a largely recreation-based economy in nearby towns began to have a growing influence on the area.

D. Ranching and Homesteading

The arrival of the railroads in the late 1880s also gave a boost to the ranching economy because it gave ranchers the ability to ship their cattle and sheep to the major cities of the Midwest and eastern U.S. Coupled with the ability to acquire homesteads through the Homestead Act and other settlements acts and the better watering places, this access to markets led to rapid growth in livestock operations.

Over the last century, livestock grazing by Euro-Americans has been one of the most important land uses in Sanborn Park and surrounding areas. As early as the 1870s, cattle grazing became a significant activity on the Plateau. Cattle from Texas and Mexico were driven into the high county to fatten on summer pastures. The IAA was certainly part of the area grazed. For instance, W.H. Nelson summered 600 head of cattle on Iron Springs Mesa in the early 1880s (O'Rourke 1992:123). Nelson and others soon expanded their cattle operations in all directions around the nearby town of Norwood, which was established in 1885 by cattlemen. Throughout the area, very large herds of cattle were taken onto the summer pastures and then driven to railheads for shipping each fall.

The earliest homesteads in the IAA were taken out in the 1890s by men such as Felton, Dunlap, Coombe, and Amsbary (GLO records). The good pastures and gently rolling open parks of the Sanborn Park area attracted farmers, and evidently, the success of the early farmers drew more homesteaders. One of the earliest homesteads in the IAA was taken out by George Sanborn in 1890 in T46N, R12W. A.E. (Ellsworth) Guy arrived in 1899 and found settlement beginning in the Sanborn area. He and Flora Guy filed on homesteads in 1900 through 1910. He was interviewed in 1952 at age 90 by the Miguel District Ranger. He told the ranger he raised sheep originally, but converted to cattle.

Another old-timer interviewed in 1951 was William E. Impson. He arrived in 1888 to work at Gutshall sawmill at Gutshall Spring and then at the Dansforth Mill, which was at the intersection of McKenzie Creek and Sawdust Gulch. He staked his claims at Craig Point in 1901 where he originally homesteaded 40 acres (T45N, R12W., Sec.15 – now called Impson Spring) and then another 160 acres in 1915 (Sec 21). Impson raised 4,000 angora goats on these lands until 1943, when he sold out and moved down to the San Miguel River at Clay Creek. He continued to raise goats

there, as well. (Nat Walker, District Ranger, History Report to Forest Supervisor, 2/1/1937)

In the two townships covering the Sanborn Park area, eight homesteads were converted to fields for dry land farming (GLO records). From 1900 to 1910, 39 homesteads were filed, ranging from between 40 to 160 acres. Sixteen were filed in 1910 to 1920 and less than ten more in subsequent decades. By contrast, in two townships to the north, in a timbered area near Middle Point (T49N, R15W), only four patents were ever recorded, all of which were concentrated around a cow camp.

Early homesteaders in the area quickly experimented with a full range of crops. Eventually, potatoes, alfalfa, and wheat became the most common on these marginal, high-elevation lands. Sheep and goats were also accessible cash crops for the small farms. Many ranchers turned to sheep from 1910 to 1920s when sheep and wool were important cash crops. However, sheep are labor intensive and have a large impact on the range; about the time of WWII when raising sheep was no longer as lucrative, many sheep ranches switched to cattle.

The impact of these small homesteads on the mid-elevation lands in the IAA was severe from an ecological point of view. As noted, large numbers of sheep and goats sometimes accompanied the small homestead farms. In addition, the lands were plowed, water was diverted, and timber and brush were cut to increase crop lands. During the Depression and the Dust Bowl era (late 1920s to 1930s), the homesteaders discovered that these lands were far from ideal for dry-land wheat farming. Economic pressures required that these small farmers wring every bit of animal and plant crop from their small acreages, thereby increasing the ecological stress and damage to this area of the Plateau.

The 1951 District Ranger's assessment of Impson's operation is telling:

> *His abuse of land was perhaps never surpassed by any human being in this entire area. He lived on Craig Point for 43 years and moved off in poor circumstances after ruining the land he owned. He has now been on his ranch on the river for eight years, and in that time, has practically killed off all the vegetation…*

Ultimately, very few of the homesteads survived. The area appears to have been too marginal to dry-land farm. In the 1940s, Marie Scott acquired vast acreages of these small claims and assembled them into ranches. She continued to run cattle and harvest the timber and then in 1953, she conveyed over 6,000 acres back to the Forest Service (GLO records). By the time the Forest Service acquired the land from Scott, it was in very poor health.

In the late 1800s, the ranges were publicly owned, and cattle grazing was unregulated until the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1937. In an attempt to

minimize damage, this Act gave specific direction to the Bureau of Land Management to better manage the range and stop overgrazing on public lands. Large portions of the Uncompahgre Plateau were set aside as a national forest reserve in 1905, and since that time, the Forest Service has also attempted to regulate grazing on public lands. In the 1940s, they experimented with different numbers and methods for livestock management. Documentation shows that the number of allotments and the number of animals permitted to graze in each allotment on the forest has steadily declined over the years. Today, the IAA contains five grazing allotments on the USFS, grazing 10,902 AUMs of cattle.

The Forest Service has also attempted to restore much of the rangeland it acquired in the IAA. In the mid-1930s, the Forest Service began to assemble land exchanges in which cutover and abandoned claims were returned to government ownership in exchange for Forest Service land elsewhere. In 1937, 1,785 acres were returned to Forest Service ownership in T45N, R12W, in addition to the roughly 6,000 acres acquired in 1953. In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) initiated range improvement projects. One of their accomplishments in the IAA was water development for livestock. They created small reservoirs and holding ponds to catch spring rains and runoff throughout the area. Sanborn Park has a number of these ponds.

Figure 2 below depicts the historic and current landownership status for the IAA. It also contrasts the minimal private land ownership pattern on the township just to the north on the forest, which contained less potential homesteading opportunities.

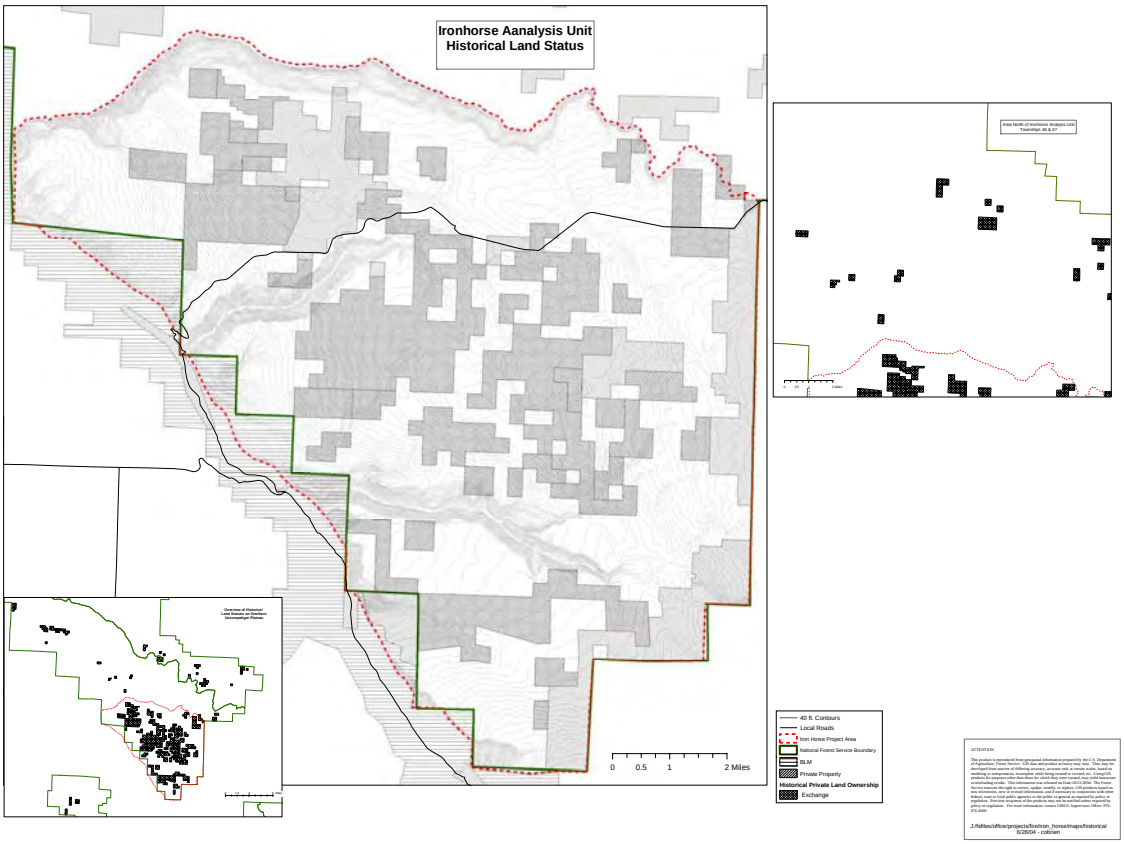

Figure 2: Historic and current landownership status.

Other Forest Service range improvement projects mentioned in the ranger history reports from the 1940s included use of fertilizers for increasing forage in golden aster parks and efforts to control *Dendroctonus* infestations. In 1950, the reports discuss aerial seeding of one allotment with mountain brome, timothy and orchard grass and the large-scale installation of utilization plots to monitor range conditions and use. That same year, a "rather large fire" of 300 to 400 acres was reported along the San Miguel River, apparently to illustrate the success of fire suppression efforts at that time. The use of 2-4 D as an herbicide to encourage grass growth is mentioned for the first time in 1951 (Ranger L. Burton, Miguel District Ranger, History Report 1/31/1950).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, 2,085 acres of sagebrush were chemically sprayed to reduce sagebrush cover and increase grass yield. Despite these efforts, forage production has declined over the years. For over a century, much of the area has been heavily grazed by cattle and sheep. In combination with extensive timber harvesting, the past grazing practices left the range in generally poor condition. In

addition, the water development projects do not support more contemporary grazing practices.

E. Timber Harvesting

In tandem with mining and ranching/agriculture, the timber industry became a driving force near the close of the 1800s. Serving only local markets in the early years after settlement, the industry paralleled development of mines and railroads. Railroads needed wood for ties and trestles, mines needed timbers for shoring, and limber mills needed access to the woods to extract logs and later access to markets to sell them.

Logging in the area can be traced back as far as the Ft. Crawford and Ute Agency construction in the 1870s. From 1875 to 1881, the Los Pinos #2 Indian Agency was located south of present day Montrose to supply the Utes with government food rations. In 1881, the military set up Fort Crawford nearby. These establishments both operated sawmills to make lumber for the many camp buildings. The Uncompahgre Plateau was roughly 10 miles west of these posts and provided the logs.

In the 1890s, a colony of “communists” settled at Pinyon, about 10 miles to the northwest of the Horsefly drainage and began constructing a large irrigation ditch to support their farming. Using a previous placer mining operation as a base, they built ditches and flumes using “several millions of board feet of timber” and also began furnishing fruit boxes to the Uncompahgre Valley area (Calvin Miller, History Report, 1922:4). Annual reports from the Miguel District Ranger mention logging most years.

Historically, there has been a close symbiotic relationship between local loggers and the Forest Service. After nearly a century of policies aimed at disposing public lands, in the early 1900s the Federal government began to view the remaining public domain as an important asset that should be managed as a national storehouse to supply a growing nation. The Progressive Movement influenced government leaders to develop policies that emphasized “scientific” management aimed at “efficient” use of resources. In the Forest Service, this “scientific” management translated into setting targets for timber harvesting.

With the Forest Service interested in “efficient” use of its timber supplies, local rangers needed to show that their timber was being managed and used. The local sawmills often harvested all their timber from National Forest lands. In 1938, two timber sales were in progress. The first being the Hermance sale at “2 million board feet of ponderosa pine in small bodies in Sanborn Park” being dormant, the logger having set up “a small gasoline powered sawmill in the old Sorenson sheep camp” (Nat Walker, District Ranger, History Report 12/16/1938). The other timber sale was for 500,000 board feet cut by J.V. “Vinton” McKeever at his spruce mill near Silesca, which is not in the IAA. In 1942, for the southern end of the Uncompahgre Plateau, there is a reference to 500,000 board feed cut by J.V. McKeever, Archie Mckeever, Jack Wilson, and E.W. Gwin - although, here again, not all the timber was

necessarily harvested in the IAA (Ranger Torgny, Miguel District Ranger, History Report, 1/27/1942).

With the technology available at that time, tractors were commonly used for logging, and roads were built to haul out logs in more level country. Steep country was not as accessible, so it was not generally logged until later years. Thus, accessible, level stands of yellow pine were heavily logged. In 1942, a ranger commented that an attempt to use the new aerial photographs to conduct a timber inventory of the area surrounding Silesca Guard Station did not work because it was "practically all cut over at various times in the last 50 years." (Ranger Torgny, Miguel District Ranger, History Report 1/27/1942).

Harvesting and other activities slowed down during the war due to the lack of labor. However, immediately after the war, logging activity increased to meet the growing demand for homes as cities expanded into the suburbs. In 1947, the McKeever Sanborn Park mill was overhauled to handle 25,000 board feet per day, and that year the Ranger noted that 800,000 feet of pine was cut, more than the previous three years combined.

Forest management activities were ongoing after WWII, and annual yields increased. By 1966, 5 million board feet was cut on the Norwood District (Ranger Tikka, Norwood District Ranger, History Report 3/2/1966). The Forest Service made use of newly obtained aerial photographs, airplanes, helicopter spraying, and other technology to enlarge its scope of action in the area. In the 1960s and 1970s, management of the forest and range became more extensive. For instance, in 1966, 4,115 acres were sprayed to release timber production, some 2,700 acres of pinyon-juniper were chained in 1967, and 255 acres were terraced for pine plantations in the Miguel District. (Ranger Weyers, Miguel District Ranger, History Report 3/15/1967). However, the growth of large-scale corporate timber industries after the war made it difficult for small-scale operations in areas with limited timber resources to compete. In addition, influenced by the environmental movement, there was a shift in public policy that also made it more difficult for these small-scale operations to stay in business.

Starting in the 1960s, the philosophy of the federal government shifted away from belief in "scientific" management aimed at the "efficient" use of resources. Government leaders began to develop new policies that emphasized limiting resource extraction and road development. The pertinent scientific questions were no longer directed at determining "how much" timber should be extracted, but rather "what if" – that is, science was used to determine the potential impacts from management activities such as harvesting. Under this new guidance, District Rangers were now required to illustrate that timber targets and harvesting techniques would not adversely impact the environment. This new legislation resulted in a significant slowdown and reduction in the amount of timber harvested on federal lands. Without a constant, predictable source of timber, many of the mills were forced to close.

A legacy of the timber industry is the extensive road system that developed across the Plateau to support logging throughout the century. Access to the IAA during the early 1900s consisted mainly of the Dave Wood Road and the main Clay Creek Road into Sanborn Park (FSR#510). Built in 1882, the Dave Wood Road splits off in Horsefly Creek and continues south to the Dallas Divide area. The Clay Creek Road/FSR #510 continues east into Sanborn Park. This east-west link from Sanborn Park to Dave Wood Road – or the "Sanborn section of the Divide Road" – was built in 1935 to 1937 by the CCC (Ranger Walker, Montrose District History Report, 2/1/1937). Other portions of the road were completed up to 1941 (Ranger Torgny, History Report 1/27/1942). As late as 1941, the report says, "the new section of the Sanborn Park Road from Lewis Bros. Pasture to Johnson Spring, 3 ½ miles, is completed with exception of the culvert bridge at Johnson Spring. This was a joint FRD/ERA project (Ranger Torgny, Montrose District Ranger, History Report 3/1/46).

In 1931, another major access route to the Plateau, Highway 90, was completed according to information from Mrs. Margaret Darling, a sawmill operator's wife. She notes that prior to Highway 90 being put through, the main road came up "through Savonin's place and on up to the Keller place." In her records from 1951, Mrs. Darling also noted that it had been 50 years (1901) since the Darlings had cut "Stump City" in the Miguel District, so clearly loggers had ready access to the area as early as 1901. Another main thoroughfare, the Divide Road, was built by the CCC where an older, rougher road had been. The Clay Creek Road was also improved by the CCC. In addition to these main roads, loggers themselves built hundreds of one-track logging roads throughout the IAA to haul out logs.

F. Recreation/Hunting

With increased pressure from global markets and a dwindling resource base, the livestock and timber industries began to lose their economic foothold in the counties surrounding the IAA in the 1970s and 1980s. At the same time, the beginnings of the current recreation industry started to take hold. Telluride opened a ski area in 1972 and many of the rural communities began to aggressively market tourism, featuring public lands as a destination spot for recreation. Recreation and hunting were always popular activities for the locals in the surrounding area. Escape from the lower valleys to the high elevations for picnics and recreation was commonplace. One ranger noted that on the Fourth of July after VE day in 1946, 72 cars passed the Silesca Ranger Station bound for the campgrounds for picnicking. However, since the 1980s, commercial recreation businesses have become a much more important part of the economies in the counties surrounding the IAA.

Because much of the land in the IAA was in private ownership up to the 1940s, there was limited hunting in the early part of the century. More recently, the area has become a favorite and renowned hunting area for large bucks and elk. The extensive road and trail system throughout the IAA associated with old logging roads support motorized hunting and recreational use – i.e. off-road vehicle use. For both

locals and tourists, motorized recreation represents the largest use in the area. Fishing, hiking, and biking appear to have much less important public uses. Motorized hunting and recreational use keep roads open and maintain dispersed campsite locations. The Forest Service has recently completed a travel management plan that calls for closing and restoring many of the old logging roads in the area. Increased motorized recreational use in the area could represent a problem to future management plans.

G. Current Conditions: An Analysis Context for Human Uses and Values

This section discusses the structure of the economic and social structures in the communities in and around the IAA. This discussion is presented to provide a proper context for agency decisions regarding economic and social objectives.

Agency managers and politicians seek to influence economic events in their jurisdictions, but the nature of economics limits their influence. Economics change as resources constantly shift to more efficient uses according to market forces, changing technologies and consumer preferences. Instead of being a rational, hierarchical structure of ordered “units”, economies are a complex web of interdependent relationships operating across many jurisdictions, both public and private, over a large area. The ability of political leaders and agency managers to achieve local economic objectives is limited by their ability to anticipate, account for, and influence economic forces.

In addition to the interdependent nature of economies, another factor that influences how a planning problem is understood and framed is the scale at which the planned management activities and products are operative. Effects of land management decisions are difficult to reasonably predict for areas smaller than those for which uses are specified. This section presents regional and county-level data to help describe the human affected environment, but its use to project future economic effects of alternatives is severely limited.

Population

From 1970 to 2000, the population of the counties surrounding the IAA has grown substantially. The towns of Telluride and Norwood in San Miguel County remained fairly small, with a stable core population of well under 1,000 in the 1950s and 1960s.

Key findings in the Horsefly EA related to departures between current and desired conditions relevant to the livestock grazing in the IAA.

- There are areas in the Ponderosa Pine-Gambel Oak plant communities within the IAA where plant composition tends to favor nonnative plant species, and the percentage of bare ground is or appears to be increasing, or where a downward trend in vegetation exists. Range inspections and observations made by Forest Service personnel indicate that livestock grazing is heavy and for extended periods of time in some areas within these plant communities. This is due to several factors including: location of water sources, pasture size, timing of grazing and permittee management practices.

- There are areas in the sagebrush dominated plant communities within the IAA where plant composition favors nonnative plant species. Livestock grazing is too heavy for too long a period of time in some areas within these plant communities. This is due to several factors including: location of water sources, pasture size, timing of grazing and permittee management practices.

During the 1970s, Telluride began to grow as its recreation-based economy expanded. By the 1990s, the trend toward migration from urban to rural areas was having a noticeable influence on the populations and economies in Telluride, as well as many of the communities surrounding the IAA.

Counties and towns that are attractive to retirees or second-home owners or are centers for recreation have experienced the greatest growth. In 2002, the population in San Miguel County increased at a rate of 2.8 percent, which was the highest rate of growth in Region 10. The town with the highest growth rate in the County was Ophir above Telluride, at 4.2 percent increase. The Town of Mountain Village increased at a rate of 4.1 percent. The unincorporated portion of the county accounts for 43 percent of the total population, and it grew by 3.2 percent.

Montrose County was also one of the fastest growing counties in Region 10, increasing 2.7 percent in 2002. The Town of Montrose grew by 5.2 percent. Ouray County on the other hand, reported only a 1.7 percent growth, with both the towns of Ouray and Ridgway losing population. However, the unincorporated portion of Ouray County makes up 61 percent of the population, and it increased by 3.6 percent in 2002.

Counties or communities that are scenic, are located close to recreational opportunities, and provide amenities such as medical, business, and educational services, had the highest growth rates during this period. As the population of the U.S. grows older and as more individuals and businesses access markets electronically or through airline and other shipping/delivery services, this trend of increasing migration to “high quality of life” rural areas is expected to continue.

Wildland Urban Interface

In many areas, population growth and consequent development threatens the quality of life that made such places attractive for recreation, retirement and new businesses. At the interface of urban development and wildlands, for example, in many of the unincorporated areas within the counties where growth has been most dramatic, fire protection is becoming a critical issue. The growth in numbers of residential dwellings near forested landscapes

Key findings relevant to the livestock grazing cont'd.

- There are big game winter ranges in the pinyon-juniper plant communities, where overstory density of pinyon and juniper has increased, decreasing the available forage for big game. Field observations, including photos and range trend data, indicate that the overstory density of pinyon and juniper has increased, decreasing the available forage for big game species. Natural openings are decreasing in size due to plant succession.

has presented new challenges in fire prevention and suppression for federal and local fire agencies. Fire protection in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) areas is a significant enough issue that the National Fire Plan and subsequent legislation directly addresses the need for federal, state, and local agencies to partner with communities to reduce the risk (National Fire Plan, 2000, 10-Year Strategy, 2001)

With populations expanding into the unincorporated areas of the counties, there is greater potential for increased conflicts with wildlife. Large mobile wildlife species with extensive home ranges often run into conflicts with humans and livestock when wildlife habitat is reduced or affected by roads and development.

Elk and mule deer have caused animal damage on private lands including crop damage during drought years. Mountain lion and coyote populations cause concern for human safety. Large carnivores such as bears may move into areas with high livestock and human habitation, intensifying potential conflicts.

In spite of the increases in population across the counties, the area remains far more rural in character than the U.S. as a whole. In keeping with its rural character, population density in the three counties is less than the U.S. average (roughly 10 persons per square mile in the counties of San Miguel, Montrose, and Ouray as compared to 70 nationwide). However, attitudes and lifestyles have changed radically in rural communities that have experienced rapid population growth. As little as a decade ago, agriculturally based lifestyles dominated the area, and most residents had a strong relationship to the land. Now lifestyles in rural, rapid growth areas appear to be oriented more toward leisure, with environmentally based amenities being an important component to the lifestyles of many people moving into the area.

Land Ownership

Forest Service and BLM administered lands that make up a substantial portion of the IAA (65 percent) as well as the three counties surrounding the IAA, make the use of public lands regionally important (Montrose is 65 percent,

Ouray is 46 percent, and San Miguel is 66 percent public lands.) These lands are also substantial assets nationally, making their use important outside the region as well.

Current Livestock Grazing

In April 2003, the Norwood and Ouray Ranger Districts of the GMUG NF completed the Horsefly Rangeland Assessment for a complex of 15 grazing allotments at the southern end of the Uncompahgre Plateau. Five allotments that occur in the IAA were included in that Rangeland Assessment. The purpose of the assessment was to issue livestock grazing permits and implement Allotment Management Plans "*to move the natural resource conditions of the project area towards meeting Forest Plan direction for riparian health, noxious weeds, elk winter range, aspen regeneration, and rangeland health, with permitted livestock, within a 10-15 year timeframe*". The assessment contained specific management actions for inclusion in each Allotment Management Plan for improving forest, rangeland and riparian health that were related to permitted livestock grazing. The summary of the current management of the five Ironhorse Allotments is contained in Table 1 below.

The primary plant community level effects that were identified in that analysis were associated with livestock impacts to the ponderosa pine–Gambel oak and sagebrush vegetation types and to specific riparian areas. The grazing effects to those communities were primarily associated with increases in the amount of bare ground and alterations of species composition between native and introduced herbaceous species. The assessment identified an imbalance regarding native and introduced herbaceous species based on grazing preference and response to grazing, big game and livestock interaction and winter range conflicts, timing of grazing, length of grazing period, season of use, and utilization.

Table 1: Summary of Current Management for the Ironhorse Allotments

Allotment	Permitted Number.	Permitted AUMs	NFS Acres	NFS Suitable Acres	SEASON	Ac/AUM	Management
Craig Point	626 c/c, 3 h	3655	12921	11849	6/6-10/15	3.2	5-p deferred
Horsefly	107 c/c	621	13045	7540	6/6-10/15	12.1	5-p rotation
Neale	317 c/c	1911	10395	7740	6/1-10/15	4.0	4-p deferred rotation
North Creek	230 c/c	1386	8172	6147	6/1-1015	4.4	6-p deferred rotation
Sanborn Park	549 c/c, 3 h	3329	12525	11619	6/1-10/15	3.5	5-p deferred rotation
Totals		10902	57058	44895			