

Agriculture. Dryland cropping is currently practiced along the northern portion of the rail spur in section 10 (T6N R88W) and south of the loadout facility and access road (see Exhibit 4-1 and Tab 10). Winter wheat is the principle crop grown. Summer fallow is practiced to build adequate soil moisture levels for crop production. Historically, dryland crop production was a primary land use in the western portion of section 14 (T6N 3R88W) west of Dry Creek. These areas were taken out of crop production a number of years prior to construction of the loadout facility. They have been seeded with various introduced species such as smooth brome, intermediate wheatgrass and crested wheatgrass and now function as rangeland. The majority of the disturbance associated with construction of the loadout occurred in this type of abandoned cropland. North of the Walker Ditch, improved pasture is the primary use. These fields are probably subirrigated but have been irrigated in the past and continue to have that capability. However, management does not appear to be intensive and only ditches in the pasture north of U.S. 40 appear to have had any recent maintenance.

Rangeland/Wildlife Habitat. Rangeland is present in Dry Creek, areas east of Dry Creek in section 14, and along the rail spur north to the cropland areas in section 10 (see Exhibit 4-1 and Tab 10). These areas are dominated by sagebrush, greasewood and rubber rabbitbrush communities. The topography ranges from alkaline flats to rolling hills. Livestock grazing has been the primary use of these rangeland areas, however the carrying capacity is generally low. Historic grazing pressure has been heavy in the Dry Creek drainage and the adjacent alkaline flats. A variety of wildlife species use the rangeland habitat and seeded cropland areas (see Tab 11). Big game, small game and upland gamebird hunting occurs in the area.

Industrial. With completion of the loadout facility and rail spur, the primary use in the permit area has been industrial. While operation of the loadout restricted livestock grazing, incidental use by wildlife continued. During temporary cessation of operations at the loadout, livestock grazing was again practiced. Resumption of normal operations will restrict all grazing within the area of the loadout facility. Inspection of the proposed facility permit area revealed no evidence of previous mining activities.

Industrial or commercial land uses in close proximity to the proposed permit area include the Yampa Valley Regional **Airport** situated from 0.25 to 0.75 miles north and east of the permit area, and the Seneca Coal Company's Tie-Across Haul Road situated just south and east of the permit area (see Exhibit 12-1, Facilities Area), and the Routt County Road and Bridge Department maintenance shop located immediately west of the Loadout facility area along existing haul road HGLF-HR-1. The Tie-Across Haul Road will remain as a permanent feature. The road will be turned over to Routt County for operation in 2022/2023 following the release of the bond and finalization of right-of-ways and easements. The road will be added to the public road system and maintained by Routt County.