

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.

PR-03 was submitted to allow the post mining land use option of Industrial/commercial be applied to the north lots of the permit boundary along both sides of Highway 40. With the proximity of the lots to the town of Hayden and Highway 40 these lots are a prime area for development. This will allow the property owner to have the ability to sell the lots under the condition they get developed in a way of industrial/ commercial and allowing the bond to be released prior to the 10 year liability period for the current permitted land use for the hay fields.

Residential. The town of Hayden is situated approximately two miles northwest of that portion of the proposed permit area that contains the loadout facilities (coal handling) and 0.25 miles west of the rail spur (Exhibit 4-1). Scattered single family dwellings (farmsteads) occur adjacent to the permit area, but none are in close proximity to the proposed permit area boundary.

Land Capability and Productivity. Five native soil map units were identified within the proposed permit area during the course of conducting soil investigations (see Tab 9 and Exhibit 9-1). The Buckley clay and Morapos silty clay loam fall under the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) dryland capability class 4E. They are suited to cultivation, but have severe limitations that restrict crop selection and/or they require careful management practices due to susceptibility to erosion. The unnamed silty clay falls under the SCS dryland capability class 4S. It has similar capability to the Buckley and Morapos soils, but has limitations caused by shallow rooting zones, stoniness, low moisture holding capacity, low fertility, or salinity or sodium. The SCS dryland capability classes for the Abor clay and Spicerton variant are 7E and 6S, respectively. Class 7 soils are unsuited to cultivation, but can be used for grazing, woodland, and wildlife uses. The Abor clay is susceptible to erosion hazards. Class 6 soils are generally unsuited to cultivation and are primarily used for pasture, range, woodland, wildlife, recreation or a combination of these. The Spicerton variant is restricted due to shallow rooting zones and other restrictions previously outlined for Subclass "S" soils. None of the soils are considered Prime Farmland soils.

Table 4-2 summarizes agricultural land use productivity and capability (cropland, rangeland) for the vegetation and croplands found in and adjacent to the permit area.

### Local Land Use Plans

Routt County. The Routt County Master Plan was officially adopted in December, 1980. The adopted plan builds on comprehensive planning done in 1974, and is structured to respect the established patterns of land use and to consider the best ways to solve expected problems of future county growth and development. The Hayden Gulch loadout facility was built prior to adoption of the plan, and a Special Use Permit has been obtained for the facility (see Tab 3). Therefore, operation of the loadout under the terms of this permit application will not conflict with county planning and development.

Town of Hayden. The town of Hayden adopted and published a Growth Management Plan in July, 1980. Since the loadout was in place prior to adoption of the plan and town administration was provided the opportunity to comment on the original permitting action and subsequent permit renewals, no conflicts with town planning and development actions will occur as a result of operating the loadout again. The town of Hayden subsequently adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 2005 to outline activities to facilitate sustainable growth while retaining the character of the community. As the loadout facility and rail loop are no longer operating, the town has leased 225 acres of the permitted area for multi-season recreational use.