

**Center for Native Ecosystems • Colorado Environmental Coalition
Colorado Mountain Club • Colorado Wild • San Juan Citizens Alliance
Sheep Mountain Alliance • The Wilderness Society • Western Colorado Congress
Wild Connections • Wilderness Workshop**

PRESENTATION

to Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area Advisory Council

June 15, 2011

Introduction

Thank you very much for this opportunity to review and re-emphasize the carefully researched and thoughtfully prepared comments and recommendations—submitted to you on May 12 in behalf of ten Colorado conservation, recreation, and scientific organizations and their members—regarding potential wild & scenic streams within the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area.

The organizations submitting these comments represent a total membership of some 54,000 Colorado citizens. These comments reflect the extensive expertise, diverse missions and memberships, and solid scientific foundations found among these organizations.

That strong foundation was enhanced—as we prepared these comments and recommendations—through extensive and detailed field research, through exhaustive documents review, and through consultations with landowners, ranchers, water providers, local officials, and others with interest and expertise in these streams and the surrounding lands.

We strongly encourage your careful consideration of these recommendations, and we heartily welcome your questions, your suggestions, and your requests for additional information.

Our comments and recommendations come in two basic parts – procedural and stream-specific.

Procedural recommendations

In procedural matters, we have three requests:

1) As required under the National Environmental Policy Act, the range of alternatives for the Dominguez-Escalante draft management plan should include at least one alternative under which all streams are found suitable for wild & scenic protection;

2) The Advisory Council, and the BLM, should consider at least three variations of wild & scenic components in the final management plan:

a) streams found wild & scenic suitable and recommended to Congress for wild & scenic designation;

b) streams found wild & scenic suitable and *not* recommended to Congress (but protectively managed);

c) streams found wild & scenic non-suitable (and not recommended to Congress, but protectively managed)

3) All outstandingly remarkable values, identified in the BLM's *Final Wild & Scenic Rivers Eligibility Report*, must be protected in some reliable and effective fashion under the final management plan.

4) Our comments, recommendations, and accompanying documents should be included on the BLM's Dominguez-Escalante NCA internet site (and other information sources), including in links to the Advisory Council, the pending management plan, and wild & scenic information. Our materials should be presented in the same locations, frequency, and visibility provided for wild & scenic materials submitted by other groups. This allows citizens reviewing plan information and considering their eventual comments on the plan to have equal access to the full range of view and information available.

Stream-specific recommendations

As noted in our accompanying documents considering the eleven eligible stream segments, we recommend that these streams ultimately be placed in three categories for management and for other actions:

1) Three segments be found wild & scenic suitable and be recommended to Congress for designation under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act – Rose Creek, Cottonwood Creek, and Dry Fork Escalante Creek;

2) Two segments be found wild & scenic suitable and not recommended to Congress – Gunnison River Segment 3 and Escalante Creek Segment 1;

3) Six segments be found wild & scenic non-suitable (and not recommended) – Gunnison River Segment 1, Big Dominguez Creek Segments 1 and 2, Little Dominguez Creek Segments 1 and 2, Escalante Creek Segment 2.

These stream-specific recommendations are based in the criteria and guidelines provided by the BLM:

- uniqueness and sensitivity of natural values;
- percentage of federal ownership;
- manageability;
- community values and interests;
- existing protections—or options for protections.

We welcome any questions, observations, and requests you may have for us as we all work through the management and protection of these streams, which are so integral to the beauty, natural health, vibrancy, and recreational attraction of the national conservation area.

Thank you again.