

Gunnison Basin Wild & Scenic Stakeholder Group
April 5, 2011

DRAFT NOTES

SUMMARY

The meeting included follow-up on questions remaining from the 3-23 meeting on the Escalante and Cottonwood Creeks in the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staff gave introductory information on the segments and their Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV's), and the group shared information on current uses as well as potential threats to the ORV's and potential options for protecting them.

The group identified the following questions and needs for additional information:

- Grand Junction (GJFO) and Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) of BLM seem to use different criteria on ownership to determine Wild & Scenic eligibility: the GJFO perspective is that only segments touched by BLM are eligible; UFO doesn't seem to follow the same criteria. Clarifications are needed on what the overall policy is.
- Does Audubon help with monitoring peregrines?
- Do pellet hunters collect the peregrines' droppings?
- Want more recent data on the peregrines (past '09)
- Need map of ACEC in Escalante Creek corridor.
- Is the State Wildlife Area exempt from Wild & Scenic eligibility?
- Are there really river otter on Escalante Creek segment 2? No one present has seen them in 20 years.
- What evidence is there of historic bighorn presence along Escalante Creek?
- Who owns water rights above Cottonwood Creek?
 - Jim Graziano should know; Hank Davis is one.

Next meeting:

April 13, 6:30 – 9:00pm, Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta.

At this meeting, we will determine the group's recommendation regarding Wild & Scenic suitability for each segment and management measures to protect each ORV.

Homework:

Review all segment charts and email additions/ recommended changes to Hannah (hiholm@hotmail.com) by 4/11.

DETAILS

Introduction

The meeting opened with participant introductions and a review of the meeting expectations and agenda.

Financial Update

No new information on contributions was offered.

Follow-up from March 23 meeting

Several questions from the March 23 meeting, which focused on Gunnison River segments in the NCA, were addressed by BLM staff.

Property Ownership

Questions were raised at the 3-23 meeting about how BLM calculated private vs. BLM river miles and whether private river miles were being considered as part of the Wild & Scenic eligible segments.

BLM staffer Andy Windsor presented revised maps of the segments, and he described the methodology behind the revisions (Note: the map labeled as D-E NCA Gunnison Segment 2 is really Gunnison Segment 3 from the Uncompahgre Field Office) :

1. They drew the map with a dark blue line at the midline of the river. Wherever BLM comes down to the river, the segment was included in BLM miles eligible for Wild & Scenic status.
2. They inserted a light blue ¼ mile band around the line, and then deleted private lands from the buffers.
3. The result was that:
 - a. for Gunnison segment 3, BLM miles declined .2 miles to 13.8
 - b. for Gunnison segment 1, BLM miles increased 1.5 miles to 14.9

Several comments and questions were made during the presentation:

- It was noted that when the Dominguez Canyons wilderness was established the river was intentionally left out – on the lower Colorado, the Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness only went to the edge of the floodplain; the Lower Colorado stakeholder group recommended legislation to take the Wilderness down to the water's edge to protect the river while avoiding Wild & Scenic status and the potential for a federal reserved water right – could we do that here?
 - Dominguez Canyons Wilderness already goes down to water's edge, except for intentional carve outs (like the ditch serving Bridgeport).
 - It was proposed that, where Wilderness touches the river, no additional protections are necessary.
- Question: if it's private on both sides, is a segment eligible?
 - Andy Windsor: eligibility is only for BLM lands and portions of river where it touches BLM.
 - Uncompahgre Field Office has used different criteria.
 - Clarifications are needed on what the overall policy is.
- Question: does BLM consider a segment 100% federal if BLM touches only one side?
 - Andy Windsor: Yes
 - Katie Stevens: It is listed as a BLM river mile, because BLM has some influence on managing to protect an Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV) due to adjacent land.
- On the new map, there are several places where the ¼ mile corridor includes the river, then excludes private land immediately adjacent to the river, and then includes BLM land on the other side of the private land. How can BLM manage those

isolated pieces of land to protect an ORV?

- That needs to be a consideration of the group when they make their recommendation on suitability.

Railroad Land Ownership Status

Andy Windsor reported that the question of whether the land occupied by the railroad is owned by the railroad or is instead a right-of-way has not yet been answered, although an information requests has been made. It turns out that the different acts authorizing railroads made different arrangements for this.

- Eric Trommer has researched this – for his land, the railroad passing through has a right-of-way. May not be the same for the entire stretch in the NCA.
- It was noted that the Colorado Railroad Museum has this kind of information, although it is not available on line.

Mineral Rights Ownership

Andy Windsor handed out a map of mineral ownership in the NCA and reported that:

- The legislation founding the National Conservation Area (NCA) withdrew all minerals from leasing, excluding prior rights (of which there aren't any).
- Nearly all the minerals underlying BLM land in the NCA are owned by BLM.
- Nearly all private and state lands in the area have private minerals underneath them – which BLM has no control over.
- There is an “other” category on the minerals – they are trying to identify the particulars.
 - It was noted that this is in the area of an old mine

Comment: It was noted that Mesa County has a minerals exploration map that can be obtained, to see where potential minerals might be in the Mesa County portion of the NCA.

National Register of Historic Places

Questions were raised at the 3-23 meeting on how nomination of cultural & historical sites to National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) could work & BLM's role in that process, as well as the different implications of a historic district vs. historic site.

Katie Stevens reported that:

- The group should also consider a similar act, the Archeological Resources Protection Act and another similar law for the protection of paleontological resources.
- Nomination to the NRHP would be made by a BLM staffer or consultant contracted by BLM. A site is eligible if it is:
 - relevant to local, state or national events of significance.
 - related to people of interest.
 - has unique craftsmanship or materials.
 - has the potential to yield important data.
- After the BLM assessment is made, this goes to the State historic preservation authority and then, if there's conflict, on to a national advisory council.

- Recommendations for historic districts (as opposed to sites) are also made by BLM. The declaration of a district brings enhanced priority and attention to an area, but no additional regulatory protections.

Several questions were raised:

- How many sites are in the area?
 - Katie Stevens said she didn't have the exact number, but there were a lot – maybe over 100.
- How is the size of a site defined?
 - The determination is made on a site by site basis and depends on the extent of the artifacts/ area of focus.
- How does BLM protect historic and archeological sites?
 - Katie Stevens reported that BLM classifies the sites for different approaches:
 - some are interpreted for public education.
 - some are concealed.
 - some are even buried to conceal them further.
- How many site stewards does BLM have?
 - They are building their program: there are something like 6 on board, and 10 trained recently.
- Will there be signage about the site stewards? This could help deter vandalism by make people feel like the steward could show up any time.
 - Not sure, will check.

Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) Discussion of this Stakeholder Process

Suzanne Sellers of the CWCB responded to a question raised at an earlier meeting about whether CWCB members had raised concerns about whether the Gunnison Basin Wild & Scenic Stakeholder process included a sufficiently diverse group of stakeholders. She said that during an agenda item on the Upper Colorado Wild & Scenic Stakeholder process, Steve Glazer of the High Country Citizens' Alliance had made a comment about an insufficient diversity of stakeholders and a lack of consensus coming out of the Gunnison Basin process, but there was no response from the board to this comment.

- It was noted that Steve Glazer had attended the first meeting of the group, but none since.

Existing Uses on Escalante Creek

Those present identified the following uses (and non-uses) in the area:

- no gold panning
- hiking
- drunken parties
- a maintained road bisects the stream corridors
- grazing
- kayaking
- rock climbing (segment 2)
- traffic count: guess 12,000/ year (will check)
- ATV's on the road.

- hunting
- access to Forest Service land via 4-wheel-drive
- power lines (segment 2)
- mountain biking
- horseback riding
- agriculture: grazing, hay at the Forks; need horse access.
- Bernice Musser takes people on tours.

Existing Uses on Cottonwood Creek

- grazing
- hunting
- ATV's (no access in canyon; north and west on rim)

ORV Work Session

Verification of BLM Information

- Lands listed as state lands in report are really Division of Wildlife lands – different than other state lands in the state.

Threats & Protection Tools

After listing the uses in the corridor, the group addressed threats and protective measures for each of the identified ORV's on Escalante and Cottonwood Creeks– see attached worksheet.

Outstanding Questions from ORV Work Session:

- Does Audubon help with monitoring peregrines in any way?
- Do pellet hunters collect the peregrines' droppings?
- Want more recent data on the peregrines (past '09)
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