

CANYON CLARION

DOMINGUEZ-ESCALANTE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA & DOMINGUEZ CANYON WILDERNESS PLANNING NEWSLETTER

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<http://1.usa.gov/1qKkMVi>

BLM

Just Released: The Proposed Plan!



A collared lizard in the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area

Just in time for the 40-year anniversary of the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (D-E NCA) is pleased to announce the release of its Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP). This plan is the culmination of six years of collaborative effort between the BLM, Mesa, Delta, and Montrose Counties, other state and federal agencies, numerous interested user groups and non-governmental organizations, and individual NCA enthusiasts who care about what happens on their public lands.

NCA history, briefly

The D-E NCA and Dominguez Canyon Wilderness are 210,000 acres of unique and exceptional public land, designated in 2009 by the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act. Since the NCA's designation, the BLM has worked diligently to craft an RMP that appropriately addresses the values for which the

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Page 2: Advisory Council Update

Page 3: The Public Spoke

Page 4: The BLM Listened

Page 5: Andy Windsor—Recreation Planning All-Star *and* Out on the Ground

Page 6: Close to the Finish Line

NCA was established—which include paleontological, geological, archaeological, cultural, historical, recreational, natural, scientific, educational, scenic, riparian, wildlife, and wilderness—while complying with the agency's mission of sustained multiple use. This process has resulted in a Proposed RMP that the BLM and its partners can truly be proud of. When finalized, the RMP will guide management activities in the NCA for several decades. (Continued on page 2)

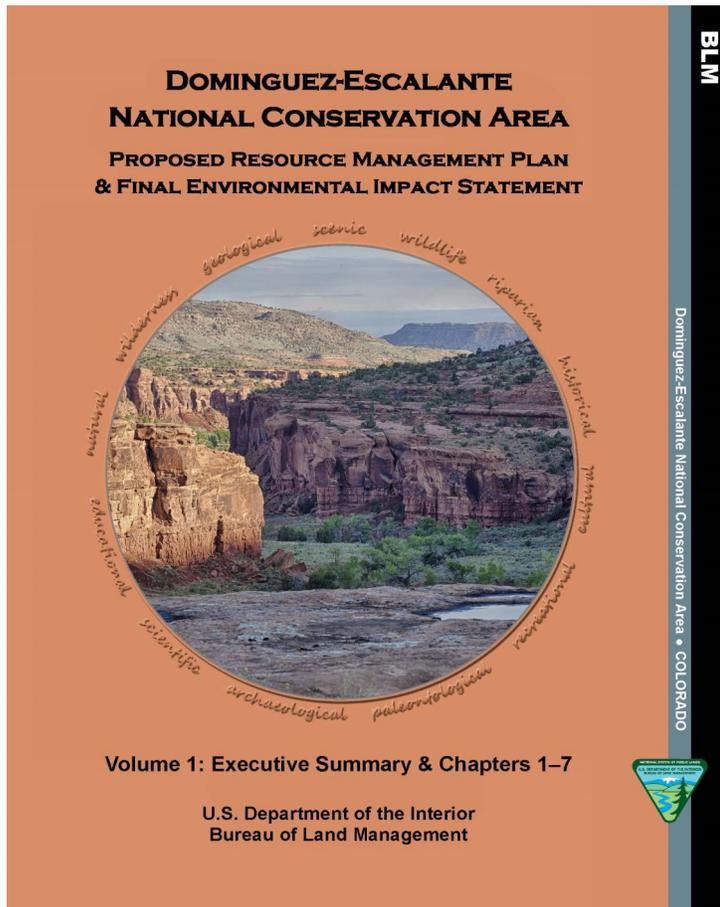
Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area • COLORADO



(Continued from page 1)

Where to find the plan

The Proposed Plan, as well as other helpful materials, fact sheets, and maps can be viewed or downloaded from the Web at the D-E NCA's ePlanning website: <http://1.usa.gov/1qKkMVi>. The BLM recognizes not everyone has access to a computer or the Internet, so printed copies of the document may be viewed at local libraries, the BLM State Office, and in the visitor reception areas of the Grand Junction and Uncompaghre Field Offices. For questions regarding access to the Proposed RMP, please contact the Grand Junction Field Office: 970-244-3000.



ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

BLM seeks nominations for Advisory Council positions

The BLM is seeking nominations to fill 8 vacancies on the council. Nominees should reside in or within close proximity to Mesa, Delta, or Montrose Counties. Individuals may nominate themselves or others. Nominations need to be received **by July 11, 2016**. For further information, visit the D-E NCA RMP ePlanning website: <http://1.usa.gov/1qKkMVi> and click on **How to get Involved**.

Changing of the guard

The Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area Advisory Council has undergone several changes in membership since the release of the Draft RMP in May 2013. In August 2013, the council said goodbye to members Joe Neuhof, Terry Kimber, and Mike Wilson, who were on the council representing local residents and whose backgrounds reflected the purposes for which the NCA was established. Commissioner Steve Acquafresca from Mesa County also vacated his seat on the council in 2013. Commissioner Acquafresca was replaced by Kaye Simonson from Mesa County's Planning department, and Ralph Files was appointed as the new representative for Montrose County. Also appointed to the council representing local residents were Kate Graham and Bob Janowski. Bill Harris, Tamera Minnick, Oscar Massey, and Katie Steele were re-appointed, joining seated members Commissioner Doug Atchley of Delta County and community resident Steve Boyle. Steve Boyle's and Commissioner Atchley's terms on the council expired in November of 2014; Commissioner Atchley was appointed for another term, and new representative Craig Grother, a wildlife biologist from Norwood, CO, joined the council.

Community service excellence

The BLM thanks all Advisory Council members, past and present, for their hard work and service. Their input, which represents contributions from a cross section of our diverse community, helps the BLM learn how people use their public lands and their needs and desires for future management of the D-E NCA. This information is critical in crafting a collaborative RMP that will help the BLM manage a landscape rich with natural and cultural resources for present and future generations. We couldn't have done it without them.

Productive meetings

The Advisory Council met six times between the last issue of the *Canyon Clarion* (released in September, 2013) and summer/fall 2015. The meetings covered specific topics of interest in the Draft RMP, information received during the public comment period, and suggested changes from the Draft RMP to the Proposed RMP. These meetings were open to the public.

Missed the meetings? Page 3 shows a recap of meeting dates, locations, and general topics. For more detailed information, find meeting minutes, schedules, updates and other information on the D-E NCA RMP ePlanning website: <http://1.usa.gov/1qKkMVi>.

Advisory Council Meetings November 2013–August 2015

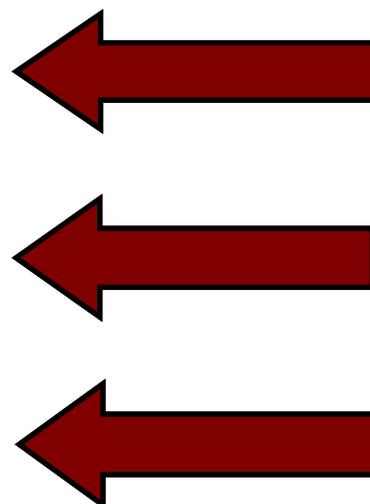
Date	Location	Topics
October 24, 2013	Whitman Education Center, Grand Junction, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation • Travel Management • Wilderness • Target Shooting • Earthcaching • Biological Systems • Wildlife
November 5, 2013	Bill Heddles Recreation Center, Delta, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological Systems • Travel Management • Wilderness • ACEC • Recreation • Livestock Grazing • Social and Economic Conditions • Cultural Resources
January 22, 2014	Mesa County Courthouse Annex, Grand Junction, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Council Members • Recap Recommendations • Recreation • Cultural Resources
April 16, 2014	Bill Heddles Recreation Center, Delta, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation • Travel Management • Biological Systems
July 23, 2014	Mesa County Central Services Building, Grand Junction, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to Proposed RMP • Wildlife • Travel Management • Recreation • Target Shooting
November 18, 2014	Bill Heddles Recreation Center, Delta, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildlife • Livestock Grazing

The next Advisory Council meetings will take place July 13 and July 27. Topics will include an overview of management under the Proposed Plan Alternative in the Proposed RMP and how the Protest and Appeal process works. These meetings will be announced in a news release as well as in the *Federal Register* and online at the RMP ePlanning website (<http://1.usa.gov/1qKkMVi>) and will be open to the public. We hope to see you there!

The Public Spoke

Comments with substance

The public review and comment period for the Draft RMP ran from May through September 2013. The purpose of this comment period was to provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about the plan, discuss it with BLM staff or Advisory Council members, and submit their remarks to the BLM. The BLM then thoroughly analyzed these comments and sorted them into substantive and non-substantive categories. BLM policy states that comments are considered “substantive” if they address specific details in the plan, such as the accuracy of the BLM’s data or methods, or pro-



(Continued on page 4)

vide new information or suggest reasonable alternative courses of action not previously considered by the BLM. Comments that simply state an opinion or preference are generally considered non-substantive (BLM Handbook H-1710-1). Substantive comments were then grouped by subject, and the BLM responded to them. These responses are in Appendix U of the Proposed RMP and in the D-E NCA Travel Management Plan Route Comment Report. BLM staff members were impressed by the valuable feedback the public provided in their comments and the in-depth knowledge of the resources and uses of the NCA that the people of Western Colorado expressed.

The BLM Listened

Change is good

The BLM used public comments and the recommendations of the D-E NCA Advisory Council to fine-tune the RMP. These changes are incorporated in the Proposed Plan Alternative of the Proposed RMP. Below is a list of key changes that were made as a result of public comments:

- Ninemile Hill ERMA and Cactus Park SRMA boundaries were modified to allow more motorized access to exceptional vistas and connection to the Tabeguache Trail.
- Zone 1 of the Wilderness would have a 25-person group size limit; a 12-person maximum group size limit would apply to Zones 2 and 3. Size limits help enhance visitor experience.
- The Cottonwood/Dry Fork area would not be designated as an SRMA; surface disturbance restrictions in this area were changed to site-specific relocation to accommodate trail re-routing and livestock grazing developments.
- Gunnison Gravels and Gibbler Mountain ACECs were carried from Alternative D in the Draft RMP into the Proposed Plan Alternative in the Proposed RMP.
- The analysis of socioeconomic impacts of recreation and livestock grazing was expanded, and non-market valuation of these resource uses was included.
- The national Risk of Contact model for desert bighorn and domestic sheep interaction was included in the analysis.

By the Numbers: Top 5 Comment Categories

Recreation	24.4%
Travel Management: Route Designations	12.0%
Travel Management: Allocations and Process	11.0%
Wildlife	9.4%
Livestock Grazing	6.3%

Other topics that proved important in the public comment period include vegetation/special status species, recreational target shooting, lands with wilderness characteristics, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs).



The public told the BLM what they value most about the D-E NCA

- The Wild and Scenic River Suitability determination would not be forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for designation consideration; the BLM would seek an in-stream flow agreement through the Colorado Water Conservation Board to protect the Outstandingly Remarkable vegetation community.
- Farmers Canyon Road would remain open to motorized vehicles year-round until BLM can construct a re-route for the protection of big game winter concentration areas.

Andy Windsor—Recreation Planning All-Star



Andy with SORP award

The *Canyon Clarion* took a moment to speak with Andy Windsor, Recreation Planner on the D-E NCA RMP interdisciplinary team. In spring 2015, Andy received a lifetime achievement award from the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP) for excellence in recreation planning through public education and outreach. Andy has demonstrated his commitment to public land management by promoting a more informed recreating clientele through developing national training courses, working with recreation groups and interested individuals, mentoring new professionals, and serving as a consultant for BLM State and Washington managers. He was recently promoted and is now the Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner for the BLM Grand Junction Field Office.

CC: How did you become interested in Recreation Planning?

AW: I have always been an active public land recreation enthusiast in my own life, and through that enjoyment, I became interested in the value recreation brings to others' lives. The combination of my enjoyment of public land resources and an interest in what recreation provides for individuals and the local community seemed to fit well together.

CC: What do you consider the most important challenges facing the D-E NCA?

AW: I think the biggest challenge is to achieve a balance between the conservation mandate required by the 2009 Omnibus Act, which designated the NCA, with traditional public land uses and the BLM's overall sustained multiple use mission. The BLM worked hard with our partners to design an RMP that will do all those things.

CC: What are you most looking forward to implementing when the D-E NCA RMP is finalized?

AW: I am really looking forward to the development of many different recreation opportunities and facilities, but most of all, I am excited about our education programs, which will help the public understand and appreciate the amazing resources the NCA provides this community.

Out on the Ground

While the BLM has worked hard toward completion of the RMP, it has also engaged with partners on exciting and fun community events. Colorado Canyons Association (CCA) and the BLM continued to expand education programs in summer 2015, when they led a float trip for high school students down the Gunnison River. Partnering with the CCA in fall 2015, the BLM joined with Delta County District 50-J, and the NCA became grounds for a scavenger hunt for 200 third-grade children.

Another educational opportunity came in spring 2016, when 350 seventh graders spent a day in the NCA learning the importance of local natural and cultural resources on public lands. The field day included a visit to Captain Smith's cabin, a hike to the Gunnison Waterwheel, and a wildlife radio-collaring tutorial.

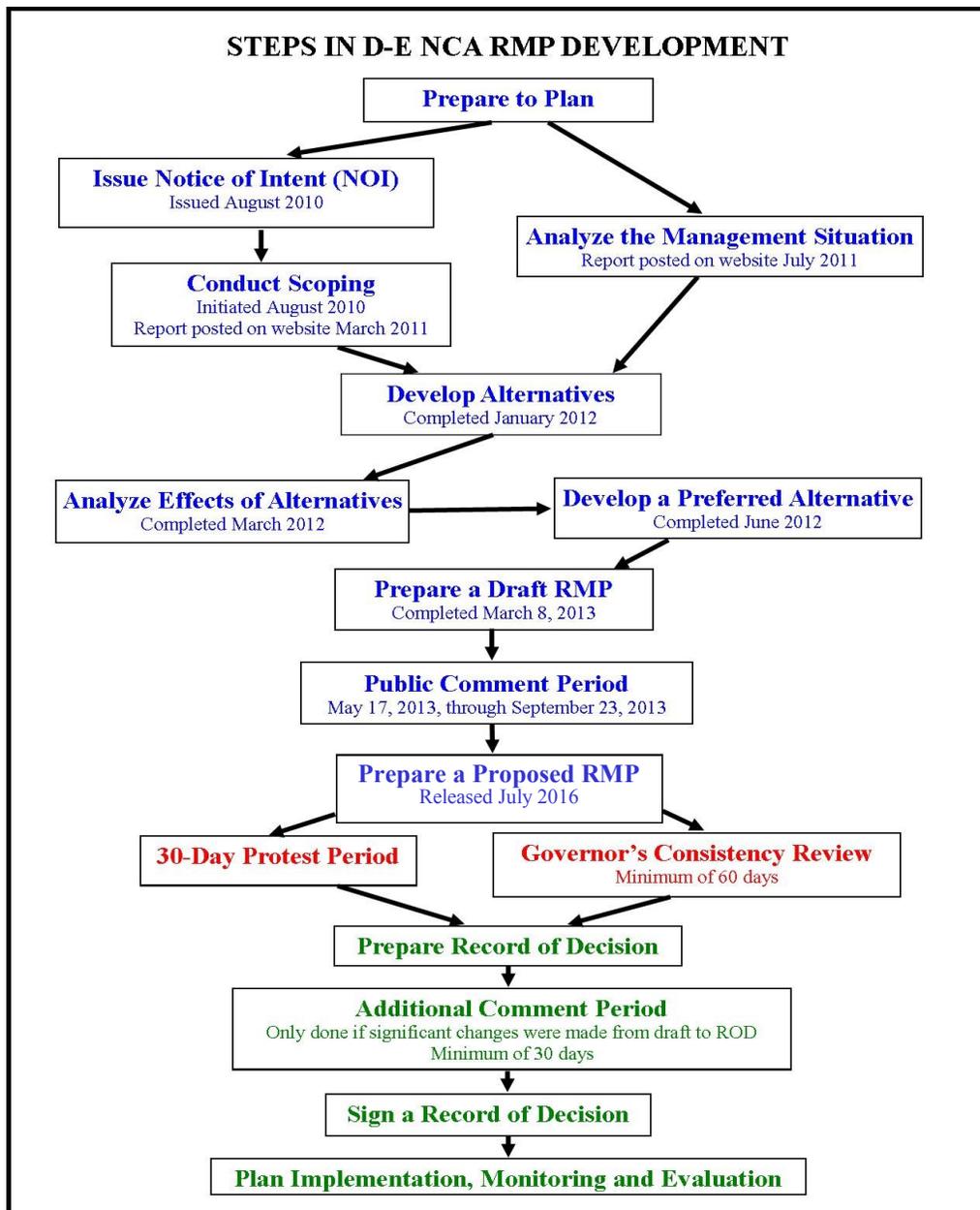
CCA also helps the BLM take good care of the NCA. Summer 2016 will be the third year for the Gunnison River Cleanup. The 2014 and 2015 cleanups were fun days with many great volunteers and their boats. Multiple bags of garbage and numerous other items were removed from the banks of the river, and a good time was had by all. The BLM appreciates the efforts of all our volunteers. Great work!



Looking for tracks at the 2014 scavenger hunt

Close to the Finish Line

Land use planning is a marathon, not a sprint, and the D-E NCA land use planning process has been no exception. The diagram below shows the deliberative steps the BLM uses in the planning process. The blue text represents steps that have been completed for the D-E NCA RMP. The red text shows where we are now, and green is where we are headed in the future. The BLM hopes to have the Record of Decision (ROD) signed in 2016. Then, the real fun of implementing the RMP with all of our partners can begin!



D-E NCA Staff

Collin Ewing—NCA Manager
Nikki Grant-Hoffman—Ecologist
Frank Stepleton—Law Enforcement Ranger
Anjelica Quintana—Natural Resources Specialist

The D-E NCA receives interdisciplinary support from fantastic teams in the Grand Junction and Uncompaghere Field Offices, and writer-editor support from Marie Lawrence, who now works for the BLM in Cañon City.