

CANYON CLARION

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

Volume 2, Issue 4 • December 2012

www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca/denca_rmp.html

Draft RMP/EIS expected for public release in early 2013

Over the past six months, since the D-E NCA Advisory Council last met in May 2012, the Dominguez-Escalante planning team has been preparing and reviewing its Draft Resource Management Plan and associated Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The BLM estimates it will release this Draft RMP/EIS in early 2013. The public will have 90 days to comment on the draft documents, once released.

“The BLM’s goal is to ensure we’ve incorporated all of the public input we’ve received and that the documents meet our agency’s policy and legislative guidelines,” said Ben Blom, planning lead for the RMP/EIS.

The Draft RMP/EIS will have the following structure:

- Chapter 1, Introduction: includes a description of the purpose and need for the plan, the planning area, legislative constraints and the planning process.
- Chapter 2, Alternatives: presents the five alternatives under detailed consideration in the Draft RMP and Draft EIS, as well as alternatives that were considered but not analyzed in detail.
- Chapter 3, Affected Environment: describes the current context of resources, resource uses, special designations and social and environmental conditions in the D-E NCA.
- Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences: describes the impacts of full implementation of the alternatives presented in Chapter 2 on the human and natural environments.
- Chapter 5, Consultation and Coordination: describes the consultations, coordination and public involvement efforts that took place throughout the planning process.
- Chapter 6, References: lists bibliographic information for all references cited in the document.

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Escalante Canyon, Delta County, Colorado

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- Chapter 7, Glossary: defines commonly used terms within the document.
- Appendices to the Draft RMP/EIS will include the following:
 - measures used for assessing the health of priority biological resources

existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

- a comprehensive travel and transportation management plan
- a Wild and Scenic River suitability report
 - Maps: includes maps used to display information presented in Chapters 1, 2,

Advisory Council will also hold meetings to discuss the Draft RMP. Dates and locations for these meetings will be posted on the D-E NCA website and will begin several weeks following the release of the documents.

“The upcoming public comment period is a key part of the RMP development process. This comment period will ensure the BLM is considering, and responding to, a wide variety of public opinions and perspectives in the development of this RMP,” said Katie Stevens, NCA Manager.

The RMP development process for the D-E NCA has been ongoing since fall 2010. For more information regarding the RMP/EIS, see the BLM’s RMP website at http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca/denca_rmp.html, or contact the BLM at (970) 244-3000.

“The BLM’s goal is to ensure we’ve incorporated all of the public input we’ve received and that the documents meet our agency’s policy and legislative guidelines”

- a bighorn/domestic sheep probability-of-interaction model
- a special recreation permit program overview
- an evaluation of proposed and

3 and appendices.

The BLM will hold open houses for the public following the documents’ release to facilitate public comment on the Draft RMP/EIS. The D-E NCA

BLM COMPLETES CONSTRUCTION ON THE BRIDGEPORT TRAILHEAD

The trailhead for this popular recreation spot, which provides entry to the mouth of Dominguez Canyon, has an information kiosk, toilet facilities, and a parking lot large enough to accommodate 23 cars and 8 horse trailers.



D-E NCA Advisory Council tours Escalante Canyon, Sawmill Mesa and the Hunting Ground

In 2012, the D-E NCA Advisory Council visited several major regions of the NCA to prepare for future discussions once the Resource Management Plan is released.

family has longstanding ties. Bill Harris, who represents cultural resources on the D-E NCA Advisory Council, explained the significance and origin of the rock art visited on the tour.

will be essential to future management. “We want to make sure that people have the opportunity to learn about this area’s unique history,” said Katie Stevens, D-E NCA Manager, “but we also have to balance that with the protection of the area’s rich and unique biological, cultural, scenic and social resources.”

The Council also generally agreed that BLM management of Escalante Canyon must be balanced with the needs of the current canyon residents. Katie Steele pointed out that the trip emphasized the importance of working with current ranchers. “Hopefully, we can all find a way for the current and future users of this area to coexist and still preserve the land, wildlife and cultural resources,” she said.

On Friday, Nov. 16, the Council, along with several BLM staff members and three local residents, visited the



On Aug. 22, the Council and the BLM toured Escalante Canyon and the Cactus Park region on the southern end of the D-E NCA.

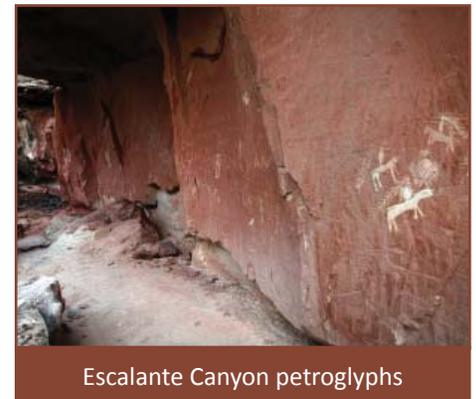
“Our intent was to become more familiar with the canyon’s geography, historic and current ranching uses, vegetation and cultural resources,” said Katie Steele, chairwoman of the D-E NCA Advisory Council and resident of Mesa County. “We thought it best for the Council to become more familiar with the concerns that are specific to the Escalante Canyon area and its residents.”

Doug Atchley and Mike Wilson, both longtime Delta County residents and members of the Council, explained the history of Escalante Canyon and Cactus Park. Oscar Massey, another member of the Advisory Council, told of the ranching history of the region, to which his

A key takeaway from this trip was the importance and distinctiveness of the history of this part of the D-E NCA. “The cultural resources in Escalante Canyon are unique because they represent a microcosm

of how man has adapted to the desert environment over the last several millennia—they provide a snapshot into how people lived during an earlier time,” said Bill Harris.

All field trip participants agreed that balancing protection with recreation and education in this part of the NCA



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Hunting Ground area of the D-E NCA. The purpose of this trip was to allow the Council to experience the area firsthand and discuss some management issues on site, to “kick the dirt” a little, according to Andy Windsor, Outdoor Recreational Planner for the BLM in Grand



View of the Gunnison River from the bluffs above Tunnel Point

Junction.

Although not visible from Route 50, several overlooks in this section of the NCA have spectacular views of Dominguez Canyon and the Gunnison River as it makes its way past steep canyon walls, quiet pastureland and the occasional desert bighorn sheep. En route to one of these overlooks, the Council visited sites used for dispersed target shooting. The last portion of the road to the Tunnel Point overlook was somewhat steep and rocky and traversed a portion of a proposed community connecting trail from Whitewater to Delta.

The group finally reached an elevation of over 5,500 feet, affording an outstanding 360-degree view,

overlooking Tunnel Point and Bridgeport (see inset on Page 2) as well as the section of the Gunnison River that winds around Dads Flat and Sand Flat, two sections of private land. Councilmember, rancher and grazing permittee Oscar Massey pointed out the historical and traditional use of grazing in this region and some of the challenges posed by the arid climate of the Hunting Ground. Local residents Bob and Doris Janowski explained how they use the area, and Jan Potterveld, Chairman of the Back Country Horsemen of Colorado, provided information about equestrian activities.

On two prior field trips, the Council visited the northern Cactus Park

region of the NCA and took a float trip on the Gunnison River. The D-E NCA Advisory Council is composed of ten members of the public, each of whom represents key interests and communities in the three-county area surrounding the NCA. The Secretary of the Interior assembled the Council to provide advice to the BLM while it is developing a Resource Management Plan for the D-E NCA. For more information on the D-E NCA Advisory Council, visit http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca/denca_rmp/DENCA_Resource_Advisory_Council.html.