

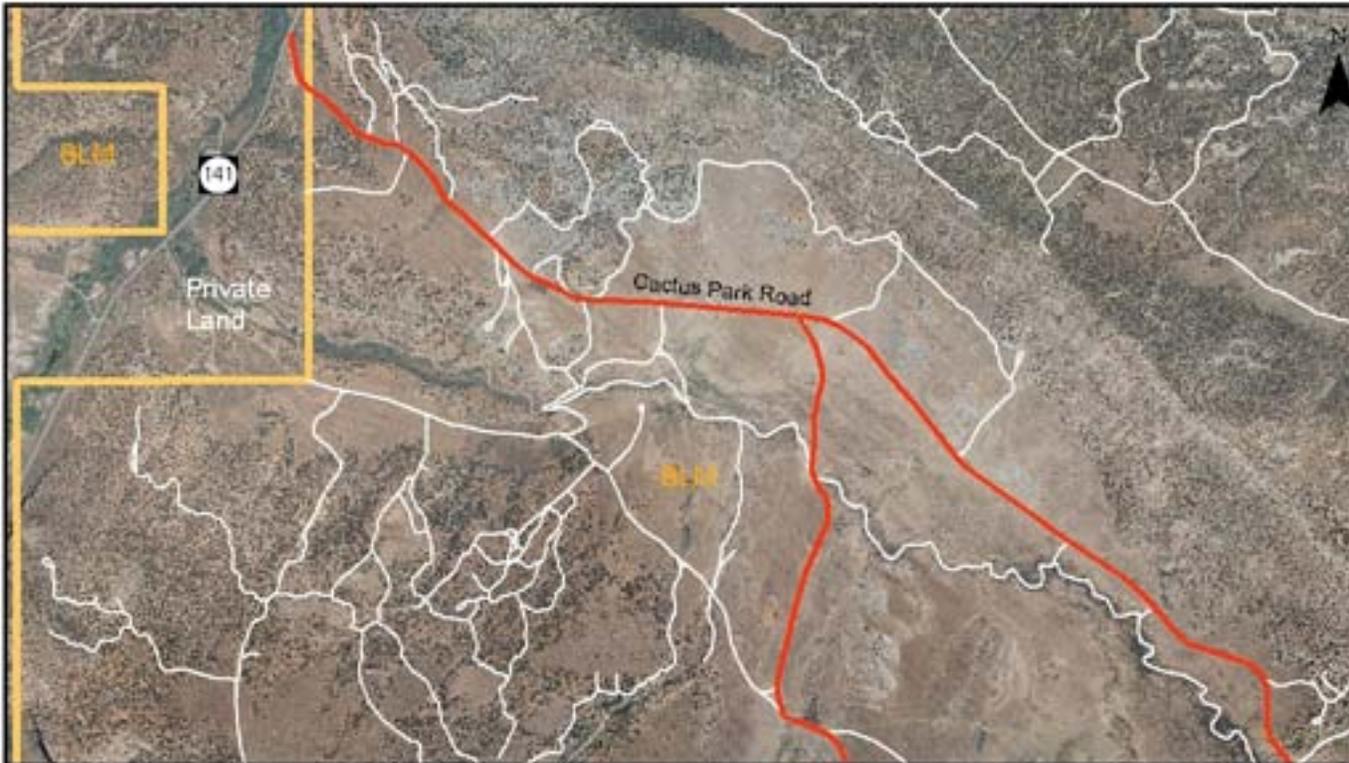
# CANYON CLARION

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

Volume 2, Issue 2-- February 2012

[www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca/denca\\_rmp.html](http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca/denca_rmp.html)

BLM



Like many other areas in the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area, Cactus Park has an abundance of trails and roads. In the transportation management plan, some will be ultimately closed, while others will be limited to specific use or open seasonally. The final plan may call for new trails, which can be expensive due to cultural survey costs.

## Travel management planning progresses

**T**he BLM's interdisciplinary team completed significant work over the fall and winter to prepare three draft travel management plans, which will be considered in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement slated for public review and comment later this year.

To consider the vast amount of available data in a consistent and repeatable way, the interdisciplinary team used Geographic Information System (GIS) data, Google Earth satellite projections and map-linked photos, to assemble and organize data for discussion and review. Between 10 and 20 specialists, including representatives of cooperating agencies, spent more than two weeks reviewing data and other information to develop draft plans. The 572 miles of existing roads and trails (not counting county roads) had already been broken

down into numbered segments for public review.

Planners numbered and identified each segment in a mapping database -- often with map-linked photographs. For each trail segment, the team reviewed multiple data sets and then discussed the data collaboratively. In addition to trails and topography data, individual specialists brought in their digital, mapped data sets (e.g., vegetation, key wildlife areas, sensitive soils, and known cultural resources). The team's outdoor recreation planner also used the public comment database to review comments on individual routes.

The team reviewed more than 3,200 segments or sections, guided by the following considerations.

The question "Does the route have a use?" allowed

**Continued on page 2**

Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area • COLORADO



## Continued from page1

planners to consider:

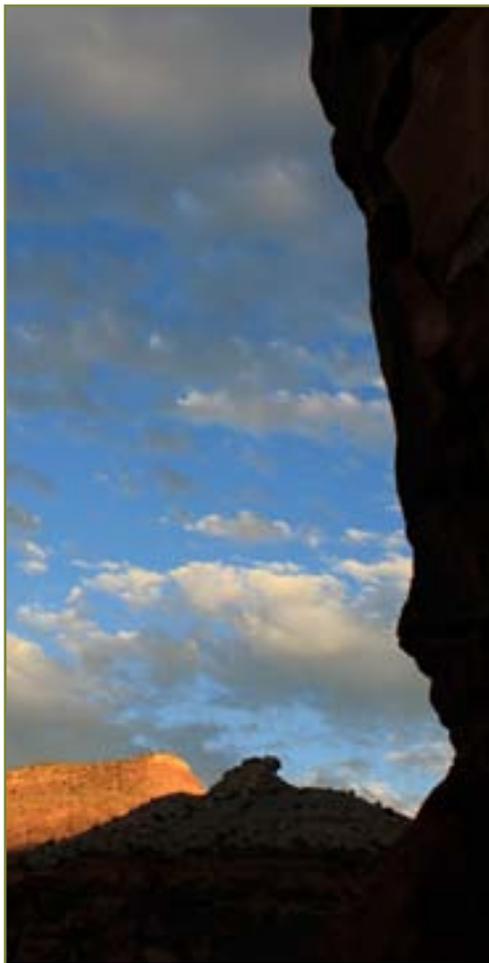
- Needs for trail-based recreation, recreational access, or access to overlooks/camping spots
- Access to range developments or livestock management needs
- Access to private or state property, or a right-of-way
- Fire suppression, science, management or Native American traditional use needs

In reviewing environmental data, the team considered:

- Areas of erosive soils or slopes of greater than 40 percent.
- Important wildlife habitats, such as big game winter range, calving areas or raptor nests.
- Presence of known cultural or historic properties.
- Whether the route is parallel to a preferable, existing route.
- Whether the route is a dead-end route (0.5 miles or less, not leading to a facility, campground, overlook or access point).
- Whether the trail “dead-ends” in private property and is likely to lead to trespass problems.

Because travel decisions are made in support of other resources and their goals and objectives, the team also considered themes within each alternative, which would yield a different travel network under each alternative. Alternatives would also have some similarities, such as:

- Routes that could lead to trespass would typically be closed or there would be administrative use only across all alternatives (about 1 percent of current routes).
- Redundant or dead-end routes would be typically closed across all alternatives (about 20 percent of existing routes).
- Routes without a use (for livestock grazing, recreation, lands and realty, access to private, rights-of-way) would be typically closed across all alternatives (about 6 percent of existing routes).
- Routes to private, livestock grazing facilities, or Forest Service-connecting routes would be typically left open or des-



## Travel planning by the numbers

**572** miles of trails and roads (not counting county roads)

**3,239** trail/road segments

**7** possible route designations

**209,610** acres in NCA

**66,280** acres of wilderness closed to motorized/mechanized travel

**143,330** acres requiring travel management planning

ignated for administrative use.

## Coming up

The three draft travel management plans will now undergo environmental analysis to predict and disclose the environmental trade-offs and impacts of each travel system. This information is a critical piece of the Draft EIS, which accompanies the Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP). Within the next several months, the BLM will also go through the same process for the preferred alternative (to be developed), prior to releasing the Draft RMP/EIS for public review. When the draft travel management plans are released for public review and comment this fall, each trail or road segment will be labeled with one of the following designations:

- Open to all modes of travel (**O**)
- Closed (**R**)
- Limited to administrative use only (**C**) (for example, access to range developments for range permittees)
- Limited to foot and horse travel (**H**)
- Limited to bicycle, foot and horse travel (**N**)
- Limited to motorcycle, bicycle, foot and horse travel (**M**)
- Limited to ATVs, motorcycles, bicycle, foot and horse travel (**A**)

The public will have a 90-day public comment period once the document is released to provide feedback on the Draft RMP/EIS and the draft travel management plans, including the preferred alternative. The planning team will then consider public comments and adjust the final plan as appropriate.



# What are the ground rules for travel management?

**A**ll discussions of management in D-E NCA start with the 2009 Omnibus Act, which created the NCA. This legislation limited motorized and mechanized travel in the NCA to designated routes. No cross-country travel is allowed.

The resource management plan (RMP) now under development, provides for recreational, traditional, casual, agricultural, commercial and educational uses and provides for all modes and conditions of travel, including hiking, biking, horseback, bicycle and motorized.

Travel management decisions are made at two levels:

- **Area allocation decisions** are at the RMP-level and require a plan amendment for changes. An area allocation can be written to limit travel to designated routes, limit the entire area to a specific season of use, type of use, or is closed altogether.
- **Implementation decisions** can be changed without a plan amendment. Individual routes are designated as open, closed or limited, to varying degrees.

BLM staff from the Uncompahgre and Grand Junction field offices collected, inventoried and digitized D-E NCA spatial data from 1998 to 2010. The BLM then gathered public input on trails and roads within D-E NCA and Grand Junction through mid-2011 to inventory routes and their uses.

The final inventory (excluding county roads and wilderness routes) includes 572 miles of trails and roads.

The current (or no action alternative) situation:

- Limits travel to the 572 miles of existing routes (plus county roads).
- Closes wilderness study areas and wilderness to mechanized and motorized travel.
- Seasonally closes some areas to protect big game calving or winter refuge areas.
- Permits cross-country travel for hikers, horseback riders and mountain bikers.

BLM regulations require the agency to locate Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) trails to minimize:

- Damage to soils, watershed, vegetation, air or other resources.
- Harassment of wildlife or disruption of wildlife habitat (especially threatened and endangered species).
- Conflicts between OHVs and other existing or proposed recreational uses.
- New motorized trails in wilderness, primitive areas or natural areas.



**BLM considers all forms of transportation in the D-E NCA transportation management plan, including horseback, hiking, mountain bike, and motorized -- motorcycles, ATV and four-wheel drive. Planners wrote the transportation plan to meet BLM resource needs -- biological, cultural, soils, water, geology and paleontology.**