

CANYON CLARION

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

Volume 1, Issue 1 • February 25, 2011

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

BLM

Stakeholders Now Focus on D-E NCA for W&SR Suitability

Independent stakeholders – landowners, conservationists, recreationists and business leaders are about to consider whether streams within the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area are suitable for inclusion in the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) system.

The stakeholders held their first meeting Feb. 24th at the Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta.

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Both the Grand Junction and Uncompahgre field offices, as part of their resource management plans, have determined that a number of streams are “eligible” for WSR con-

sideration. The stakeholders will strive to reach consensus on whether streams and stream segments are “suitable” for federal management. The stakeholders are wrestling with that question for the field offices and D-E NCA alike.

Eligibility determinations are already completed for the rivers and streams within the D-E NCA, through eligibility studies conducted by the neighboring field offices.

The initial step in determining eligibility was to generate an inventory of all rivers and streams within the evaluation area.

The river segments were then evaluated to determine whether they meet the dual criteria of being free-flowing and possessing one or more outstandingly remarkable values and classified as wild, scenic, or recreational, based on water quality and

level of human development along the river corridor.

After evaluating the stream segments inside D-E NCA, six streams – separated into 10 segments – were determined to be free-flowing and possessed one or more outstandingly remarkable values necessary for WSR eligibility.

Determining suitability is a complicated process, but essentially comes down to how practical it is for a federal land agency like the BLM, to manage these streams and stream segments. (See www.rivers.gov for more information.)

Stakeholders recently prepared comments for stream segments outside D-E NCA. They failed to reach consensus as to whether segments upstream from D-E NCA were suitable for WSR status.

| Stream Segment | BLM miles | Outstandingly Remarkable Values | Tentative Classification |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gunnison River Segment 3 (UFO Report) | 14.02 | Recreational boating, Fish, Cultural, Historical | Recreational |
| Gunnison River Segment 1 (GJFO Report) | 13.45 | Recreational boating, Fish, Cultural, Historical | Recreational |
| Big Dominguez Creek Segment 1 (GJFO Report) | 15.86 | Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, Geological, Cultural | Wild |
| Big Dominguez Creek Segment 2 (GJFO Report) | 0.78 | Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, Geological, Cultural | Scenic |
| Little Dominguez Creek Segment 1 (GJFO Report) | 13.14 | Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, Geological, Cultural | Wild |
| Little Dominguez Creek Segment 2 (GJFO Report) | 2.45 | Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, Geological, Cultural | Scenic |
| Rose Creek (UFO Report) | 3.90 | Scenic | Wild |
| Escalante Creek Segment 1 (UFO Report) | 8.45 | Scenic, Recreational, Geologic, Wildlife, Vegetation | Scenic |
| Escalante Creek Segment 2 (UFO Report) | 0.90 | Fish, Wildlife | Recreational |
| Cottonwood Creek (UFO Report) | 18.27 | Vegetation | Scenic |



Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area • COLORADO

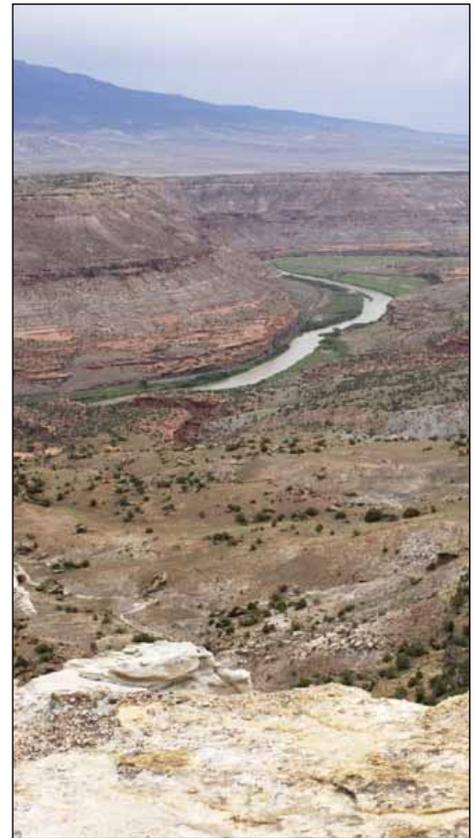


Work on AMS Helps Formulate Management Alternatives

Part two of the planning process for Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area’s planning team is to work on an “analysis of the management situation” (AMS) document. This document is designed to answer preliminary questions about the condition of each resource and resource use inside D-E NCA – all within the context of how it has been managed by the field offices in Grand Junction and Montrose. Each specialist within the Grand Junction and Uncompahgre field office is asked to predict where the BLM has opportunities to improve management of each D-E NCA resource and resource use. As these opportunities emerge, the D-E NCA Advisory Council will be asked for ideas, research and suggestions. Ultimately, the D-E NCA planning team will use all of the above information to develop a range of management alternatives. The advisory council and planning team will ask a number of questions, including:

- How can the BLM best respond to changing resource conditions and uses?
- What new information should be considered?
- Where might a change in management approach be needed?
- What issues and suggestions have been gathered through the scoping process?

The AMS document should be completed in February. A draft of management alternatives should be written by July. These two steps will lead to a draft resource management plan for D-E NCA by mid-2012.



D-E NCA has Growing Number of Friends

Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area welcomes a growing body of volunteers to tackle projects that emerge from the planning process, and to maintain the area for present and future generations.

Leading the charge will be Colorado Canyons Association (CCA) – an expansion of the Friends of McInnis Canyons (FMC) group that will now also offer assistance to D-E NCA and the Gunnison Gorge NCA.

CCA Executive Director Joe Neuhof will be working to grow the organization beyond its McInnis Canyons roots to encompass all three NCAs in western Colorado.

Neuhof will have a solid foundation in the FMC group, which has existed for five years. FMC has 150 members and more than 600 contacts of people who’ve volunteered, donated money or attended FMC activities and functions in the past.

“By late 2011, I’d like to recruit one or two additional board mem-

bers for Colorado Canyons, to represent the Dominguez – Escalante and Gunnison Gorge NCAs,” Neuhof said. Recruitment would boost board numbers from 11 to 15.

The expansion is made possible by a \$300,000 grant from the Conservation Lands Foundation, enabling the FMC

board to hire a full-time executive director, and move into a downtown office at 543 Main Street #4 in Grand Junction. The board also employs a half-time outreach coordinator.

The FMC has built a reputation in the Grand Valley for its education programs for children and the general

Joe Neuhof at a glance

Executive Director, Colorado Canyons Association.

Former West Slope Director, Colorado Environmental Coalition.

Board member, Dominguez – Escalante National Conservation Area Advisory Council.

Bachelor’s degree, University of Maine, majoring in philosophy and environmental policy.

Master’s degree, Naropa University, nonprofit management and leadership.

CCA main phone: 970-263-7902

E-mail address: joe@canyonsassociation.org

Colorado Canyons Association NCAs

| National Conservation Area | Founded | Acres |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|
| Gunnison Gorge | 1999 | 62,844 |
| McInnis Canyons | 2000 | 123,430 |
| Dominguez – Escalante | 2009 | 209,610 |

..... continued

public. The CCA will continue and extend that tradition into the Dominguez – Escalante and Gunnison Gorge areas, Neuhof said.

Neuhof will work to identify and secure new grants, launch a major donor development campaign and establish partnerships with individuals and groups who value all three NCAs. Neuhof will also be the face of the organization, especially with stewardship work in all three NCAs. Friends have long relied on a pool of dedicated board members and volunteers for trail maintenance and interpretive work.

The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, which created the Dominguez-Escalante NCA, also formalized the National Landscape Conservation System – containing 27 million acres of national monuments, wilderness areas, wild and scenic river and NCAs.

Neuhof said the CCA will look at how the three NCAs – all within 50 miles of each other – can fit together from a habitat, community and recreational point of view. All three NCAs have growing numbers of local friends and volunteers. CCA's goal is to help those friends and volunteers grow even more, with fund-raising expertise and office support.

For information on the CCA, visit www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org.



D-E NCA's Cooperating Agencies Dig into Issues

Similar to the advisory council for the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area, a group of cooperating agencies have signed up to help with the D-E NCA planning process.

The D-E NCA planning team has invited neighboring counties, municipalities, tribes and agencies with relevant expertise, to help the BLM develop the D-E NCA management plan. Last month, the cooperating agencies were briefed on the D-E NCA planning process and given an opportunity to share their own concerns.

Representatives who attended the Jan. 20th meeting were:

- **Doug Atchley**, Delta County Commissioner
- **Brian Wilson**, Public Works Director for Montrose County
- **Keith Fife**, Long-range Planning Director for Mesa County
- **Kerwin Jensen**, Community Development Director for the City of Montrose
- **Rob Schoeber**, Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Grand Junction

Representatives from the City of Delta, U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Department of Natural Resources and Colorado Water Conservation Board were not present. Two representatives of the cooperating agencies – Atchley and Fife – also attended an advisory council meeting in early February. Currently, nine local, state and federal agencies have signed on as cooperating agencies, based on jurisdiction by law or special expertise.

While the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office have declined becoming official cooperating agencies, the BLM will nevertheless consult with them as the D-E NCA planning process proceeds. Similarly, while the tribes have not responded to the invitation to be an official cooperating agency, BLM planners will consult with them later this spring. In 2005, the BLM amended its planning regulations to ensure that staff at all levels engage their governmental partners consistently and effectively through the cooperating agency relationship whenever land- use plans are prepared or revised. Cooperating agency status has long been part of the NEPA process.

