



DOMINGUEZ-ESCALANTE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA PROPOSED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN & FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



❖ WILDLIFE ❖

The Dominguez-Escalante NCA Proposed Plan Alternative includes management actions to conserve, maintain, and enhance habitat for a variety of wildlife species, including big game and special status species. Management actions for wildlife and wildlife habitat are found in the Proposed RMP under Priority Habitats and Vegetation, Special Status Species, and Non-Special Status Fish and Wildlife.

Priority Habitats and Vegetation

The BLM went through an extensive process to consider the species and biological communities in the NCA, so that future management could be based on an understanding of species and community relationships. As part of this process the BLM identified vegetation/habitat types and species (including wildlife and plants) that would be priorities for management. Sagebrush shrublands and pinyon juniper woodland habitats are part of this focus. Associated actions in the Proposed Plan Alternative include the use of vegetation treatments, adjustments or restrictions on resource uses, reduction in travel route density to minimize habitat fragmentation, minimization of ground disturbing fire suppression activities, and limitations on surface disturbing activities. Management of Priority Habitats and Vegetation begins on line 22 of the alternatives matrix in Chapter 2, Volume 1. See Appendix A for information on the process the BLM used for evaluating Priority Habitats and Vegetation, and Appendix R for maps showing areas where there would be surface disturbance or timing limitations in the Proposed Plan Alternative.

Special Status Species

Desert bighorn sheep were identified as a priority species, as they require special management consideration and attention beyond management of their broader habitat types. In the Proposed Plan Alternative management of bighorn sheep is focused on reducing the risk of contact with domestic sheep herds to avoid potential disease transmission. To determine the risk of contact between domestic and bighorn sheep, the BLM used an intensive analysis process and two models. Results helped the BLM craft appropriate management actions for bighorn habitat. The Proposed Plan Alternative would permit domestic sheep grazing, with special stipulations that would reduce the likelihood of contact between the species. Stipulations include the required use of guard dogs to deter comingling in occupied desert bighorn habitat, limitations on domestic sheep band size, and prohibitions on breeding and lambing on public lands. Special Status Species management begins on line 116 of the alternatives matrix in Chapter 2, Volume 1. Appendix C explains the probability of contact modeling used by the BLM, and Appendix R contains maps depicting the results of this model as well as desert bighorn range in the NCA.

Non-Special Status Fish and Wildlife

The NCA is home to many native species of birds, fish, and mammals. The Proposed Plan Alternative contains management actions to conserve ecosystem diversity, productivity, viability and natural processes for these species. Examples include prohibition of surface disturbing activities during migratory bird nesting season and big game winter range, invasive species removal and replacement with indigenous species (e.g. removal of non-native rainbow trout and restocking with native cutthroat trout), and rehabilitation or closure of BLM routes when necessary for pronghorn winter range. The BLM would continue to work closely with Colorado Parks and Wildlife on management of all wildlife species in the NCA. For more information see line 171 of the alternatives matrix in Chapter 2, Volume 1. Appendix J contains a list of Best Management Practices which the BLM would use, where appropriate, for the management of fish and wildlife, and Appendix R contains maps showing ranges for various wildlife species in the NCA.

Watchable Wildlife Areas

The Proposed RMP would create a Watchable Wildlife Area in Escalante Canyon in order to provide the public with a high quality wildlife viewing experience. This area is depicted on Map 2-16 of Appendix R. The BLM would encourage education and interpretation, and provide facilities such as signs, kiosks, designated trail systems, and restrooms to enhance visitor's experience and provide opportunities to learn about the special and unique organisms found in the NCA. Management of the Watchable Wildlife Area can be found on line 630 of the alternatives matrix, Chapter 2, Volume 1.