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News Release

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BLM moves forward with plan to protect resources at the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. - Today, the Bureau of Land Management released a plan guiding management in the 210,000-acre Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area, including the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness. Congress, based on broad local support, designated these public lands as a National Conservation Area in 2009 for their unique geologic, cultural and ecological resources in the spectacular canyon country of the Uncompahgre Plateau.

The plan provides long-term management goals for the area's cultural and historic sites along with ecological, geological and paleontological resources spanning 600 million years. The NCA, which is located in Delta, Montrose and Mesa counties south of Grand Junction, provides hiking, horseback riding and wilderness recreation opportunities. Approximately 137,000 recreational visitors contribute \$2.1 million to the surrounding communities annually.

"The hard work and involvement of a very active advisory council; the state of Colorado; local governments in Mesa, Delta and Montrose counties; and many interested private citizens have helped us understand the communities' needs for this important piece of public land," said Collin Ewing, manager of the Dominguez-Escalante NCA. "We believe the plan strikes the right balance in providing outstanding recreation opportunities, protecting sensitive resources and continuing historical uses in the NCA."

Representatives from the local communities contributed time and resources toward developing the Proposed Resource Management Plan. In addition to public comments and participation in meetings during both the scoping and draft stages of the plan, the Dominguez-Escalante Advisory Council met with the BLM and the public 35 times to delve into how to best manage this area for its special resources.

The Proposed RMP is based largely on the Preferred Alternative in the Draft RMP and Environmental Impact Statement released for public comment in 2013. The BLM finalized the plan with the help of public comments as well as close coordination with Cooperating Agencies and the advisory council.

Under the Proposed RMP, seven areas would be managed as Recreation Management Areas where specific activities such as motorized and non-motorized trail use, camping, big game hunting, canoeing and auto-touring would be protected.

The BLM would continue to manage livestock grazing in the NCA, which is an important economic and historical use specifically identified in the designating legislation that is consistent with objectives for recreational, biological, natural and cultural resources.

In addition to two existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, the plan adds two new areas to emphasize protecting rare plants and paleontological resources for a total of four areas covering 9,011 acres. The plan also identifies one segment of Cottonwood Creek as suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation.

The Proposed RMP/Final EIS is currently out for a 30-day public protest period and 60-day Governor's consistency review. The Proposed RMP documents can be found online at <http://1.usa.gov/1qKkMVi>.

Dominguez-Escalante NCA was designated by the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Management Act and is part of the BLM's National Conservation Lands. The area is known for its breathtaking beauty, characterized by red-rock canyons and sandstone bluffs. Within the boundary of the NCA, the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness provides outstanding hiking and exploring opportunities. It includes scenic canyons and mesas carved in sandstone, and features two cascading streams, waterfalls, spectacular geologic features, ecological diversity, and archaeological and paleontological sites. The wilderness is home to desert bighorn sheep as well as rock art and historic remnants of the area's ranching roots.

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