



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Royal Gorge Field Office
3028 East Main Street
Cañon City, Colorado 81212

DEC 07 2015

In Reply Refer To:
1610 (COF020, JS)

Dear Interested Party:

In November 2015, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO), completed a Wild and Scenic River Eligibility study. This study was completed as part of the Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that such a study be completed whenever Federal agencies revise their land use plans.

The final eligibility report can be found at <http://on.doi.gov/1HVULcA>. The report details which river and stream segments on BLM-administered public lands within the field office meet the criteria to be eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation. The eligibility phase of the study is solely an inventory designed to identify outstanding river-related values, and it does not examine competing uses for the identified river segments.

The BLM is now beginning the second phase of the Wild and Scenic River study called the suitability phase or suitability study. The suitability study is the process of determining whether each segment identified as eligible would be a worthy addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system. During the initial stage of the suitability process, the BLM is considering a number of suitability criteria such as manageability of each segment, land ownership, use tradeoffs and conflicts, usage levels, and availability of other methods for protecting values, to name a few (see the complete list of criteria in Attachment #1).

Public input is critical for developing a thorough draft suitability analysis. At this time, the BLM is soliciting data from the public regarding each of the eligible stream segments. The most helpful information to BLM is data that directly addresses each of the suitability criteria identified in Attachment #1. Please send us any information that may be useful regarding the eligible stream segments of interest to you by January 15, 2016. While BLM will accept recommendations on specific river segments, data regarding each of the suitability criteria is the most useful in making the draft suitability determinations.

It is expected that a Draft Alternatives Report will be published in the summer of 2016 that incorporates the Draft Suitability Report and the public will have the opportunity at that time to comment on draft suitability determinations. Comments on the Draft Alternatives Report and Suitability Report will be incorporated into the Draft Resource Management Plan (DRMP)/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), tentatively scheduled in the winter of 2017.

Also included for your information is a Question and Answer document regarding Wild and Scenic Rivers Analysis and Water Rights/Water Projects (Attachment #2), and the BLM Colorado Wild and Scenic Eligibility and Suitability Studies Fact Sheet (Attachment #3).

If you have any questions, contact John Smeins at 719-269-8581 or email at jsmeins@blm.gov

Sincerely,



Patricia M. Bailey
Field Manager (Acting)
Royal Gorge Field Office

Enclosures:

- 1 - W&SR Suitability Criteria (1 p)
- 2 - Q&A on W&SR Analysis and Water Rights/Water Projects (3 p)
- 3 - BLM Colorado Wild and Scenic Eligibility and Suitability Studies Fact Sheet (2p)

cc:

Roy Smith (CO - 930) w/attachments