

ROYAL GORGE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

PLAN AMENDMENT

Sub-region(s): South Park #4 Maintenance Change: # 8
Area of Change: All BLM administered lands in the
South Park Sub-region

Change Initiated By (Title): Resource Staff and Land Use Planner

Decision to be Changed: 4-47 and 4-48 Land tenure adjustments

Other Affected Decisions: N/A

CHANGE

BLM 1996 South Park land tenure designations in the RGFO-RMP Record of Decision

- 7,901 (12%) acres for retention or exchange
- 43,551 (68%) acres for disposal through exchange or transfer
- 12,900 (20%) acres for disposal

Adjusted, per this decision, to:

- 40,316 acres (63%) would be retained in BLM ownership.
 - 19,330 acres (30%) would become exchange-restricted.
 - 3,953 acres (06 %) would be marked for disposal.
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RATIONALE

The change in land tenure status in the South Park Eco-Subregion recommended in the South Park Land Tenure Adjustment Environmental Assessment (Alternative D) balances the protection of better understood important resource values with agency management costs and RGRA-RMP goals and objectives. The protection of newly discovered resource values, evaluation of agency management costs and the promotion of RGRA-RMP goals and objectives were accomplished through extensive public involvement, multi-agency consultation and more up-to-date GIS mapping techniques

Specialists Consulted: RGFO interdisciplinary team

SIGNATURE

Land Use Planner  Date: 5/27/09

Field Manager  Date: 5-27-09

DECISION RECORD

CO-200-2005-0025 EA

To
Amend South Park Land Tenure Designations in the
Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

USDI Bureau of Land Management
Royal Gorge Field Office

Park County, Colorado

INTRODUCTION: This document describes my Decision and rationale for the South Park Land Tenure Adjustment Environmental Assessment (EA) and plan amendment to the Royal Gorge Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RGRA-RMP). My Decision is based on the South Park Land Tenure Adjustment Environmental Assessment, subsequent finding of no significant impact (FONSI), and the goals and objectives of the RGRA-RMP. The South Park Land Tenure Adjustment Environmental Assessment utilized the goals and objectives of the RMP and newly acquired resource information to analyze land tenure adjustments in the South Park Subregion of the Royal Gorge Resource Area (RGRA).

In accordance with 43 CFR 1610.5-5, "an amendment shall be initiated by the need to consider monitoring and evaluation findings, new data or revised policy, a change in circumstances or a proposed action that may result in the change of the scope of resource uses or a change in the terms, conditions and decisions of the approved plan." The collection and analysis of new data and public input on the South Park Subregion of the RGRA-RMP required an adjustment to the land allocation patterns in this area. The new analysis and subsequent land allocation decisions outlined in Alternative D (proposed action) of the South Park Land Tenure Adjustment Environmental Assessment require the Royal Gorge Field Office to amend the RGRA-RMP. Resource management plan amendments are subject to a 30-day public protest period and 60-day governor's consistency review.

The Administrative Record, including the EA that discusses and analyzes the Proposed Action and alternatives, is available for review at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Royal Gorge Field Office, 3028 E. Main Street, Canon City, Colorado. The EA is available at the following web address:

http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/rgfo/planning/south_park_land_tenure.html

Please direct questions about the Decision Record, EA, or FONSI to Joseph Vieira, Natural Resources Specialist, at (719) 269-8708, or by submitting your questions to rgfo_comments@co.blm.gov.

BACKGROUND:

The South Park region of Colorado is a 480,000-acre valley of intermontane grasslands at approximately 10,000 ft elevation located west of Denver in Park County, Colorado. The valley contains the headwaters of the South Platte River and Antero, Spinney Mountain and Elevenmile Reservoirs, making this area an important source of drinking water supplies for Colorado's Front Range cities.

In 1996 the RGRA Record of Decision and approved RGRA-RMP identified 57,793 acres of BLM-administered lands, 347,531 acres of private lands and 79,230 acres of state lands in the South Park Eco-Sub-Region. The approved RGRA-RMP recommended the following BLM acreages per land-use category:

- 7,901 (12%) acres for retention or exchange
- 43,551 (68%) acres for disposal through exchange or transfer
- 12,900 (20%) acres for disposal

These recommendations are based on RGRA-RMP land tenure adjustment recommendations and, in part, on knowledge acquired during the resource management planning process completed in 1996. However, since that time the BLM has completed joint studies with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program and other partners that have identified significant resources not identified by the RGRA-RMP. These discoveries led the BLM to adjust the original RGRA-RMP recommendations to include significant wetlands, fen complexes, mountain plover habitat, open space recreation opportunities and other important resources not considered in the 1996 RMP.

DECISION: It is my Decision to adjust the land tenure status in the South Park Eco-Subregion of the RGRA to reflect the recommendations of the RGRA-RMP, public input, newly acquired area specific resource knowledge and better mapping technologies. These adjustments are reflected in the land tenure categories below:

- 40,316 acres (63%) would be retained in BLM ownership
- 19,330 acres (30%) would become exchange-restricted
- 3,953 acres (06 %) would be marked for disposal

RATIONALE: The change in land tenure status in the South Park Eco-Subregion recommended in the South Park Land Tenure Adjustment EA (Alternative D) balances the protection of better understood important resource values with agency management costs and RGRA-RMP goals and objectives. The protection of newly discovered resource values, evaluation of agency management costs and the promotion of RGRA-RMP goals and objectives were accomplished through extensive public involvement, multi-agency consultation and updated GIS mapping techniques.

The following groups were consulted during the land tenure adjustment process:

- Central Colorado Cattlemen's Association
- City of Aurora
- Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Colorado Natural Heritage Program
- Colorado Open Lands
- Colorado State Land Board
- Nature Conservancy
- Park County Commissioners
- Park County Office of Historic Preservation
- Park County Office of Tourism and Community Development
- South Park Wetlands Focus Group
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- United States Forest Service

As a result of consultation with these groups, GIS resource mapping, guidance from the RGRA-RMP, and extensive public involvement the EA ID Team chose to evaluate land tenure status in South Park with the following criteria:

- Presence of mountain plover habitat
- Presence of fen and mire wetlands
- Big-game habitat
- Public access
- Parcel size
- Proximity to open space
- Adjacency to private conservation easements
- Visual resources
- Cultural and historic resources
- Range economics

Following these criteria, the EA ID Team generally prioritized wetlands for retention over uplands. Uplands with mountain plover habitat were favored over uplands without or containing minimal mountain plover habitat. Lands identified as important to National Heritage designations were preferred over lands unimportant to this designation. Lands valued for public lands grazing were favored over lands less important to this industry. Public lands with good public access were favored for retention or exchange over public lands lacking access or with very poor access which were marked for disposal. Public lands not marked for disposal through the previous process were mapped for proximity to open space and adjacency to private conservation easements. Lands adjacent to conservation easements or other public lands with similarly identified resources were put in the exchange restricted category for possible exchange to the adjoining entity or another entity that would agree to protect the identified resources.

My decision is based on findings and analysis in the EA, including supporting documentation and reports, and public participation and involvement in this project.

PROTEST OPPORTUNITIES: Pursuant to the BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the planning process for the South Park Land Tenure Adjustment EA interest that is or may be adversely affected by the **land tenure adjustment** amendment to the RMP may protest the amendment. A protest may raise only those issues that were submitted for the record during the planning process. New issues may not be brought into the record at the protest stage. These issues may have been raised by the protesting party or others. For consideration, the protest must be filed within 30 days of the published notice of the decision record's effective date. Please see the accompanying protest regulations in the pages that follow. E-mailed and faxed protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular or overnight mail postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, the BLM will consider the e-mailed or faxed protest as an advance copy and will afford it full consideration. If you wish to provide the BLM with such advance notification, please direct faxed protests to the attention of Brenda Hudgens-Williams, BLM protest coordinator, at 202-452-5112, and e-mail protests to: Brenda_Hudgens-Williams@blm.gov with a carbon copy (cc) to joseph_vieira@blm.gov.

For regular mail send to:

Director (210)
Attention: Brenda Hudgens-Williams
P.O. Box 66538
Washington, D.C 20035

For overnight mailing
(must be Federal Express) send to:

Director (210)
Attention: Brenda Hudgens-Williams
1620 L Street, N.W. Suite 1075
Washington, D.C. 20036

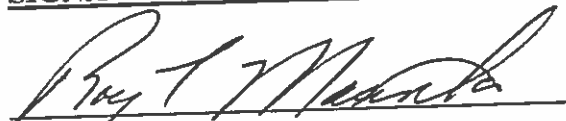
The regulations comprise critical elements of your protest. Take care to document all relevant facts. As much as possible, reference or cite the planning documents or available planning records (e.g. meeting minutes or summaries, correspondence, etc.) To aid in ensuring the completeness of your protest, a protest check list is attached following this letter.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your protest; be advised that your entire protest – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your protest to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The BLM Director will make every attempt to promptly render a decision on each protest. The decision will be in writing and will be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the BLM Director regarding protests shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior.

Upon completion of the 60-day Governor's consistency review and resolution of any resource management plan protest, the BLM will issue an Approved RMP Amendment. Approval will be withheld on any portion of the Amendment under protest until final action has been completed on such protest. The Approved RMP Amendment will be available to all parties through the "Arkansas River Travel Management Planning" page of the BLM Royal Gorge Field Office website.

SIGNATURE OF RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL



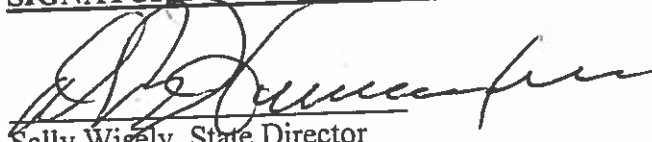
Roy L. Masinton
Field Manager
Royal Gorge Field Office

10-30-08
Date

DECISION

It is my decision to amend designations in the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan as described above.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:


Sally Wigely, State Director

5/18/09
Date