

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 81401**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

CO-150-2008-33

Location: This project is located within T. 47 N., R. 9 W, 10 W, and 11 W.; T. 48 N., R. 10 W., 11 W., and 12 W.; T. 49 N., R. 10 W., 11 W., and 12 W.; T. 50 N., R. 10 W., 11 W., 11 W., and 12 W.; T. 51 N., R. 11 W. and 12 W.

Project Name: Uncompahgre Field Office Resource Management Plan Amendment of OHV Designations and Travel Management Plan in the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan Area

Planning Unit: Uncompahgre Field Office/Uncompahgre Basin

Applicant: BLM

Background

The Bureau of Land Management Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) is preparing to amend the 1989 Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan (RMP). The amendment would change current off highway vehicle (OHV) area designations for the Dry Creek Travel Management planning area. BLM has prepared the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan - Uncompahgre Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment EA (DCTMP/EA) to analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

The proposed action (alternative 2) will amend the 1989 RMP, and is in compliance with BLM planning regulations in CFR 1601.0-1 to 1610.8 and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Finding of No Significant Impact

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) CO-150-2008-33. Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA, I have determined that the Proposed Action, with the design specifications, will not have a significant effect on the human environment.



Rationale

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context:

The approximately 110,500 acres of public land is located on the Uncompahgre Plateau near Montrose and Olathe, Colorado. Approximately 4,500 acres of private land, are within the boundary of the planning area, and would not be affected except for routes where there are existing or potential easements. The current acreage of OHV designations on public lands include:

- 28,557 acres Open
- 10,668 acres Closed in the Camel Back Wilderness Study Area
- 1,964 acres Limited to Designated Routes Yearlong
- 69,375 acres Limited to Designated Routes from 12/1 through 4/30

Under the proposed action (alternative 2), all the current OHV designations, except for the Closed designation in the WSA, would be changed to **Limited to Designated Routes Either Seasonally or Yearlong**. Under Alternative 2, the WSA, which is currently designated **Closed**, would continue to be designated and managed as **Closed** in order to comply with the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review. Under Alternative 2, the acreage of OHV designations on public lands include:

- 0 acres OHV Open
- 10,668 acres OHV Closed in the Camel Back WSA
- 99,832 acres OHV Limited to Designated Routes Either Yearlong or Seasonally (Some routes would be closed to motorized and non-motorized vehicular travel from December 1 through April 15 or December 1 through March 31 to prevent disturbance to wintering big game and other wildlife).

Alternative 2 would also designate a system or network of routes. This action designates the specific routes for motorized and non-motorized vehicles and devices, establishes conditions of use for designated routes, such as seasons of use, provides for rehabilitation of routes, and recommends the design and construction of facilities and improvements to support the Transportation Plan.

Intensity:

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The beneficial effects of the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan (DCTMP) include the designation of routes, which should dramatically slow the proliferation of user-created routes. This would slow the increase in resource impacts and habitat fragmentation occurring in this area. It will also provide support facilities for motorized and non-motorized users, which will help to distribute use and potential impacts.

Adverse effects include increased motorized and non-motorized use of designated routes that may result in soil compaction as well as the potential crowding of routes that would have vehicle use limitations and other conditions of use.

2) Degree of effect on public health and safety.

The designation of routes separates some of the conflicting recreational uses. Signing and maps will clearly define which uses will be allowed on each route, so that users can be informed of the potential safety hazards of using a particular route. Closing and rehabilitating certain routes will remove potentially hazardous routes from the route network. Designing and constructing support facilities will help distribute use, which will potentially create a safer and more enjoyable experience for all users.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There are no prime or unique farmlands or wild and scenic rivers in the planning area. The Camel Back WSA is within the area. Camel Back WSA provides the solitude and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation values necessary for designation as a WSA. The BLM, according to the Interim Management Policy on Lands under Wilderness Review, must protect these values through proper management. Within adjacent areas, UFO will close some routes and limit travel to designated routes (no off-route travel) on the others; this will enhance the wilderness qualities and values of the WSA.

4) Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The BLM held numerous public meetings, distributed maps for public consideration, solicited and received public comments, conducted some on-the-ground meetings, and held individual meetings and interviews to discuss and address the affects of the action on the human and natural environment.

The effects on the quality of the human environment are controversial for some people but not for others. Alternative 2 fulfills the legal and regulatory mandates required of BLM to protect the public lands from resource impacts and provides a safer environment for the public. Alternative 2 also provides the best mix of travel opportunities that satisfy the desired future conditions established while reducing environmental effects in the long run, and resolves the many transportation issues identified by the public. Alternative 2 will restrict mechanized and motorized entry onto BLM lands from private lands (limited to designated routes), which could be controversial to some of the public. The EA follows established mandates outlined in the BLM national policy on Comprehensive Travel Management Planning, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and BLM Colorado standards for public land health.

5) Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.

The effects of alternative 2 are not highly uncertain. Alternative 2 is anticipated to improve the overall quality of the human environment by limiting travel to designated routes. Sensitive

areas, such as sensitive plant areas, riparian areas, and wildlife winter range, would receive better protection.

Continuing with current management (alternative 1), would continue unregulated motorized and non-motorized travel, on-route and cross-country, and is anticipated to continue to result in the creation of new and unplanned routes, some in locations that are and could be hazardous to human health. Also, private property adjacent to public lands could continue to receive some degree of unauthorized entry by the public, affecting the owners of the private land.

6) Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Alternative 2 requires the preparation of a comprehensive implementation and monitoring plan that will incorporate adaptive management principles to ensure that desired future conditions are met and all proposed actions are carried forward. The adaptive management principles will help ensure that successful implementation occurs and that needed adjustments will occur which may require simple mitigation measures (signs, barriers, rehabilitation) or more complex measures (reallocation of uses, changes in travel management designations). Should resource impacts be observed and documented as the result of implementing the implementation and monitoring plan, BLM will consider different corrective methods. Depending on the type of adaptive action, further environmental analysis or plan amendment may be required. A future action that may occur is the preparation of additional travel management plans on specific land areas in the UFO. The Dry Creek Travel Management Plan EA and the methodology to develop the travel management plan could be a model for future plans in the field office.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Alternative 2 does not produce any individual or cumulatively significant environmental impacts. Alternative 2 is anticipated to reduce the adverse impacts occurring from current management (the no-action alternative).

8) The degree to which Alternative 2 may adversely affect district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The UFO operates under a programmatic agreement between the applicable local governments, the Colorado State Historical Society, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Site specific environmental documentation and assessment, and site surveys are completed for individual projects that involve ground disturbance.

The overall affect of designating routes in the TMP, closing all Open areas, and decreasing additional user established routes is positive for the preservation of historically, culturally and scientifically significant resources. Alternative 2 will provide protection to these important resources.

9) *Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.*

Alternative 2 does not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species. Alternative 2 lessens impacts to the following Federally-listed rare plant species and their potential or known habitat: Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), and yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus Americanus*). Alternative 2 also enhances core habitat for larger animal species susceptible to habitat fragmentation from potential effects of nearby suburban development.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

Alternative 2 will not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

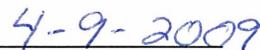
Determination

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts; and 2) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Approved:



Barbara Sharrow
Field Manager
BLM, Uncompahgre Field Office



Date