

ROYAL GORGE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

PLAN AMENDMENT

Amendment # 3

Subregion(s): 1 Area of Change: Travel Routes

Change Initiated By (Title): Land Use Planner

Decision to be Changed: Existing to Designated Travel Routes

Other Affected Decisions: NA

CHANGE

(Describe exactly what is to be deleted, added, rewritten, etc.)

Delete: Limitation to existing roads and trails for the Cache Creek area.

Insert: Limitation to designated roads and trails for the Cache Creek area.

RATIONALE

(Describe exact rationale for above change)

The RGFO acquired about 2,160 acres in the Cache Creek area in January 2000. A plan amendment for designating roads & trails on these lands and about 1,600 acres of adjacent public land was initiated. The plan amendment EA was completed on August 24, 2001. One protest was received and resolved in April 2002. The State Director approved the plan amendment on June 14, 2002.

Specialists Consulted: Erik Brekke, Jim Cunio, Mike Gaylord, Dave Gilbert, Ernie Gillingham, Dan Grenard, Dave Hallock, Tom Grette, John Nahomenuk, Martin Weimer,

SIGNATURE

Land Use Planner *Pete Gammell* Date 06/24/02

Field Manager *Roy T. Mabe* Date 6/24/02

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
COLORADO STATE OFFICE
2850 YOUNGFIELD STREET
LAKEWOOD, COLORADO 80215-7093

JUN 6 2002

In Reply Refer To:
CO-931
1610

Memorandum

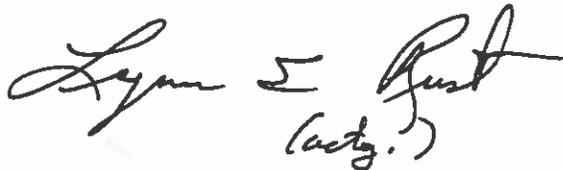
To: State Director, Colorado
From: Deputy State Director, Resources
Subject: Cache Creek Travel Management Amendment Approval

We have reviewed the proposed amendment and associated Environmental Assessment (EA) # CO-200-2001-0065EA, Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record. All legal requirements have been met including completion of the Governor's Consistency Review and the public protest period. The Governor did not respond with any inconsistency. One protest letter was received, and each issue raised was resolved by the Director without requiring a change to the proposed amendment.

In coordination with Pete Zwaneveld of the Royal Gorge Field Office, we have made a clarification to the second listed mitigation measure to show that it applies to non-motorized trails (not motorized roads or trails which will be limited to designated roads and trails if the amendment is approved). With this clarification, we recommend approval.

This amendment to the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan involves 3,760 acres of which 2,160 were acquired from the Conservation Fund to protect elk and riparian habitat as well as to provide recreational access. The lands are located in Lake County.

If you have any questions regarding this action, please contact Glenn Wallace at 303.239.728.



Roy Masinton
(actg.)

Attachment: EA CO-200-2001-0065 EA, FONSI and Decision Record for Cache Creek Travel Management Plan Amendment

Roy Masinton, Royal Gorge Field Office Manager (CO-200)

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD

NUMBER: CO-200-2001-0065 EA

PROJECT NAME: Recreation - Cache Creek Travel Management and RMP Amendment

PLANNING UNIT: Arkansas River, # 1

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T.11S.,R.79W., Sec.31,west of highway 24,except for a narrow strip along the west side of the highway; T.11S.,R.80W.,Sections 34 NE¼, 35 and 36; all previously non-BLM land in T.12S.,R.79W., portions of sections 5 and 6, section 7 N½N½, section 8 N½NW¼; T.12S., R.80W., Sections 1 and 2 (see attached map).

APPLICANT: BLM

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background: Cache Creek is located immediately west and south of the town of Granite and flows into the Arkansas River just below the Granite bridge. It was the site for one of the first large mining communities in the late 1800s. Until recently, most of the land in the watershed was private. In January 2000, the Bureau of Land Management acquired 2160 acres through which Cache Creek flows, extending from the forest boundary to highway 24. The parcel was acquired from the Conservation Fund, a group that works to maintain Colorado's open space. It was purchased to help protect critical elk and riparian habitat as well as to provide recreational access.

Many of the adjacent slopes and the creek bottom were significantly disturbed by placer mining and turn of the century logging. The period of major disturbance was from 1860 to 1911. Large tailings deposits and discarded mining materials and equipment are found all along the drainage. Since major mining operations ended in 1911, a slow, natural recovery began in the uplands and in the riparian zone. Much of the drainage bottom is now a wet meadow/riparian shrub/beaver pond complex. There are also several larger artificial ponds constructed by past landowners. The many ponds in the drainage are used by waterfowl from spring through fall and some nest there. Brook Trout are also present throughout the drainage. In addition to the fishery present, there is a large elk herd that uses the area year round especially for winter range and during calving.

Cache Creek has many attributes that are desired by the public for recreation and has potential as a high use area. Therefore, it is important that management strategies are put in place that protect an area that is still recovering from previous disturbance. Restricting vehicle access and regulating recreational use is important to protect wildlife and fisheries resources, riparian/wetland vegetation and prevent increased sediment loading into Cache Creek. There has never been public access to the parcel. When the property was acquired by BLM, an closure order was put in place under authority of 43 CFR 8364.1, until funds could be secured for managed access. The emergency closure was published in the federal register on March 23, 2000. Non-motorized

use has been allowed. Some vehicle access is needed to provide more recreation opportunities for the public but still protect resources.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action is to approve a Travel Management Plan for the Cache Creek area in which roads and trails are designated and Amend the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan. The primary route to be designated is the so-called powerline road from County Road 398 south to a point near Cache Creek, where a parking area would be built, large enough for vehicles with trailers to turn around. This route is about 1 mile in length and would end before it intersects with the Colorado Trail, which is designated for non-motorized use only. The parking area would have large boulders (4-5 ft.) around the boundary and a locked steel gate with appropriate signs. Non-motorized access would be allowed beyond the parking area.

In addition, a second route paralleling Cache Creek into the proposed placing area would be designated for motorized access, subject to acquisition of legal public access from US Highway 24 across a small piece of private land. The public access to be acquired is about 100 feet long. The designated route would be about 0.6 miles long.

All Chaffee County roads in the Cache Creek project area are unaffected by this Travel Management Plan and remain available for motorized access. BLM will approach Chaffee County to request that County Road 398 C, which has been physically closed for some ten years, be vacated. Note, this is a County Decision to vacate or not, this action is only to approach them with our request.

Administrative access would be maintained on all other routes in the Cache Creek area. Other non-county roads within the property would be blocked.

This action also analyses closing the powerline road from the south that is on USFS land. It would be closed with a locked gate at its intersection with the Clear Creek road, C.R. 390, but administrative access would be maintained. The route on USFS land is 1.5 miles long, was originally used for powerline maintenance, but has been used for unauthorized access to what was previously private land. Assistance from USFS with regulating access from the south is necessary to implement management on the BLM parcel. A gate with appropriate signs would be installed. This proposed action assumes that USFS will return that route to administrative vehicular access only, in addition to foot travel.

In addition, a winter and spring closure would be established in the Cache Creek area from December 1 to June 30 to protect deer and elk on winter range and during calving. A fence with gate would be re-built on the powerline road, 0.3 miles from where it branches off of County Road 398 and would be re-enforced to prevent vehicles from driving around it and have signs explaining the seasonal closure. A gate would also be built on the placing road near highway 24.

Temporary access would be allowed on other roads within the property for a clean-up effort to remove materials and would involve using trucks and equipment. Construction of the parking area and clean-up of debris would be done by volunteers from Trout Unlimited under BLM

supervision.

Alternative A (the No Action Alternative): Under this alternative, the temporary closure order that was placed on the project area would be made permanent and all non-County roads would remain closed to motorized use. The Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan would be amended to reflect these closures. Six roads, totaling about 7.2 miles would remain closed to motorized use. Temporary vehicle access would be allowed for clean-up of debris by Trout Unlimited and for administrative duties. Administrative access would be maintained.

Alternative B: Under this alternative, all non-county roads in the Cache Creek project area would be designated for motorized use. The Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan would be amended to reflect these decisions. This would involve 6 roads, totaling about 7.2 miles. The winter and spring closure for elk would still be utilized. The clean-up project would also be done under this alternative.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: Following acquisition of the property a temporary closure order, published in the Federal Register on March 23, 2000, was placed on all roads in the Cache Creek project area until a Travel Management Plan could be put in place. Since this area is desired by the public for many recreational uses, a Travel Management Plan is needed to allow limited vehicle access for recreation and still protect and restore wildlife, fisheries and riparian/wetland resources as mandated by federal policies, insuring continued recovery and rehabilitation.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The proposed action is subject to the following plan:

Name of Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 05/13/01

Decision Number: 1-50, 1-68, 1-70, 1-82

The proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

Standards for Public Land Health: The Standards are addressed in the appropriate Affected Environment/Environmental Consequences sections. The following table is a summary of those two sections. Project areas have been assessed for all Standards, however, not all Standards necessarily apply to all acres in the project area. "NA" denotes where a Standard does not apply and does not influence overall land health. Depending on the action analyzed, completion of this chart may be required, optional, or not required. Also, in completing this chart, either acres or checkmarks are acceptable in the appropriate row-column depending on the action analyzed.

	Current Situation			With Proposed Action	
	Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Not Achieving	Causative Factors	Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving	Not Achieving
Standard 1		X		X	
Standard 2		X		X	
Standard 3	X			X	
Standard 4	NA			NA	
Standard 5	X			X	
Total Acres					
Total number of acres in project area: about 3,760					

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS / MITIGATION MEASURES:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY: The proposed action will likely result in an improvement in air quality to a minor degree. The area does not receive heavy vehicular use because most access points have been controlled. The proposed action will result in a reduction in vehicular traffic, and a subsequent reduction in road dust. The no action alternative will continue the existing situation (at least at the time of acquisition). Dust levels would exceed those resulting from the proposed alternative. Alternative C would result in the highest level of dust resulting from vehicular use. The proposed action would not require specific mitigation for dust generation as it would improve the existing situation upon implementation.

Name of specialist: Mike Gaylord, 05-01-01

CULTURAL RESOURCES: Two historic sites (5CF1282 and 5CF1283) and five historic isolated finds (5CF1284 -1288) were recorded within the project area, however, they have been determined to be ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places [see report CR-RG-01-65 (P)]. Therefore, the proposed project will have no effect on any historic properties.

Name of specialist: Martin Weimer, 7/12/01

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: There are no minority or low-income populations in or near the project area. As such, the proposal will not have a disproportionately high and adverse human

health or environmental effect on minority or low-income populations.

Name of specialist: Pete Zwaneveld, 05/01/01

FLOODPLAINS, WETLANDS, & RIPARIAN ZONES (includes all information related to Standard 2): The property affected by this action has Cache Creek, several first order tributaries, many seeps, and small ponds. All these waters contribute to making a valuable riparian/wetland complex. The proposed action allows roads down in the floodplain to continue to naturally reclaim, benefitting the values these resources provide. The routes discussed for access are already in place and no new disturbance is anticipated other than the parking area which will not impact the wetland resources. Drainage from the parking area proposed will be good because of the large glacial substrate in the area proposed. The alternative to having motorized travel can be viewed as a no change as the routes are in place, however, those routes in the riparian area will not recover fully with vegetation. Keeping the area closed would benefit resources similar to the proposed action.

Name of specialist: David Gilbert 6/06/01

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES: The area has not been inventoried for noxious weeds. The proposed action and alternative A would greatly reduce the risk of weed infestation from off road vehicle use compared to having all the existing roads open. Alternative B would result in a higher risk of weed infestation due increased probability of illegal off road vehicle use.

Name of specialist: Thomas Grette 6/06/01

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS: No possible traditional cultural properties were located during the cultural resources inventory (see above). There is no other known evidence that suggests the project area holds special significance for Native Americans.

Name of specialist: Martin Weimer, 7/12/01

PRIME AND UNIQUE FARMLANDS: There are no Prime or Unique Farmlands involved in the proposed action or the alternatives, so there are no impacts.

Name of specialist: Thomas Grette 6/06/01

SOILS (includes all information related to Standard 1): The parcel of land in this EA is predominantly found in the soil association of Pierian-Poncha. This is nearly level to steep, deep, well-drained soils. The dominant soils in the area of EA are: Granile gravelly sandy loam (3-35% slopes), Pierian gravelly sandy loams (3-9% slopes), Pierian soils (20-45% slopes), and Troutville gravelly sandy loams (3-35% slopes). More detail is available in the Soil Survey of Chaffee-Lake Area, Colorado.

The Granile soils are usually conifer covered forested lands. The vegetation on the other soils is various open shrub-grass land complex. The gravelly nature of the soils tends towards well

drained surface with slow run off and erosion potentials averaging from slight to moderate. Most erosional cutting occurs in drainage areas during high precipitation events.

As noted in the description of the proposal, some of the soil characteristics of these lands have been altered due to mining activities of past. These soils usually have less fines and more gravel/rock materials. Long term natural revegetation is returning many of these non-functioning soil areas to functioning soils. Where vegetation has established itself, fines are trapped and held with in the gravel and rock.

The largest soils disturbance of the area currently relates to constructed roads, trails developed from overland travel, and off-road vehicle use on native undisturbed vegetation.

In the proposed alternative, closing of roads will moderately reduce sediment flow on the short term, with possible longer term reductions dependent on road/trail maintenance of the trails and roads being left for administrative use. The total impacts are directly related to the eventual amount of administrative vehicle use and the recreational use these trails get from foot, horse, and other methods used to transverse the area. From a soil perspective, Alternative A and the proposed alternative impacts are probably very similar, with slightly less over all long term sedimentation resulting under Alternative A. Alternative B would lead to longer term sedimentation and erosion because of continued disturbance of soils by motorized vehicles. Most erosion risks are likely to occur on the steeper slopes and where vehicle travel transverses drainage areas.

Recommended Mitigation: Those roads that will remain in place for purposes of administrative use and related to BLM needs should include programing of sufficient funds for placement on water control structures to stabilize soils and disperse water. Gulch areas should be highest priority areas. While no trail development was specifically addressed in the proposal, the nature of placing parking areas will likely result in some trail development. If such trail development occurs, sufficient funds should be programed to properly maintain trails. Consideration should be given to appropriate water drainage in any establishment of parking areas. This could include diversion ditches up hill of the parking areas, and rip-rap of water outlet drainage from the parking area.

Name of specialist: Ernie Lee Gillingham; 06/06/01

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (includes all information related to Standard 4): The Canada lynx is a threatened species in Colorado and potential habitat is identified for the lynx in the project area. No lynx that have been released into Colorado are known to be utilizing the area. The Proposed Action will limit vehicle uses to established areas and provide parking areas for non-motorized uses. In addition, establishing winter and spring closures for elk wintering and calving will benefit any lynx that may be in the area. The alternative for opening up the area to motorized uses may impact lynx and their prey. This alternative would require Section 7 consultation with USFWS.

Name of specialist: Erik Brekke, 5/02/01

VEGETATION (includes vegetation information related to Standard 3): The most extensive upland range site on the Cache Creek Property is Mountain Outwash. Dominant species include Arizona fescue, western wheatgrass and big sagebrush. The species diversity and ground cover are adequate on most of the area to meet the vegetation health standard. Any alternative that prevents off road vehicle use will help maintain the satisfactory condition of the vegetation. The Proposed Action and Alternative A would be more effective than Alternative B in preventing disturbance to vegetation from off-road vehicle use.

Name of specialist: Thomas Grette 6/06/01

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID: None of the proposed alternatives will result in the use, storage or disposal of hazardous or regulated materials on public lands as a component of the alternative. The proposed action will reduce or eliminate vehicular access through areas that have had some level of traffic in the past. Solid waste problems including intentional dumping should be reduced as a result of the proposed action. The no action alternative would continue past vehicular use and solid waste disposal in the area would also continue. Alternative B might result in the highest incidence of solid waste as the area would receive more vehicular traffic and the associated uses that might result in either dumping or littering.

No specific mitigation for hazardous materials uses is needed under any alternative.

Name of specialist: Mike Gaylord, 05-01-01

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes all information related to Standard 5): The Proposed Action would result in the highest level of protection for surface water quality among those proposed alternatives. Reduced vehicular traffic should generate less water borne sediments as a result of vehicular stream crossings. Vegetation in the areas accessible to the roads should also improve over time as the areas receive less trampling and compacting from vehicles and associated uses. Eventually, most road surfaces will stabilize and revegetate naturally, even if not reclaimed.

The no action alternative would perpetuate the existing uses that result in both the generation of silt and the denuding of roadways and other areas. Alternative B would result in the highest level of disturbance as it maximizes the level of vehicular traffic even with the seasonal closure.

Name of specialist: Mike Gaylord, 05-01-01

WILDERNESS, AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN, WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS: Cache Creek is a new acquisition and has been added to the public land base of the Royal Gorge Field Office. This parcel was in private ownership at the time Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers inventories and studies were completed. ACECs were identified in the RMP prior to this parcel being acquired. The proposed action and alternatives will not have an affect on the above values.

Name of specialist: John Nahomenuk, 6-6-01

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes wildlife information related to Standard 3): The property affected by this action has Cache Creek, several first order tributaries, many seeps, and small ponds. All these waters contribute to making a valuable aquatic habitat, benefitting many wildlife species and a self sustaining fishery. The Proposed Action allows roads down in the floodplain to continue to naturally reclaim, benefitting aquatic wildlife and aquatic habitat. The routes discussed for access are already in place and no new disturbance is anticipated other than the parking area which will not impact any aquatic habitat. Drainage from the parking area proposed will be good because of the large glacial substrate in the area proposed. The alternative to having motorized travel can be viewed as a no change, as the routes are in place, however, those routes in the riparian area will not recover fully with vegetation. Keeping the area closed would benefit resources similar to the proposed action. The area has been surveyed for Boreal Toads but none were located. There is likely suitable habitat present. Protection of the habitat would preserve the option of future introductions of this sensitive species.

Name of specialist: David Gilbert 6/06/01

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes wildlife information related to Standard 3): The Cache Creek property was specifically acquired for the wildlife values that it possesses. The area provides important aquatic and riparian habitat that is used by riparian wildlife species including calving elk and upland habitat that provides important elk forage during the winter months. The proposed action is designed to protect these wildlife values by limiting human uses in critical areas during critical time periods. The motorized alternative would likely cause elk and other wildlife to abandon the area.

Name of specialist: Erik Brekke, 5/02/01

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

FOREST MANAGEMENT: The forested lands within Cache Creek property (generally the existing public lands and not the acquired lands) are stocked (generally overstocked) with 120 year old Lodgepole Pine with basal areas ranging from 120 to 200. The stands are classified as small sawlogs as the average diameter is 7+ inches. These stands are a result of heavy utilization and burning during the mining era of the 1880s. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the BLM created several clearcut units ranging from 1.2 to 15 acres. All successfully regenerated.

In 1983 using Colorado Division of Wildlife funding BLM created 5 additional clearcut units for big game forage. These also regenerated. In 1998, 7 of the previously created units were precommercially thinned.

The action to limit access by the public will not affect the past or potential Forest Management actions as administrative access to the site will still be maintained.

Name of specialist: Jim Cunio 6/18/01

GEOLOGY AND MINERALS: The proposed action would not result in impacts to minerals or geology provided the suggested mitigation measures are implemented.

The acquisition was made in part to provide access to the areas along Cache Creek for recreational placer activities. An initial inventory of the area shows that the vast majority of the Cache Creek area has been already mined. Only a few pockets of unmined placer deposits remain and gold still remains in some of the areas that have already been mined. These remaining gold deposits are of interest to the recreational placer community. Because of the relatively small size and scattered nature of the deposits, it would not be conducive to large scale mining. On the other hand these deposits could provide a valuable recreational placer experience.

The proposed action describes the current condition of the area. Much of the riparian areas have gradually reclaimed themselves after the flurry of mining activity in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A proposal for recreational placer activity has not been developed to date but it can be assumed that these riparian areas would need to remain undisturbed and the time periods critical to elk winter range and calving areas would need to be protected. As a result, recreational placer activity would be restricted to the summer time period (e.g., June 20 to mid October) and not authorized in the riparian areas. This would restrict usage to the disturbed areas away from the streams. The proposed travel management plan would restrict vehicular traffic to a lower area near the highway and an upper area near the powerline and Cache Creek. These two access points would provide sufficient access to allow for this type of activity. The type of equipment that could be utilized would need to be backpacked in the upper area (power line road parking area) but could be carried by vehicle into the lower area. As mentioned, this is not a proposal, only two possibilities.

The lower road will be used for access to a mining claim that has existed in the area for many years. The mining claimant will utilize this lower access route to bring in equipment and supplies.

Mitigation: It should be noted that the lower road will need safety improvements in order to accommodate vehicular traffic. The entrance to this road is close to the highway and there is no turning lane off the highway. This is a dangerous situation and should be corrected. It is recommended that this location be analyzed by BLM engineers and that access improvements be designed and built. It should also be noted that some large abandoned equipment exists on the lower road and this abandoned equipment should be removed. One piece of equipment is estimated to weigh four tons.

Alternative A would result in an inability to access recreational placer areas and would be a major impact to minerals and geology.

Alternative B would provide much more access and could result in an unmanageable situation for minerals and geology and would result in major impacts to minerals and geology.

Name of specialist: Dan Grenard, 06-05-01

HYDROLOGY AND WATER RIGHTS: None of the proposed alternatives will impact either of these resources. No mitigation is necessary.

Name of specialist: Mike Gaylord, 05-01-01

LAND STATUS/REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS/ACCESS: Refer to attachments: **A.** Master Title Plats (5-8½ X11 pages), **B.** Aerial photo at 4"=1 mile with acquisition/ownership shown (1-11X17 page), **C.** Survey Plat at 4"=1 mile with acquisition/ownership shown (1-11X17 page), **D.** USGS topographic map at 4"=1 mile with acquisition/ownership shown (1-11X17 page).

The property was originally patented under the 1872 Mining Law. Seventeen Placer Claims constitute the acquisition. The placer names are shown on the attachments B and C. Most of the acquisition land falls under the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management administration, but two separate parts lie within the National Forest Boundary and administration of the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. The Granite Cemetery was excluded from the deed and remains private land. Five Chaffee County roads cross the parcel (398, 398A, 398B, 398C, and 398D), providing access to the private land to the north and the FS lands to the west, as well as the BLM and acquisition property. The United States has an administrative easement from Chaffee County Road 398 south to the National Forest lands in Section 11. A major natural gas line and a powerline cross the west side of the property and continue through the federal land. Another powerline crosses the eastern edge of the property. A water pipeline crosses the eastern edge of the property.

Proposed Action: Acquisition of a legal public access easement across about 100 feet of private land from US Highway 24 would be necessary to implement this plan for the lower road.

Alternative A (the No Action Alternative): Under this alternative all non-County roads would remain closed to motorized use. Temporary vehicle access would be allowed for clean-up of debris by Trout Unlimited and for administrative duties.

Alternative B: Under this alternative, all non-County roads in the Cache Creek project area would be designated for motorized use. This would involve 6 roads, totaling about 7.2 miles. The winter and spring closure for elk would still be utilized. The clean-up project would also be done under this alternative.

Name of specialist: David Hallock

NOISE: The project area currently has a low level of noise. The primary sources of noise are from vehicles on the county roads running through the project area.

The Proposed Action's designation of two roads for vehicular use and parking areas will add a small amount of noise from vehicles to that found on the county roads. If access is gained to the placer area, there will be additional noise from small engines powering the pumps used in this activity. The seasonal closure of these roads will bring overall noise levels down and limit the increases to the 5 month period the roads are open.

Under Alternative A, the noise levels from the use of county roads will remain the same, with no increase from any BLM roads.

Under Alternative B, the noise levels will rise from vehicular use of all the BLM roads in the project area. Overall, this would lead to a small to moderate increase in noise levels but this would be limited to the 5 month period the roads are open.

There will be no short-term, long-term or cumulative impacts. No mitigation is recommended.

Name of specialist: Pete Zwaneveld, 05/01/01

RANGE MANAGEMENT: The Cache Creek Property is not currently leased for grazing. The proposed action or the alternatives would not effect any future grazing authorizations as long as administrative access is allowed for the gazing lessee.

Name of specialist: Thomas Grette 6/06/01

RECREATION: Recreation opportunities for the public have been enhanced in this area with the acquisition of this property. A portion of The Colorado Trail crosses the western portion of this property.

The proposed action would provide the greatest opportunities for recreational access. Alternative B provides limited recreational access. The no-action alternative would be the least desirable for a lot of the public.

The closure of the unauthorized Forest Service access route on the south side of the property will impact those who previously used this route for access to the private lands. The general public did not have legal access to the private land prior the acquisition and should not be impacted by the decision to close this unauthorized route. The lack of additional motorized routes in this area would be additional rationale to maintain a closure on this Forest Service unauthorized route. Safety concerns and the high maintenance cost to bring this route into compliance with Forest standards and guidelines is further rationale.

Non-motorized recreational opportunities would be enhanced under all alternatives. Motorized recreational opportunities would be restricted under all alternatives. Reasonable access to these newly acquired public lands is provided under all alternatives. There would be no short or long term impacts to recreation under any of the alternatives.

Mitigation:

A trailhead should be developed at the parking areas that provide the public with information about the area.

A recreational placering plan should be developed prior to this type of activity being authorized.

The portion of the Colorado Trails that crosses through this parcel should be properly signed and maintained.

Name of specialist: John Nahomenuk, 6-6-01

TRANSPORTATION: The public use of the routes on those lands that have historically been BLM ended about 1984, during the "Quail Mountain Project". Since 1984 some access by motorcycles and "quadrunners" in all likelihood occurred by accessing the public lands from the Clear Creek Reservoir side by traveling off Lake County Road 390 onto a short section of deeded land then onto National Forest and finally onto BLM.

An administrative access to National Forest lands via the power line road was acquired in the mid 80s. This access has been used primarily by BLM forest management for access to precommercially thin and to sell small forest product sales for "walking sticks" or "lateas".

Allowing the public use of the power line road will allow public access to these lands without diminishing the intent for which the new public lands were acquired.

Name of specialist: Jim Cunio 6/19/01

VISUAL RESOURCES: The 1996 Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan did not assign VRM Classes to the private lands in the project area. Most of the property could be classified as either Class III, with small portions in Class II or IV. Previous mining and timber activity, along with a major ROW utility corridor would be the rationale for such a range of classes. The proposed action and alternatives would not have any additional affects on the visual resources.

Name of specialist: John Nahomenuk, 6-6-01

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:

BLM STAFF INVOLVED:

Roy Masinton	Field Manager
Paul Trentzsch	Staff Leader-Renewable Resources
Erik Brekke	Wildlife Biologist
Jim Cunio	Forester
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist
John Nahomenuk	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Pete Zwaneveld	Planning & Environmental Coordinator
Mike Gaylord	Haz-Mat Coordinator
Dan Grenard	Geologist
Ernie Gillingham	Surface Reclamation Specialist
Dave Hallock	Realty Specialist
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist

FONSI

CO-200-2001-0065 EA

The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures result in a finding of no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

It is my recommendation that this plan amendment and OHV redesignation, as described in the Proposed Action, be approved with the below listed mitigation. Amendment of the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan is required for changes in OHV designations. The routes identified in the Proposed Action fulfill the decision in the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan to go to an OHV designation of "limited to designated roads and trails" for this area. These routes, along with the existing Chaffee County roads in the area, give a reasonable amount of access to these public lands for a variety of users while protecting the land for the primary reason they were acquired, that being critical wildlife habitat. The seasonal closure from Dec. 1 to June 30 will protect the wildlife during the most critical times of the year. No significant resource issues came up in the environmental analysis.

Considerable outreach was conducted in solicitation of public involvement to gain comments on travel management for this parcel. It was clear from the comments that the public is divided as to how to access the parcel. The split favoring very open access vs. keeping it tightly closed was nearly even. Because the parcel was acquired primarily for its elk habitat values and because there is access along county roads, in addition to the proposed routes, no additional travel ways are needed beyond that in the proposed action. Furthermore, because public access to this parcel had never been available without the permission of the private landowners, the routes selected will give access beyond what has been traditionally available.

The proposal meets the Standards for Public Land Health and the Guidelines for Recreation Management. Native American consultation, pursuant to the regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act [specifically 36 CFR 800.2(c)(3)], was completed and no negative comments were received. Consultation was not done with the US Fish & Wildlife Service on this action, as none was deemed necessary.

The acquisition of the Cache Creek property was supported by both the Chaffee and Lake County Commissioners. The Conservation Fund acted as an intermediary in the acquisition and supports the protection of the wildlife habitat while allowing a reasonable amount of public access. The Collegiate Peaks Anglers Chapter of Trout Unlimited has been an enthusiastic supporter of the acquisition and management of these lands, as well as assisting in a major cleanup project in the area and the construction of gates to control vehicles. The Colorado Division of Wildlife also

supported the acquisition and management of this area.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. Funding will be sought to maintain administrative and public access routes.
2. If user created non-motorized access trails develop, they will be managed to protect against erosion.
3. Appropriate water drainage will be developed in the parking areas. This could include diversion ditches up-slope of the parking areas and rip-rap of drainages from the parking area.
4. If access is gained for the placering road from Highway 24 by Granite, public users interested in recreational placering will be contacted to develop an area to pan for gold. A recreational placering plan should be developed prior to this type of activity being authorized.
5. If access is gained for the placering road, it will need safety improvements in order to accommodate vehicular traffic. The entrance to this road is on the edge of the highway and there is no turning lane off the highway. This is a dangerous situation and should be corrected. This location will be analyzed by BLM engineers and coordinated with CDOT to determine what can be done to improve access.
6. Information should be provided at the parking areas that tells the users about the area, its management, and constraints on use.
7. The portion of the Colorado Trail that crosses through this parcel will be properly signed and maintained.
8. In the event the USFS does not close the powerline access route from the south, gates will be necessary along the BLM/USFS boundary to achieve the habitat protection goals.
9. Provide the right-of-way holders along the powerline route and the owners of the private inholding in the southwest part of the project area with keys or combinations to any locks on gates to facilitate their continued access.

REMARKS:

1. The holders of the rights-of-way along the powerline route were contacted. They asked only for keys or combinations to locks to retain their access along this route.
2. BLM will approach Chaffee County to request that County Road 398 C, which has been physically closed for some ten years, be vacated.

COMPLIANCE PLAN: RGFO recreation staff will oversee compliance.

NAME OF PREPARER: Dave Gilbert
Pete Zwaneveld

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Pete Zwaneveld

DATE SIGNED: 08/22/01

SIGNATURE OF RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL:



DATE SIGNED: 8-24-01

ATTACHMENTS: Maps

DECISION AND RATIONALE

CO-200-2001-0065 EA

It is my decision to approve the amendment to the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan, as described in the Royal Gorge Field Manager's recommendation.

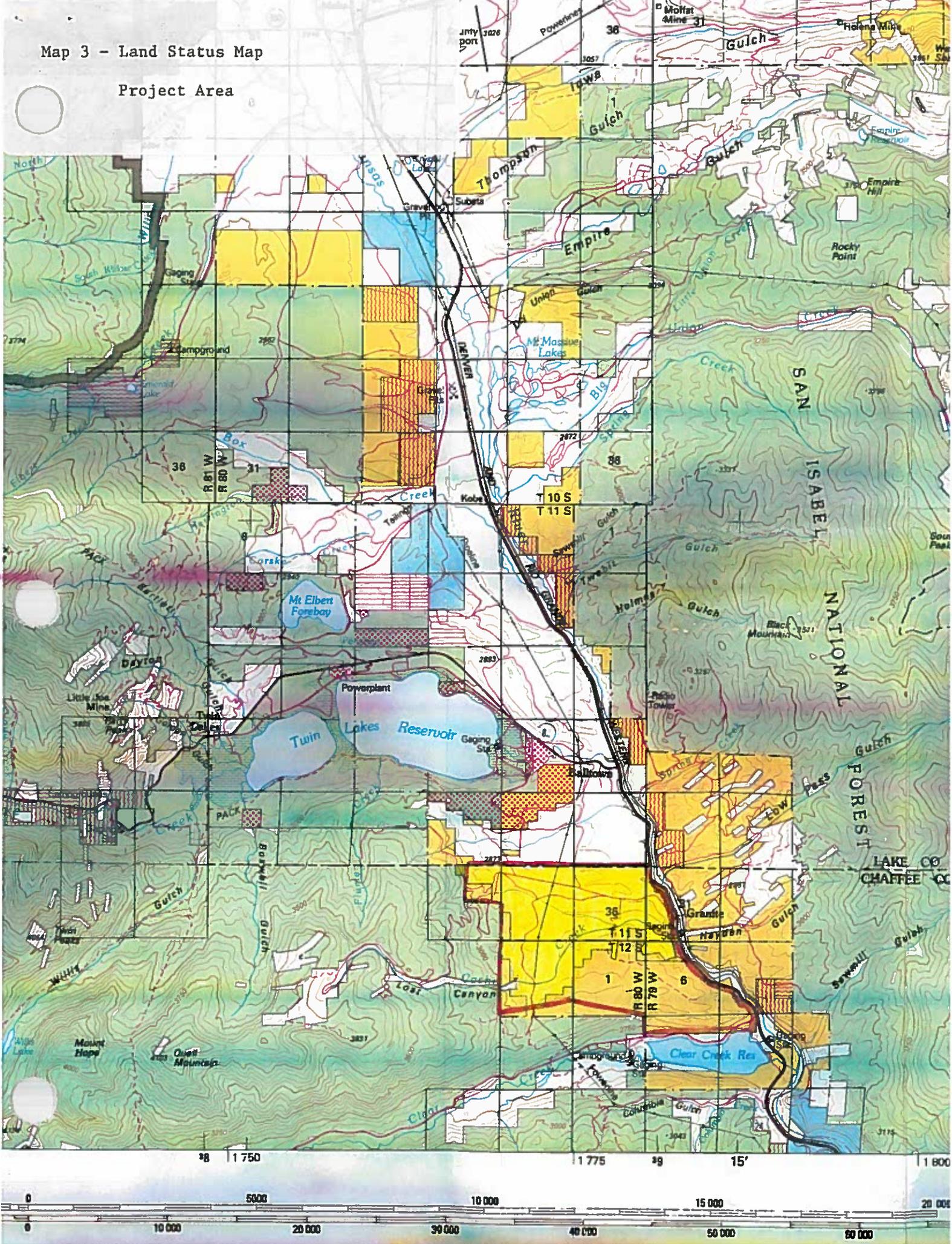
SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



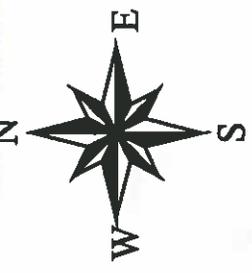
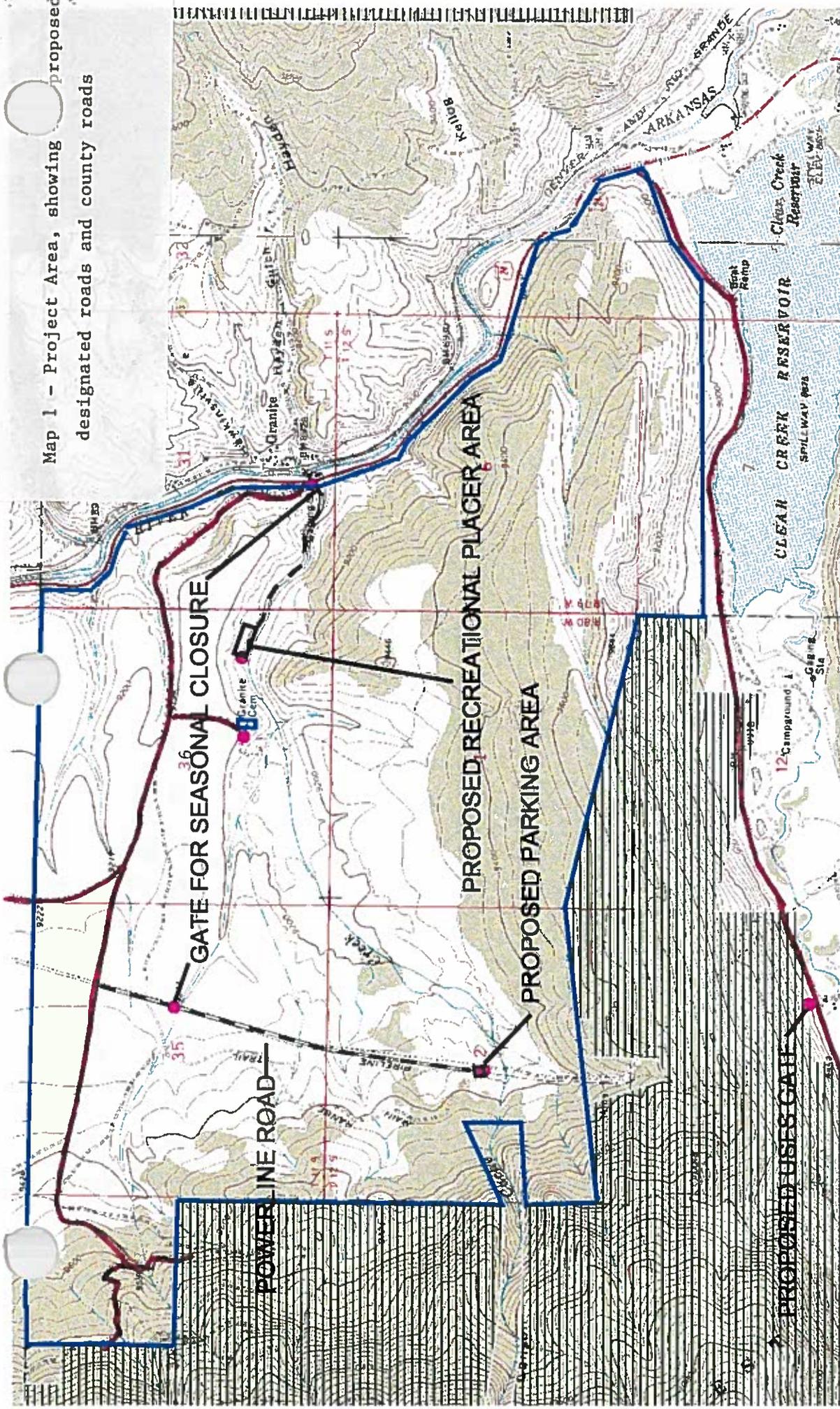
DATE SIGNED: 6-14-02

Map 3 - Land Status Map

Project Area



Map 1 - Project Area, showing proposed designated roads and county roads



CACHE CREEK PLANNING AREA

- PLANNING AREA
- US Forest Service
- PROPOSED GATES
- DESIGNATED ROADS
- COUNTY ROADS