

Finding of No Significant Impact

Johnny Behind the Rocks Trail Connectivity

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Chapter 1. Finding of No Significant Impact

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1.1. Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-WYR050-2013-0003-EA

Johnny Behind the Rocks Trail Connectivity EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts (per Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-WYR050-2013-0003-EA), I have determined that combining Alternatives B and C in the manner detailed in Section 1.2 (hereby referred to as the selected action) of this document, will not have significant impacts on the environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding and conclusion 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 and further summarized in Section 1.3 and 1.4 of this document.

1.2. Design Features of The Selected Action:

1. The selected action blends the trail layout for alternative B and C. In the Interior and Red Ridge Terminus areas the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and partners will construct a trail along the layout described under Alternative B. The Alternative C layout will be constructed for the Johnny-On-Top Trail in order to alleviate adverse impacts to cultural resources. The three trails meet the sustainable trail principles outlined in the supporting EA while also enhancing visitor satisfaction and safety.
2. There is a potential for buried cultural and paleontological resources to be present in the project area. Volunteers and BLM employees involved in surface disturbing activities will immediately report any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object or fossil) discovered by the BLM, or any person working on their behalf, on public or Federal land to the authorized officer. Onsite monitoring by the BLM cultural specialist will be conducted during surface disturbing activities in areas with high potential for buried resources. Upon discovery, the BLM will suspend all operations in the immediate area of such discovery until the authorized officer evaluates the discovery and provides a written authorization to proceed taking appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values.
3. Cultural materials on public lands may not be removed, damaged, disturbed, excavated or transferred without a BLM permit. No alternative proposes authorizing such a permit. Therefore users of the public lands and the BLM employees and volunteers are not authorized to disturb archeological and historical values, including, but not limited to, petroglyphs, ruins, historic buildings, and artifacts.
4. Place natural screening objects (junipers, rocks, and brush) in and near cultural resources. The objects will be located in a manner that reduces the likelihood of the cultural resources being discovered by trail users, thus reducing the likelihood of vandalism or damage. The natural screening objects/barriers will be installed, maintained, and paid for by the BLM recreation program in coordination with the BLM cultural program.
5. Deploy motion activated cameras in and near cultural sites. The motion camera will be paid for by the BLM recreation program and be installed/maintained/monitored by the BLM cultural program.

6. Trail layouts proposed at the northern terminus of the Red Ridge Trail and along the upper connector of Johnny-on-Top intersect important shrub species. All spoil dirt (created from trail construction activities) will be located in areas targeted for rehab or in disposal locations without shrub species.
7. Use integrated pest management including mechanical/chemical treatments to control weeds. Prescribed fire would be used only in areas with more than 12" of annual precipitation. Reseed or replant as necessary to promote vegetative growth in consultation and cooperation with interested parties.
8. Prohibit surface-disturbing activities within 500 feet of surface water, riparian-wetland areas, and playas unless activities are determined to be necessary and when impacts can be mitigated.
9. Prohibit surface-disturbing and disruptive activities within identified big game crucial winter range from November 15 to April 30 and within identified big game parturition areas from May 1 to June 30 unless the authorized officer grants a prior written exception, waiver, or modification.
10. Prohibit surface disturbing and/or disruptive activities that have the potential to cause destruction of reproductive nests, eggs or young of migratory birds during the period of May 1 to July 15. The authorized officer may grant a prior written exception if a survey (following BLM protocol) reveals that no nesting migratory birds exist in the project area.
11. Avoid pygmy rabbit habitat.
12. Complete a survey for Fremont Bladderpod and Rocky Mountain Twinpod prior to surface disturbance. If localized populations are found in the area proposed for disturbance, then the disturbance will be relocated to avoid the sensitive plants.

1.3. Context:

The project is to complete site-specific actions directly involving up to approximately 1 acre of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. The impacts of the project would be beneficial to users and natural resources in the project area, and no long-term negative impacts resulting from the implementation of any action would occur.

1.4. Intensity:

The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR1508.27 and incorporated into the BLM's Critical Elements of the Human Environment list (H- 1790-1), and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders.

The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

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

The environmental assessment has considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action and alternatives. Overall, implementing the selected alternative would result in decreased off-trail travel and associated environmental impacts, improved visitor safety,

reduced traffic across the Twin Creek Riparian system, as well as improved visitor safety and enjoyment.

2. ***The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.***

The selected alternative will eliminate the need for trail users to travel along the highway right of way corridor, thus reducing visitor health and safety concerns associated with mixing pedestrian and highway traffic.

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

A number of cultural resources exist in the project area. However, design features will be implemented in a manner that will not impact cultural resources. The Twin Creek Riparian system will be avoided as a result of project implementation.

4. ***The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be controversial.***

The methods of trail construction activities are accepted, and are commonly employed to meet resource management objectives. The effects from implementing the project are well known and documented and not considered to be highly controversial.

5. ***The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.***

There are no known effects of the selected action identified in the EA that are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.

6. ***The 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.***

The selected action would not establish a precedent for future actions.

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

No significant cumulative impacts were identified in the EA.

8. ***The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.***

The selected action will not result in direct impacts to NRHP eligible sites. The additional design features of the selected action will also provide for long-term protection of these sites.

9. ***The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.***

The selected action does not affect endangered or threatened species or habitats determined critical under the ESA of 1973.

