

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Bull Canyon Rim Trail DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2015-0031-EA

Background

Dinosaur National Monument (DNM) currently manages a developed picnic area with entrance signs, asphalt parking to accommodate 10-15 vehicles, asphalt trails to picnic tables, a viewpoint with interpretive signs, and a double vault restroom adjacent to the Bull Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA). This site is receiving moderate use during the summer and fall months and is surrounded by BLM lands on three sides to the west, north, and east. The cliff rim where the proposed trail is located can be seen from the developed viewpoint and visitors are seeking the experience of traveling along this rim. This has created various parallel, braided and undefined user trails in the project area, some of which travel dangerously close to the cliff rim. A need was identified by WRFO staff to designate and define one trail that is a safe distance from cliff drop offs, concentrates use on one path in this particular area, and provides visitors the views, access, and experiences they are seeking.

The proposed 1.3 mile trail primarily consists of an evident user trail with recent use that parallels 10-20 ft away from the abrupt edge of a bedrock rim cliff drop off to Viewpoint 1. The trail corridor would be analyzed 50 ft either side of the propose alignment line to provide on-the-ground flexibility when the trail is being constructed. This allows the trail to be located in the most sustainable areas and to be located around any obstacles as needed.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the White River Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (1996). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

Context

The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public lands that do not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. This project is located within the Bull Canyon WSA and on approximately 550 feet of DNM lands. The implementation of this project would result in the long term disturbance of up to 0.32 acres. The only management activities visible from the proposed trail are a wire fence that marks the approximate DNM/BLM boundary and the developments in the DNM Plug Hat Butte Picnic Area, which include the paved parking area, a vault toilet, picnic tables, surfaced trails, and an overlook with interpretive signage. There was a vegetation treatment conducted in the summer of 2014 approximately two miles north of the proposed trail to improve sage-grouse habitat. This project was determined to meet the WSA non-impairment standard and retain the Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class I objective of retaining the existing character of the landscape. Other current activities known to occur in the Bull Canyon WSA include livestock grazing, big game hunting, and a low amount of off trail hiking and canyoneering.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this Proposed Action:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Construction of the proposed trail is likely to result in beneficial effects to recreational visitors to this area. This project provides another amenity for visitors to the Plug Hat Butte Picnic Area and better facilitates this use of the area by providing visitors a safer and more sustainable method for traveling in the area than what exists. By establishing formal trail signage for this trail, visitors can also gain a clear expectation of the distance needed to travel to reach their viewpoint destinations and know where the trail will take them. This ensures that visitors are better prepared for the trail and understand that the trail will meet their desired experience. The Proposed Action will also result in some impacts to various resources as well. The removal of vegetation from the trail corridor will provide a potential gateway for invasive/noxious weed establishment. Increased levels of use by creating a trail also increases the likelihood of noxious/invasive weeds to be transported into the area on user clothes and shoes. Recreational day-use has the potential to disrupt nesting activities of migratory birds and raptors on a localized basis from mid-April through mid-August. Recreational activity that coincides with big game seasonal use would prompt avoidance and habitat disuse on a localized scale.

2. The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety.

The Proposed Action is located in an area with extreme cliff drop offs. The intent of locating the trail a safe distance from the cliff edge is designed to improve visitor safety in this area while providing for the desired recreational experience of traveling near the cliff edge for the views down into Bull Canyon. The formal construction and signing of the proposed trail is likely to result in an increase of visitor use to this area. However, while visitation may increase, the trail design and signs at the beginning of the trail are intended to facilitate a safer experience than the current user-created trails.

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.

This project is located within the Bull Canyon WSA and on approximately 550 feet of DNM lands. This proposed trail provides a unique opportunity for those traveling along the trail to view the dramatic geography of the Bull Canyon drainage and experience traveling through the scenic surrounding landscape. Because the trail will be constructed, using basic hand tools with minimal ground disturbance and no excavation into the bedrock, the proposed action will not affect any paleontological resources.

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

This project was discussed with both BLM-WRFO staff and DNM staff and no highly controversial effects on the quality of the human environment were identified. This project was also discussed with local representatives of The Wilderness Society with the same outcome. This project is designed to meet the Visual Resource Management Class I objective of retaining the existing character of the landscape and is not viewable from any location except when traveling on the trail. No other comments or concerns have been received regarding possible effects on the quality of the human environment during scoping.

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

No highly uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment were identified during analysis of the Proposed Action or through scoping and outreach efforts.

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.

The Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. All future management activities or proposed projects within WSA's must be determined to meet the non-impairment standard or meet one of the defined exception criteria as defined in BLM Manual 6330-Management of Wilderness Study Areas.

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

Combined with other past, present, and future management activities such as the development of the Plug Hat Butte Picnic Area, livestock grazing, big game hunting, and vegetation treatments, the Proposed Action does not relate to these actions in a manner that would result in any cumulatively significant impacts.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The proposed trail was surveyed for cultural resources at the Class III intensity level by the WRFO archaeologist, which included a 15 meter-wide area of potential effect (APE) buffer on either side of the proposed trail. The survey yielded no National Register or otherwise eligible historic properties in the APE that would be impacted by trail construction activities. Overall, the Proposed Action would not adversely affect any districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

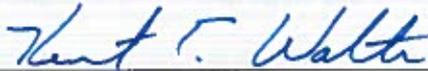
9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973.

The Proposed Action will not adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat. There are no known threatened, endangered or candidate animal species that are known to inhabit or derive important use from the project area

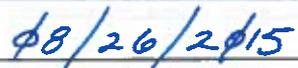
10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Neither the Proposed Action nor impacts associated with it violate any laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Signature of Authorized Official



Field Manager


Date

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641

DECISION RECORD

Bull Canyon Rim Trail DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2015-0031-EA

Decision

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action (Alternative A), as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2015-0031-EA, authorizing the construction and maintenance of the approximately 1.3 mile Bull Canyon Rim Trail.

Design Features

1. Any branches cut would be discussed with the Project Lead or flagged by the Project Lead before they are cut. Consideration will be given to if the entire branch needs removed or only a portion of it. The decision to cut any branch will be based on whether it is determined to be within the four to six feet wide and eight feet high trail corridor or not, and if those traveling this portion of the trail will come in contact with the branch while naturally walking on the trail. The intent is to retain as much vegetation along the trail corridor as possible in order retain the naturalness of the area and not attract attention of those traveling along the trail. All cut branches would be cut flush with the tree's trunk or branch with no stabs remaining.

2. Native Seed Mix: # 3

Variety	Common Name	Scientific Name	Rate (lbs PLS/Ac)
Rosanna	Western wheatgrass	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>	4
Whitmar	Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>	3.5
Rimrock	Indian ricegrass	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>	3
	Needle and Thread	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>	2.5
	Sulphur Flower Buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum umbellatum</i>	1
	Scarlet Globemallow	<i>Sphaeralcea coccinea</i>	0.5

3. Any areas where soil must be disturbed greater than a depth of four inches would be discussed with the Project Lead or marked on the ground by the Project Lead before the ground is disturbed. This decision will be based on limiting the amount of ground disturbance while also creating the most level, sustainable tread and with appropriate drainage.
4. All persons who are associated with implementing the project will be informed that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts.
5. If any archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, activity in the vicinity of the discovery will cease, and the BLM WRFO Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The applicant will make every effort to protect the site from further impacts including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage until BLM determines a treatment approach, and the treatment is completed. Unless previously determined in treatment plans or agreements, BLM will evaluate the cultural resources and, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), select the appropriate mitigation option within 48 hours of the discovery. The applicant, under guidance of the BLM, will implement the mitigation in a timely manner. The process will be fully documented in reports, site forms, maps, drawings, and photographs. The BLM will forward documentation to the SHPO for review and concurrence.
6. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the applicant must notify the AO, by telephone and written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), the operator must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the AO.
7. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for disturbing or collecting vertebrate or other scientifically-important fossils, collecting large amounts of petrified wood (over 25lbs./day, up to 250lbs./year), or collecting fossils for commercial purposes on public lands.
8. If any paleontological resources are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the applicant or any of his agents must stop work immediately at that site, immediately contact the BLM Paleontology Coordinator, and make every effort to protect the site from further impacts, including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The BLM or designated paleontologist will evaluate the discovery and take action to protect or remove the resource within 10 working days. Within 10 days, the operator will be allowed to continue construction through the site, or will be given the choice of either (a) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for stabilizing the fossil resource in place and avoiding further disturbance to the fossil resource, or (b) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for mitigating impacts to the fossil resource prior to continuing construction through the project area.

9. During trail construction, no Curl-Leaf Mountain Mahogany will be cut/removed. Trail alignment will be done in a way to avoid Curl-Leaf Mountain Mahogany.

10. BLM will be responsible for surveying the trail twice a year (once in the spring and once in the fall) and treating any noxious or invasive weeds by methods outlined in the Integrated Weed Management Plan for WRFO.

Compliance with Laws & Conformance with the Land Use Plan

This decision is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. It is also in conformance with the 1997 White River Record of Decision/Approved Resource Management Plan.

Environmental Analysis and Finding of No Significant Impact

The Proposed Action was analyzed in DOI-BLM-N05-2015-0031-EA and it was found to have no significant impacts, thus an EIS is not required.

Public Involvement

This project was posted on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on January 23, 2015. The preliminary EA and both the BLM's and NPS's unsigned Findings of No Significant Impact (FONSIs) were made available for public review and comment from June 1 to June 30, 2015. One comment letter was received from Conservation Colorado recommending that the BLM adopt the no action alternative and then decommission and rehabilitate all trails in the area.

Monitoring and Compliance

On-going monitoring and maintenance will be conducted by White River Field Office staff at least twice each year with the most appropriate timing being once in the spring and once in the fall. Specific design features will be followed.

Rationale

Overall, the Proposed Action rehabilitates the multiple user-created braided trails and establishes one formal identifiable trail to concentrate existing use of this area onto one trail, thereby reducing/mitigating long-term impacts to soils over a larger area. The Proposed Action also benefits the wilderness naturalness character of the area by restoring human-caused impacts from unmanaged travel and facilitates current and expected increased future use of the area. The Proposed Action also improves human health and safety in this area by facilitating travel to a desired designation a safe distance from extreme cliff drop offs. Analysis of the Proposed Action has concluded that there are no significant negative impacts and that it meets Colorado Standards for Public Land Health.

Administrative Remedies

Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4. Within 30 days of the decision, a Notice of Appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at White River Field Office, 220 East Market St., Meeker, CO 81641 with copies sent to the Regional Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, 755 Parfet St., Suite 151, Lakewood, CO 80215, and to the Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals, 801 North Quincy St., MS300-QC, Arlington, VA, 22203. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals at the above address within 30 days after the Notice of Appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

Signature of Authorized Official



Field Manager



Date