

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Royal Gorge Field Office
3028 E. Main Street
Canon City, CO 81212**

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-F02-2015-0032 CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT NAME: SRP - The Shelf Road Corral Events

PLANNING UNIT: Gold Belt Subregion #5

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T16S R70W Section 27, 28, 33

APPLICANT: Adam Peters, American Alpine Club (AAC)

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

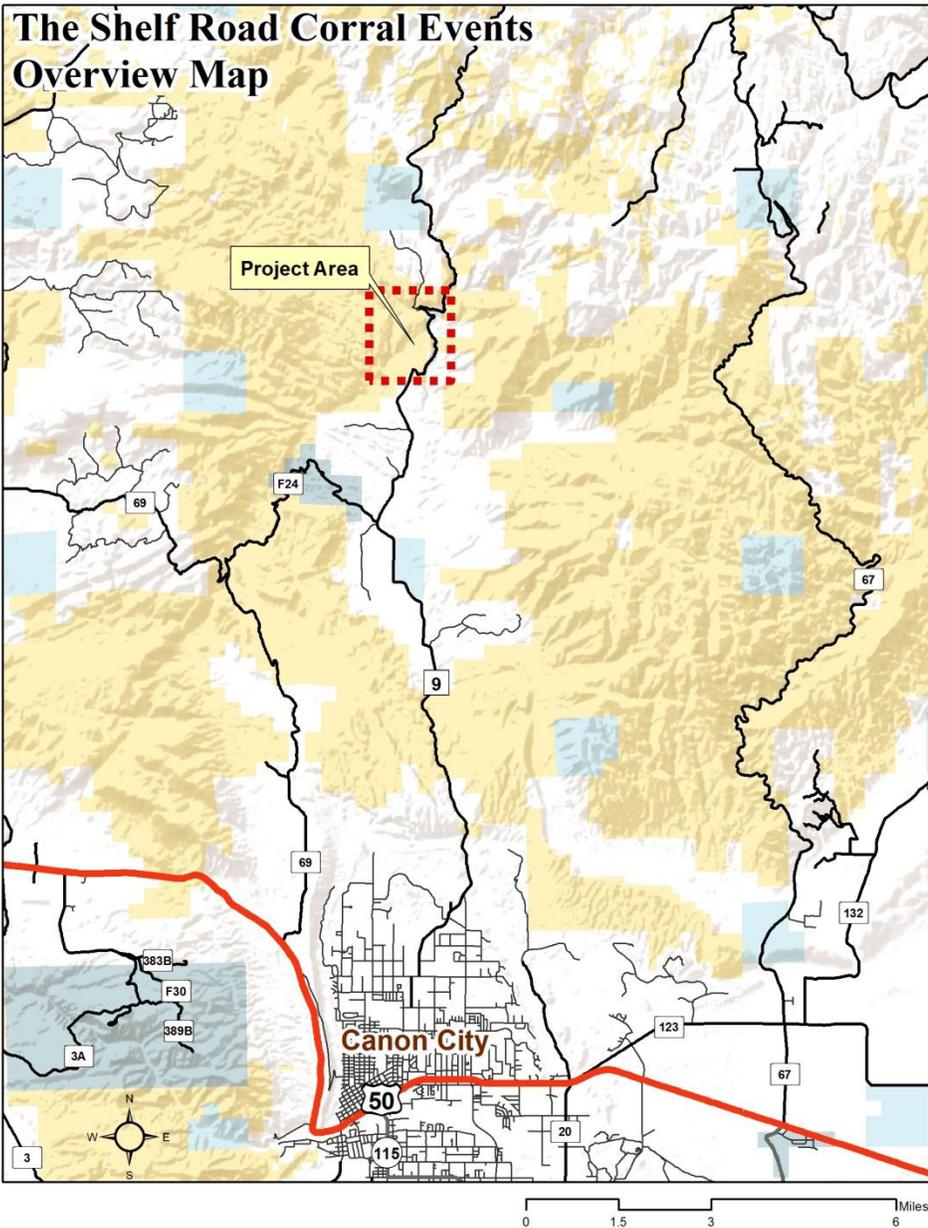
The American Alpine Club, has proposed a climbing event known as the The Craggin' Classic. The Proposed Action would issue a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) for events taking place on BLM public lands in the Shelf Road Recreation Area (see map 1). The Craggin' Classic educates the climbing community in competency, stewardship and safety. Education is promoted through clinics.

Use of BLM public land is non-exclusive; designated routes and parking will be open and available to the public. Vendors and booths would be located at the corral area. The event would take place in several locations in the Shelf Road Recreation Area (see map 2), the corral area would serve as the staging area for camping, parking and vendors. To prevent congestion, shuttles would be used from the corral to the parking areas, using only designated routes. All designated trails would be used to access the cliffs for clinics. Climbing clinics would take place at the cliffs within the Shelf Road Recreation Area.

The applicant is responsible for providing portable toilets and trash clean up. Loud speakers would be directed away from the campgrounds and would not be used during the quiet hours (10:00pm to 6:00am). The maximum amount of participants would be limited to 250 people.

Compliance with the standard stipulations for all permits is required. All permitted activities will be monitored by the BLM for adherence to the stipulations.

Authority to issue SRP's is found in BLM SRP Handbook H-2930-1 and 43 CFR Part 2930. Issuing an SRP is a discretionary action with final approval by the authorized officer. Applications may be denied based upon factors such as non-compliance with land use plans or designations; a moratorium on permits issued as part of a planning process; the results of an environmental analysis; other resource values; an allocation system; public health and safety concerns; applicant's past performance; or the inability of the managing office to issue, manage, and monitor the proposed use.



Map Legend

- Land Ownership**
- Bureau of Land Management
 - Private
 - State

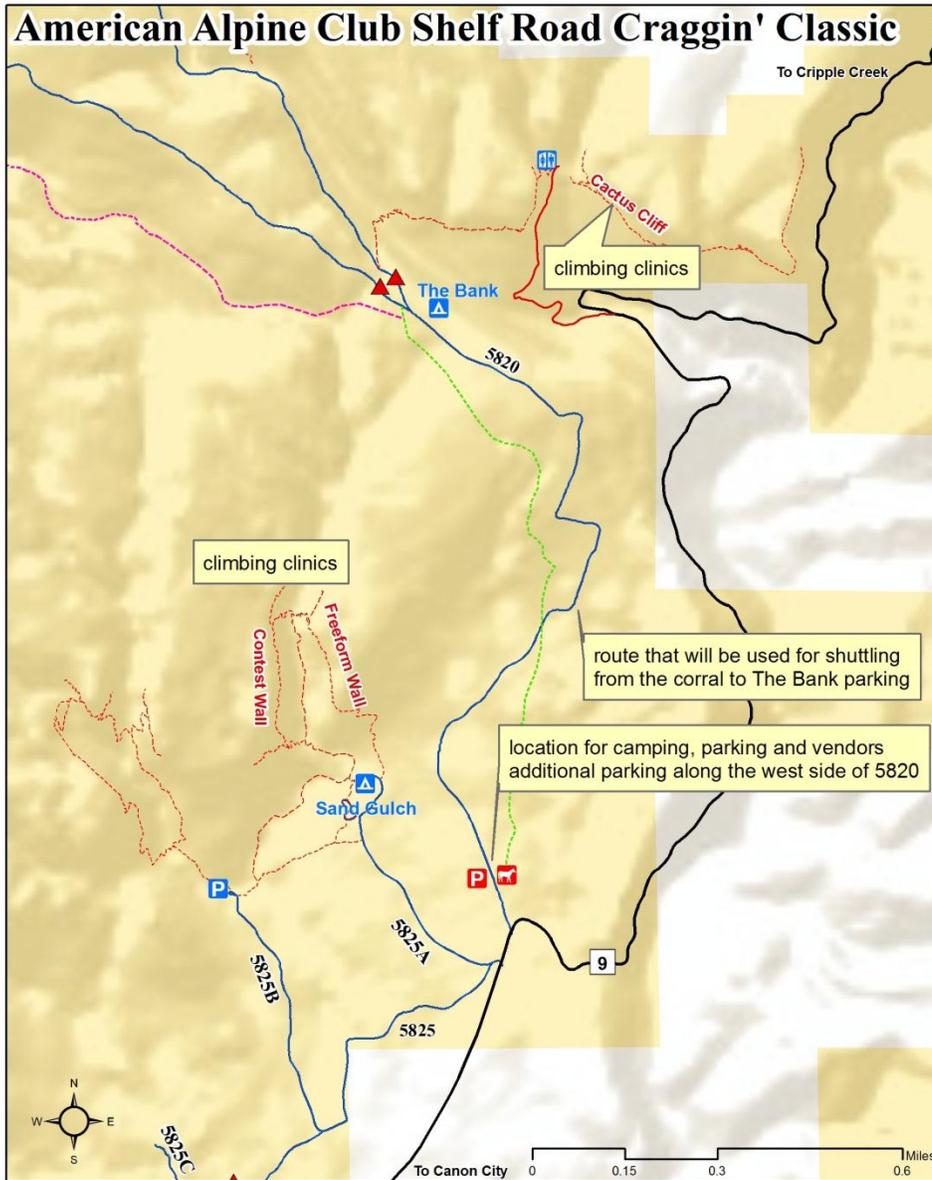
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The Bureau of Land Management
 Royal Gorge Field Office
 3028 E Main St
 Canon City, CO 81212
 (719) 269-5500

<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/rgfo.html>





**16S 70W
Section 27, 28, 33**

Map Legend		
County Roads	Campground	Bureau of Land Management
Designated Routes	Horse Staging Area	Private
Administrative Access	Parking Area	State
Primitive Roads	Restroom	
ATV Trails	Trailer Parking	
Bicycle Trails	Wet Weather Gate	
Non Designated Routes		
Horse and Hiking Trails		
Hiking Trails		

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PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:

Name of Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 5/13/1996

Decision Number: 5-86

Decision Language: Recreation will be managed to provide for: a variety of recreational opportunities and settings; additional opportunities for mountain biking, hiking, off-highway vehicle use, interpretation, and horseback riding.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: This proposed action is listed as a Categorical Exclusion in DOI Departmental Manual Part 516 Chapter 11 9(H). None of the following exceptions in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Exclusion Criteria	YES	NO
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; lands with wilderness characteristics; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.		X
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		X
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		X
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.		X
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal		X

lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.		
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.		X

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM REVIEW			
NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	Initials/date
Lara Duran	Wildlife Biologist	Terrestrial Wildlife, TE&P, Migratory Birds	See analysis, LD 5/29/15
Chris Cloninger	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	CC, 3/16/15
John Lamman	Range Management Spec.	Weeds	JL, 03/25/2014
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife, Riparian/Wetlands	DG, 3/17/15
Stephanie Carter	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology, Waste Hazardous or Solid	SSC, 3/16/15
Melissa Smeins	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology	-----
John Smeins	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights, Soils	JS, 3/17/15
Ty Webb	Fire Management Officer	Air Quality	TSW, 3/16/15
Dave Parker	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey	DP, 3/25/15
Linda Skinner	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers,	LS, 3/16/15
Ken Reed	Forester	Forestry	KR, 3/16/15
Michael Troyer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	MT 3/25/15
Richard Rotte	Realty Specialist	Realty	RAR,3/16/15
Steve Cunningham	Law Enforcement Ranger	Law Enforcement	SC 4/10/15
Ty Webb	Fire Management Officer	Fire	TSW, 3/16/15

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: Although cultural resources were found near the area of potential effect [see reports CR-RG-84-021 N, CR-RG-86-012 N, CR-RG-90-002 P, CR-RG-94-015 P, CR-RG-96-027 N, CR-RG-99-104 N, CR-RG-00-017 N, CR-RG-02-059 N, CR-RG-05-053 P, CR-RG-06-118 P, CR-RG-09-038 P, CR-RG-10-026 N, CR-RG-11-042 N, CR-RG-13-048 N, CR-RG-13-117 P, CR-RG-14-050 N, CR-RG-15-025 P] no sites determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were found. Therefore, the proposed project will have no impact on any historic properties (those eligible for the NRHP).

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.

Threatened, Endangered & Proposed Species: Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) has suitable habitat within its range within a half-mile of the proposed recreation event. The proposed Shelf Road Craggin' Classic Recreation Event, with the design features, would have NO EFFECT on Mexican spotted owl for the following reasons:

1. The presence of Protected Activity Centers near the action area does not preclude all management activities.
2. Vegetation and coarse woody debris would remain unaffected.
3. Prey would remain unaffected.
4. Human disturbance, occupancy and noise would remain within baseline conditions, and outside of the breeding season.
5. There would be no effects to foraging or nesting habitat, or prey.
6. There would be no effects to foraging or nesting behaviors of Mexican spotted owl individuals.
7. There would be no cumulative effects.
8. All conservation measures and relevant recovery actions would be met.

Federally Designated Critical Habitat

The proposed Shelf Road Craggin' Classic Recreation Event would have NO EFFECT on Critical Habitat for Mexican spotted owl for the following reasons:

1. There would be no affect to any of the primary constituent elements.
2. Breeding, roosting, and nesting habitat for Mexican spotted owl would not be affected.
3. Prey habitat and populations would not be affected.

Refer to the Biological Assessment for details. In the event that a project or action proceeds and later results in any "take" of Mexican spotted owl, or if the proposed action changes in any way, including the design criteria, is modified in a manner that causes effects not considered or not as disclosed, or if new information becomes available that reveals that the proposed action may impact endangered, threatened, or proposed species in a manner or to an extent not previously considered, a new or revised biological assessment and consultation with USFWS would be required. The proposed actions would have no effect on any other Threatened or Endangered Species; therefore no further consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service is required.

Sensitive Species: Since the majority of recreation event would occur on cliffs, and in areas dominated by piñon pine and juniper woodland, ponderosa pine, four BLM sensitive species have suitable habitat present within ¼ mile and are believed to be present in the action area. These species and the expected effects are described in the table below.

Species Name	Environmental conditions need for habitat	Expected Effects
ferruginous hawk (<i>Buteo regalis</i>)	Flat rolling prairies, semi-desert shrub-steppe, low elevation, 3000 to 9500' elevation, migratory in CO, breeds in CO from March 5 to July 31, very intolerant of disturbance, requires a 1 mile nest buffer	Although nest sites are within the action area, the event would occur after the breeding season is over for this species so reproductive success would not be affected; foraging habitat would not be affected; no effect to the species
bald eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Forested areas with large bodies of water, perches, mature large trees, <8000' elevation, requires a ½ mile nest and ½ mile winter roost spatial buffer, in CO breeds from January 1 to August 10	Only winter roosting habitat is present in the action area and the event would occur before the winter season occurs; no effect to the species
fringed myotis (<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>)	Fir-pine forests, ponderosa pine, piñon pine, juniper woodlands with snags, Gamble oak, interspersed with open deserts, shrubs, grasslands, edges and abundant water sources, 3900 to 10,000' elevation, caves, mines, rock crevices, structures	The event is confined to existing rock climbing routes and cliffs where fringed myotis suitable habitat no longer exists; foraging behavior would not be affected; no effect to the species
Townsend's big-eared bat (<i>Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens</i>)	Caves, mines, rock crevices, structures, tree cavities, edge habitats 6100 -9500' elevation in dry to mesic forests	The event is confined to existing rock climbing routes and cliffs where Townsend's big-eared bat suitable habitat no longer exists; foraging behavior would not be affected; no effect to the species

Because there would be no effect to these four BLM sensitive species or their habitats, there would be no cumulative effects from this action when combined with other federal and non-federal actions.

Migratory Birds: Sixteen migratory birds of concern (BLM priority migratory bird species, Colorado Partners in Flight Birds of Conservation Concern and US Fish and Wildlife Service) have suitable habitat within ¼ mile of the proposed recreation event action area and are believed to be present on the cliffs, and in areas dominated by piñon pine and juniper woodland, ponderosa pine. Nest territories were previously documented within or immediately adjacent to the action area for two cliff nesting raptors: prairie falcon and golden eagle. However, this proposed recreation event would occur after the breeding season is over for these migratory bird species. Hence, reproductive success and breeding behaviors for these migratory bird species would not be affected. Foraging habitat would not be affected. Thus, there would be no effect to these migratory birds from this proposed recreation event. Because there would be no effect to these sixteen migratory bird species or their habitats, there would be no cumulative effects from this action when combined with other federal and non-federal actions.

Terrestrial Wildlife: Limestone crags, rock outcroppings, canyons and riparian corridors support prime black bear (*Ursus americanus*) habitat and Shelf Road is no exception. Black bear - human conflict area, summer concentration, and fall concentration areas are all documented by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as being located within ½ mile of the areas proposed for use in the recreation event. There is no record to indicate that the habitat within the action area was modified in any way as the result of the past conflict(s) with black bear to prevent future conflicts. This event is proposed for the fall season when black bears are voraciously foraging in preparation for winter hibernation, which is also when most human –black bear conflicts occur. Since this multi-day event that would be expected to attract a large crowd and vendors, attractants would be in

abundance during the event and possibly afterward. Because of the site history and adjacent concentration areas for black bear, there is a high probability that attractants brought in by event participants would cause black bears to attempt to forage in the action area, for additional black bear to human conflicts to increase in frequency during and after the event, and for individual black bear to face negative consequences of those conflicts. The Biologist and the Rec Staff will coordinate on efforts prior to the event based on black bear sightings or known presence.

Pro-active conservation measures to protect recreation event attendees and black bears would be recommended as part of the recreation event special permit to minimize the probability and frequency of black bear- human conflicts before and after the recreation event, and to reduce relocation and mortality of black bears as the result.

Conservation Measures for Black Bears

1. Biologist may work with CPW to post black bear habitat warning signs throughout the action area and especially at campgrounds before the event
2. Engage RGFO BLM wildlife biologist and CPW in potentially hosting a black bear – human conflict avoidance education with participants during the event, for instance as a vendor exhibit or as part of required registration materials
3. If bears are observed in the action area, require all attractants to be stored in a bear-resistant manner when not in immediate use any time of day or night for the full duration of the event, then packed out and removed from the event promptly
 - a) Bear resistant manner means in a: bear resistant container manufactured for that purpose, closed hard-sided vehicle, hung 10 x 4, dwelling or building, or approved electric fence
 - b) Attractants are defined as all items with a scent or order including but not limited to: food, bones, scraps, grease, garbage, gas, oil, pet food, detergent, deodorant, beverages, coolers, grills, stoves, beverage containers
4. Require the event organizer to sweep the area for residual garbage at the close of the event to ensure all attractants are found and removed off site
5. Report all black bear sightings immediately to both BLM RGFO Wildlife Biologist and CPW

Wastes, Solid or Hazardous: If the project involves oil or fuel usage, transfer or storage, an adequate spill kit and shovels are required to be onsite during project implementation. The project proponent will be responsible for adhering to all applicable local, State and Federal regulations in the event of a spill, which includes following the proper notification procedures in BLM's Spill Contingency Plan.

COMPLIANCE PLAN (optional):

NAME OF PREPARER: Bryce Hofmann

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: Melissa K. S. Garcia

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: /s/ Martin Weimer

DATE: 7/2/15

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed this Categorical Exclusion and have decided to implement the Proposed Action.

This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 10 criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an exception and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

/s/ Keith E. Berger
Keith E. Berger, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 7/2/15