

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
GRAND JUNCTION FIELD OFFICE
2815 H Road, Grand Junction, CO 81506**

and

**UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE
GRAND MESA, UNCOMPAHGRE, AND GUNNISON NATIONAL FOREST
GRAND VALLEY RANGER DISTRICT**

DECISION RECORD

Palisade Plunge Trail

DOI-BLM-CO-S080-2017-0030-EA

DECISION

As authorized officers of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and United States Forest Service (Forest Service), we have decided to authorize construction, maintenance, and use of the Palisade Plunge Trail located on public lands administered by our agencies, as described in Alternative B in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA). By this approval, we authorize construction of 31.6 miles of new singletrack trail. We also authorize maintenance and use of approximately 34 miles of overall trail, constructing two connectors to the Palisade Rim Trail, building the Shirrtail Point Trailhead, re-designating existing routes, constructing and applying identified design features in the EA such as fences, kiosks, emergency evacuation areas, etc., and rehabilitating social trails.

The decisions made by the BLM and the Forest Service include designating the types of uses allowed on the Palisade Plunge Trail on the public land that each agency manages. The portion of the Palisade Plunge Trail that will be located on public land managed by the BLM will be open to bicycles and foot users (Milepost 18.24 to 31.58), and the portions managed by the Forest Service will be open to bicycles, foot, and equestrian use (Milepost 0 to 18.24). The Forest Service has also decided to approve the proposed Shirrtail Point Trailhead. The trail will have a winter closure for wildlife from December 1 to May 1 from MP 11.60 to MP 30.41, but will initially be enforced under adaptive management at MP 27.48. The entire trail will also be open to two-way traffic.

The BLM approves the proposed a designation changes for routes 014 and 0952, and rehabilitation of social trails located between the Palisade Rim Trail and the proposed Palisade Plunge Trail and in other locations in the project area. The designation for route O14 (segments 7207, 7588, and 7605) will be changed from “closed” to “administrative” to allow for permitted uses and maintenance and the designation for route 0952 will change from “open to all terrain vehicles and

utility task vehicles (ATV/UTV)” to “open to all uses” (see Map 2 in the EA). These decisions have been made based on the analysis contained in this EA.

The Bureau of Reclamation will issue their decisions to authorize the proposed fences and use within their Rights-of-Way through separate documents and agreements.

During scoping, the public was invited to provide comments on the proposal for 30 days beginning June 6, 2017 through July 5, 2017. One scoping meeting was held on June 15, 2017 in Palisade. During the public scoping comment period, 40 comment letters and emails were received. Comments received during scoping were considered in preparation of the EA. The preliminary draft of this EA was posted to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ePlanning website https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do and announced by press release for a 30 day comment period starting March 15, 2018. During the public comment period, 77 comment letters and emails were received. The EA was revised to include identification of parking areas along the trail route and Map 4 was revised to include a better depiction of work in the clear zone at the U.S. Highway 6 and 24 crossing. The EA was revised to include the requirement for additional signage at kiosks and development of a Monitoring and Mitigation Plan. The EA was revised to include a design feature stating that educational material about potential landslide areas will be provided to the public and that the trail will be closed until repairs are completed if a landslide were to occur. The EA was revised to include preparation of a Monitoring and Maintenance Plan as a collaborative effort between the agencies and partners (see Section 2.2.2, Proposed Action, in the EA). See the Comment Summary attached to the EA for more detail on how each comment was considered.

Based on the EA, and considering public comment, the BLM and Forest Service reached a Finding of No Significant Impact; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary.

RATIONALE

The Palisade Plunge proposal is a collaborative effort between the BLM, the Forest Service, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), the Town of Palisade, Mesa County, City of Grand Junction, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), and the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association (COPMOBA). The trail is one of Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper’s “16 in 2016” initiatives to support trails and promote outdoor recreation in Colorado. Local governments and tourism organizations are also supportive of the project and view it as a key opportunity for economic development.

Throughout initial layout and construction, many modifications and adjustments were made to ensure that the final alignment was in the best location possible. The BLM, the Forest Service, cooperating agencies, and partner organizations coordinated with the BOR to design a safe crossing of the Orchard Mesa Power Canal and with the Colorado Department of Transportation to make sure there is a safe crossing of U.S. Highway 6 and 24. The trail alignment was rerouted to avoid several Colorado hookless cactus plants and to avoid raptor nests in proximity to the trail alignment. The BLM consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and received concurrence that the proposed trail is “not likely to adversely affect” Colorado hookless cactus. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer was conducted and a Memorandum of Agreement has been prepared for mitigation of adverse effects. In response to public comment, the BLM, Forest

Service, and partner agencies and organizations have committed to preparation of a Monitoring and Maintenance Plan for the trail (see discussion below under Mitigation and Monitoring). Rehabilitation of existing social trails will improve vegetation including rare plant habitat, soil, and watershed conditions.

MITIGATION MEASURES AND MONITORING

To address the unknowns associated with the number of vehicles and users of the trail, the BLM, Forest Service, and partners will develop a Monitoring and Maintenance Plan and include a schedule for monitoring and also identify parties responsible for monitoring and maintenance. The Plan will include a breakdown of the types of maintenance that will be required by trail segment or regions and by different times of the year. Maintenance needs will vary based upon a variety of factors such as elevation (vegetation type, slope, and proximity to drainages and water) throughout the year. Maintenance might include clearing fallen trees (at the beginning of the season and after wind events) and trimming vegetation and oakbrush in the higher elevations, repairing drainage features, maintaining trail critical edge, repairing areas with erosion, maintaining bicycle cattleguards, replacing signs, and repairing rock ramps, etc. to maintain the integrity and stability of the trail.

The City of Grand Junction will monitor near their reservoirs during their regular weekly inspections of these facilities. The Town of Palisade will improve and maintain North River Road and the parking lot on the west side of U.S. Highway 6 and 24. COPMOBA will lead and complete three large scale work days each year (early season, mid-season, and late season) and will provide monthly monitoring throughout the entire year for the portions of the trail that are open.

Partners will work with the BLM and Forest Service on developing a central clearinghouse where the monitoring, maintenance needs, and maintenance efforts will be reported and tracked. A comprehensive record will be kept of all monitoring and maintenance. The Plan will also be reviewed annually. If user trails create unauthorized trails, they will be closed and none will be considered for future approval. If the Monitoring and Maintenance Plan cannot be fully implemented with available agency and partner resources, other funding sources will be pursued to ensure full implementation of the Plan. Additional funding sources may include, but are not limited to, outside grants and trail user fees.

No required mitigation measures were necessary to reach a FONSI for this action.

PROTEST AND ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS/REVIEWS

For the BLM's portion of this trail, this decision shall take effect immediately upon the date it is signed by the BLM Authorized Officer, and shall remain in effect while any appeal is pending unless the Interior Board of Land Appeals issues a stay. 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 Grand Junction Field Office, 2815 H Road, Grand Junction, Colorado, 81506. 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, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U.S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

Applicable to the Forest Service portion of the trail only, this is a draft decision subject to pre-decisional administrative review under 36 CFR § 218 subparts A and B. Objections must be filed with the reviewing officer in writing. All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process. Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted and timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project or activity on National Forest Service lands (i.e., during the scoping or comment period) and attributed to the objector, unless the issue is based on new information that arose after the opportunities for comment. At a minimum, an objection must meet the requirements in 36 CFR § 218.2, 218.5 and 218.8. Objections, including attachments, must be filed with the reviewing officer (see 36 CFR § 218.3 and § 218.8) within 45 days of the publication of the legal notice in the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*. The publication date of the legal notice in the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel* is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Evidence of timely filing is described in 36 CFR § 218.9. Please submit objections via mail or hand delivery to: Reviewing Officer, U.S.D.A Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region, 1617 Cole Blvd. Building 17, Golden, CO 80401; via fax to: 303-275-5134 to the attention of Objections; or via email to: r02admin-review@fs.fed.us. Please include "Palisade Plunge Trail" as the project name. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered objection are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Electronic objections must be submitted in a format such as an e-mail message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or MS Word (.doc). In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification. If no objections are received, the decision may be signed and implementation may occur no sooner than 5 business days after the objection period closes. If objections are filed, decision finalization and implementation is subject to Reviewing Officer's response.

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Christina Stark

DATE: 6/19/18

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIALS:



Katie A. Stevens
Field Manager
Grand Junction Field Office

DATE SIGNED: 6/19/2018



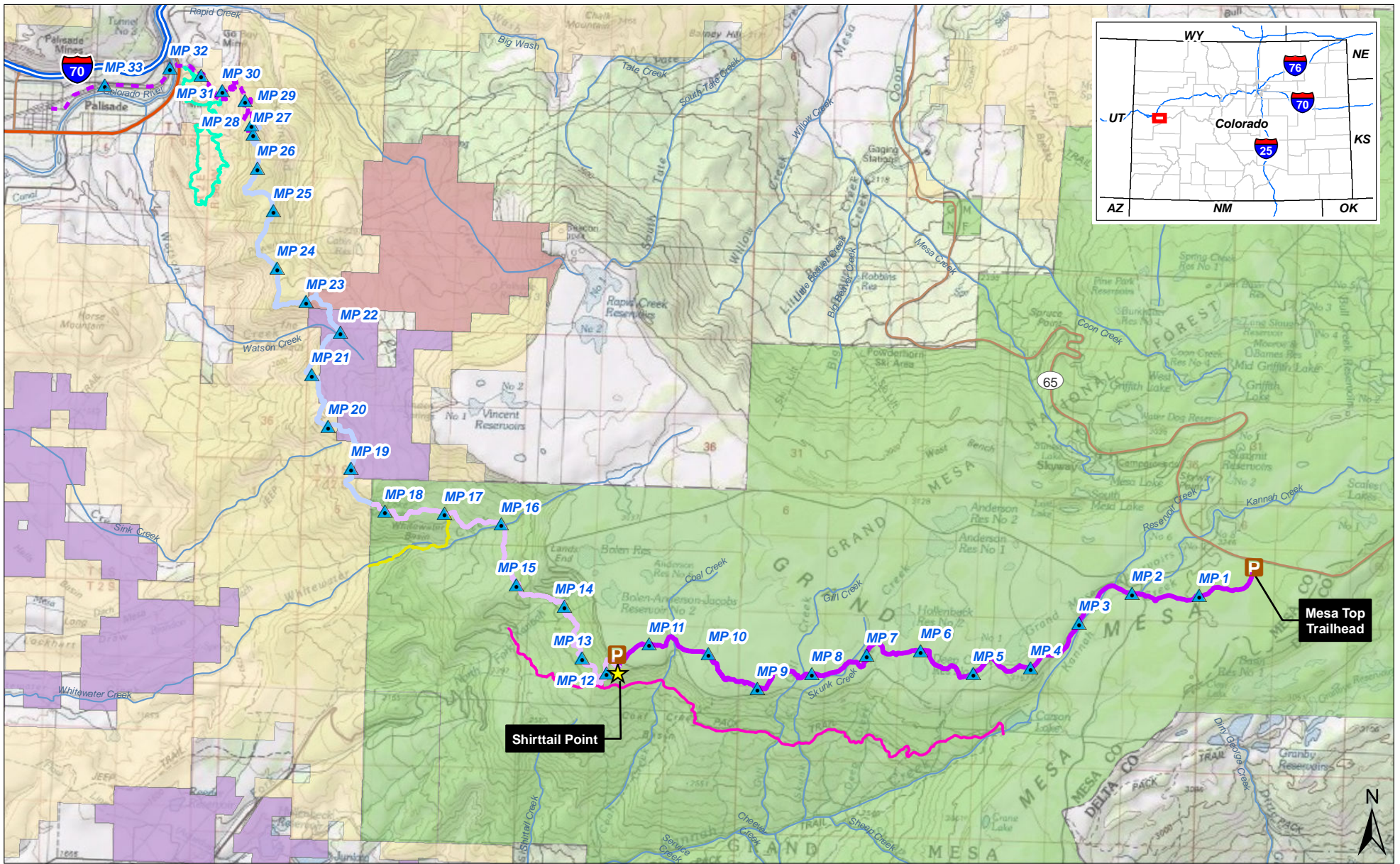
William A. Edwards
District Ranger
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison
National Forest, Grand Valley Ranger District

DATE SIGNED:

8/18/2018

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) Project Map

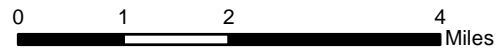


Legend

- ▲ Milepost
- Palisade Plunge Trail**
- Bicycle and Foot Only*
- Bicycle and Foot Only with Seasonal Closure
- Bicycle, Horse, and Foot Only
- Bicycle, Horse, and Foot Only with Seasonal Closure
- Whitewater Basin Trail
- Coal Creek Trail
- Palisade Rim Trail

- Surface Ownership**
- Bureau of Land Management
 - Forest Service
 - City of Grand Junction
 - Town of Palisade
 - Private
 - Streams

*Winter Closure may be moved to the intersection near MP 30.4 if there are violations of the closure past MP 27.48



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This project was developed through digital means and may be updated without notice.

Palisade Plunge Trail
Mesa County, Colorado

Map 1
General Project Location