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Chaffee County Camping and Travel Management Plan

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Bureau of Land Management
Rocky Mountain District
Royal Gorge Field Office
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Identifying Information

Project Title: Chaffee County Camping and Travel Management Plan

Legal Description: New Mexico Principal Meridian, Colorado

T. 49 N., R. 8 and 9 E.,

T. 50 N., R. 7 and 8 E.,

T. 51 N., R. 8 E.

Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado

T. 13 and 14 S., R. 78 W.

Applicant: Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

NEPA Document Number: DOI-BLM-CO-F020-2021-0020-EA

Lease/Casefile/Project Number: N/A

1.2. General Setting

The Chaffee County Camping and Travel Management Plan has two components. The first component is establishing a designated route network on approximately 13,000 acres (2% of BLM land in Chaffee County managed by the field office) through travel management planning that are not covered by any previous travel management plans. The second component is establishing a Camping Management Plan for the proposed management area, approximately 38,200 acres of public land (6% of BLM land in Chaffee County managed by the field office), that includes the 13,000 acres where route designations are also proposed.

The project area is within Chaffee County, Colorado. This includes BLM public lands in elevations ranging from 7,000' to 8,500' within the Arkansas River Valley. The majority of the proposed management area is in pinyon-juniper woodlands with higher elevations within Ponderosa and Oak vegetation types and occasionally mixed conifer. The BLM parcels are primarily in the foothills of the surrounding mountain ranges but also includes some parcels within the valley bottom. The major transportation corridors include State Highways 24, 50 and 285 as well as numerous county roads. Major recreation destinations in the general area include the Arkansas River, numerous trail and road systems as well as campgrounds, 14,000' peaks and scenic vistas. Salida and Buena Vista are the largest communities within the proposed management area.

Given that the parcels of land within the proposed management area are somewhat unique in their current route designation status, as well as their recreation setting, it is broken out into sub-units. A recreation setting matrix, along with descriptions of setting classifications, for each of the sub-units can be found in the documents section of the projects ePlanning page. These differences are described below for each sub-unit.

1.2.1. Shavano Area (T. 49 N., R. 7 and 8 E.)

- This 4,700-acre parcel does not have a specific travel management plan in place and, per the governing Resource Management Plan (RMP), motorized travel is limited to the existing road network with an allowance for “direct travel to a suitable parking site within 300-feet of an existing road trail...if damage to the land or streams would not occur”. The RMP directs the agency to change the limitation to designated roads and trails through activity level plans. As a thorough inventory was not completed at the time of the 1996 RMP, on the ground management and communication of regulations to the public has been challenging and has resulted in an extensive network of user created routes and campsites that are negatively impacting grazing forage, vegetation and soils.
- Located just six-miles west of Salida, and along a primary access road into U.S. Forest Service lands, the relatively open and flat Shavano area has seen dramatic increases in dispersed camping volume and impacts over the past five-years.
- The current physical and social setting of the area is primarily front-country to rural given the easy access from County Road 250 and the evidence of use and number of encounters one has with other visitors. The operational setting is closer to primitive or backcountry, due to the limited regulations in place for the area resulting in minimal regulatory signing and rare staff presence.
- The BLM Shavano area has become a popular destination for those wishing to visit the greater Arkansas River Area to participate in all recreation activities that the area has to offer. There is not one primary recreation activity for the area and a variety of camping setups are often found ranging from tents, van campers to large Class A motorhomes and 5th Wheels. Based on staff observations and conversations with visitors, it appears that people visit the area for short stays and as more of an overflow location for people wishing to maximize the 14-day stay limit while vacationing in the greater Chaffee County area. There are also a number of people who attempt to illegally reside in this area.
- According to staff observations, dispersed campsites in this sub-unit often have multiple fire rings, trash, and evidence of human waste, which has dramatically increased in number and size over time.
- Portions of this planning sub-unit are within the Droney Gulch ACEC associated with an imperiled plant species. Action Alternatives will avoid designating sites where sensitive plants are present therefore the ACEC will not be impacted.
- 19.3-miles of BLM routes were inventoried within the sub-unit. 0.5-miles of these inventoried routes were determined to not have legal public access.
- Staff have observed increased demand and impacts from camping in this sub-unit especially along CR 250. A definite number has not been established due to varying degrees of impacts, subjectivity of inventory efforts and changing conditions but it is estimated that this location has the highest number and density of dispersed campsites within the entire field office.

See ePlanning, Shavano Area Sub-Unit Maps

1.2.2. Pass Creek (T. 49 N., R. 7 and 8 E., T. 50 N., R. 7 E.)

- The 5,200-acres of public land within this sub-unit do not have a travel management plan

in place and, per the current RMP, motorized travel is limited to the existing road network with an allowance for “direct travel to a suitable parking site within 300-feet of an existing road trail...if damage to the land or streams would not occur.” The RMP also directs the agency to change the limitation to designated roads and trails. As a thorough inventory was not completed at the time of the 1996 RMP, on the ground management and communication of regulations to the public has been challenging.

- These parcels of public land currently have relatively low volumes of recreation use when compared to other adjacent areas. Public access to portions of this sub-unit is limited, due to private land.
- The current physical setting of this sub-unit is primarily middle country due to the 4wd access and limited development maintaining a natural feel. Due to the rough roads and limited access, the social setting is closer to back-country where visitors expect to have few encounters with others. The operational setting is closer to primitive or backcountry, due to the limited regulations in place for the area resulting in minimal regulatory signing and staff presence.
- This area receives relatively low levels of visitation when compared to the other sub-units. People tend to value the area for these reasons. The area is also frequented by hunters and provides important camping and access for these users. The existing campsites have relatively rough access and are small and tight lending themselves to smaller camping units, car camping and tents. There are also a number of people who attempt to illegally reside in this area, especially the sites closer to the creek itself.
- Recent inventories within this sub-unit documented 13.9-miles of BLM routes, of which 10.7-miles do not currently have legal public access. Staff inventory efforts identified approximately five campsites that have been used regularly and continuously within this sub-unit with several in close proximity to Pass Creek and within riparian habitat.

See ePlanning, Pass Creek Area Sub-Unit Maps

1.2.3. *Miscellaneous lands*

- The 3,200-acres of public land within this sub-unit do not have a travel management plan in place and, per the current RMP, motorized travel is limited to the existing road network with an allowance for “direct travel to a suitable parking site within 300-feet of an existing road trail...if damage to the land or streams would not occur.”
- There are a number of small, isolated parcels totaling approximately 3,800-acres within Chaffee County that do not currently have any travel designations. This sub-unit covers the remaining lands within the broader proposed management area that are not within the other sub-units, including those lands without existing roads or public access.
- The current physical setting of the area is primarily front-country given that the parcels are typically close to or are intersected or bordered by a gravel county road. Most of the parcels are more primitive to backcountry for the social component of the setting seeing relatively little visitor use and are viewed more as open space except for those near the Arkansas River that sees high levels of recreation use. The operational setting is closer to primitive or backcountry due to the lack of regulations in place for the area resulting in minimal regulatory signing and staff presence.
- The roads in this sub-unit are primarily county roads or are primitive with low levels of

use. The only campsites inventoried were near the Arkansas River and outside of the boundaries of the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA) and are seeing regular and continuous use including visitors traveling beyond vehicle barriers and increasing the impacted footprint.

- Outside of the areas near the Arkansas River and popular trail systems recreation use and camping impacts are relatively limited.
- Within this sub-unit nine-miles of BLM routes were inventoried, of which 1.7-miles do not currently have legal public access. Staff inventories identified a limited number of campsites spread throughout the sub-unit with the majority occurring off of CR 371 that have some vehicle barriers in place to prevent spread and increased impacts.

See ePlanning, Miscellaneous Lands Sub-Unit Maps

1.2.4. *Burmac/Methodist Area (T. 49 N., R. 8 and 9 E.)*

- The designated trail network for this 3,200-acre sub-unit was established through the 2006 Arkansas River Travel Management Plan. The decision for this plan establishes that no person may operate a motor vehicle more than 100-feet off a designated road and does not apply to areas where a motor vehicle could cause resource damage. The decision goes on to incorporate adaptive management principles to assess the effectiveness of this rule and pending monitoring results could be further limited.
- The travel management plan was later supplemented with additional planning efforts to add additional trails and trailheads.
- This area is accessed by multiple paved or gravel county roads as well as more primitive BLM roads. There are numerous subdivisions interspersed with public lands that have seen increased development in recent years. The public lands contain an extensive non-motorized trail network that sees year-round use, both by local residents and visitors.
- The physical and social component of the setting for this area is primarily front-country with some rural areas due to the ease of access, proximity to houses, modified landscape, volume of people, visitor contacts and evidence of use. The operational setting is middle country to back country since travel management designations are in place allowing for regulatory signing. Kiosks contain maps and recreation information while brochures are also available for the area. Staff are infrequently present, due to staffing limitations and workload.
- The trail system serves as the primary driver for visitors to this area who wish to participate in hiking and bicycling. The trail system serves both locals backyard riding and hiking but is also an important component of outdoor recreation tourism to the area. The area sees moderate to low levels of recreational camping, but due to the proximity to Salida many areas within this sub-unit have become a popular destination for people attempting to illegally reside on public land. This is resulting in high volumes of trash, human waste and drug paraphernalia, creating an unsafe environment for visitors and staff. Staff anticipates that legal camping demand associated with the trail system and people visiting the greater area is present and will increase over time.
- The highest concentration of campsites is found near the Burmac Trailhead area, accessed by BLM road #5672. These sites and road #5672 are located in the bottom of an active drainage with moving drainage channels and sediment loads. These sites often

have trash, human waste and have increased in number and size over time. A limited amount of camping occurs throughout the remainder of the sub-unit but in low concentration and low volumes. A majority of sites outside of Burmac typically are barely evident indicating they are seldomly used.

See ePlanning, BurmacArea Sub-Unit Maps

1.2.5. Fourmile (T. 13 and 14 S., R. 78 W.)

- The designated trail network for this 9,000-acre sub-unit was established through the 2002 Fourmile Travel Management Plan. The decision for this plan establishes that no person may operate a motor vehicle more than 100-feet off a designated road and does not apply to areas where a motor vehicle could cause resource damage. The decision goes on to incorporate adaptive management principles to assess the effectiveness of this rule and pending monitoring results could be further limited.
- The travel management plan was later supplemented with additional planning efforts to add additional trails and trailheads.
- The Fourmile area offers numerous recreation opportunities outside of Buena Vista, Colorado. The area has easy access from county gravel roads and state highways. There are numerous homes located on the interspersed private land. The public lands contain an extensive non-motorized trail network that sees year-round use both by residents and visitors.
- The physical and social component of the setting for this area is primarily front-country due to the ease of access, modified landscape, volume of people, visitor contacts and evidence of use. The operational setting is middle country to back country since travel management designations are in place allowing for regulatory signing. Kiosks contain maps and recreation information while brochures are also available for the area. Staff are infrequently present due to staffing limitations and workload.
- The recent construction of non-motorized trails has drastically driven demand for camping in this area in recent years, particularly in the CR 304 area. Those seeking non-motorized trail-based recreation likely generate the most demand in this area. A number of sites off of the dead-end County Road 304 were recently created and inventoried since 2020. This road is extremely narrow with steep drop offs and limited shoulders while also providing access to private driveways.
- On the northern end, accessed by CR 371, is a major trailhead and the Turtle Rock Campground. The trailhead is used by all forms of trail-based recreation users, motorized and non-motorized. Turtle Rock Campground is a popular destination for those wishing to visit the greater Arkansas River Area with visitors participating in all the recreation activities that the area has to offer. Turtle Rock currently does not charge a fee but does meet the criteria for an expanded amenity fee site. There isn't one primary recreation activity that visitors participate in, but the small size of the roads typically limits visitors to smaller camping units, car camping and tents. Staff observations indicate that the campground is near 100% occupancy throughout the summer months.
- On the far southern end of this unit is the Carnage Canyon Trailhead, a popular destination for motorized trail enthusiasts, including rock crawlers. People who camp in this area are typically there for the directly adjacent motorized recreation opportunities and typically use larger RVs and trailers for camping.

- Inventories show a concentration of campsites off of CR 376 and CR 304 with most users accessing the adjacent trail system or public lands.
- Currently the campground does not have a fee, however management costs are continuing to increase with increased visitation indicating the need to develop a business plan and assess if a fee is warranted.
- The current travel management plan “directs motor vehicle travel to a suitable parking site would be allowed within 100-feet of a designated road or trail if travel does not damage the land or streams”, which in recent years has led to an increase in impacts from dispersed camping.

See ePlanning, Fourmile Area Sub-Unit Maps

1.2.6. Browns Canyon National Monument (BCNM) Entrance/Hecla Junction (T. 51 N., R. 8 E.)

- The designated trail network for this 500-acre sub-unit was established through the 2006 Arkansas River Travel Management Plan. The decision for this plan establishes that no person may operate a motor vehicle more than 100-feet off a designated road and does not apply to areas where a motor vehicle could cause resource damage. The decision goes on to incorporate adaptive management principles to assess the effectiveness of this rule and pending monitoring results could be further limited.
- The 500-acres of BLM land located along County Road 194 accesses Hecla Junction, the primary river take-out for Browns Canyon and designated fee site campground and day-use area. Hecla Junction is also one of two primary gateways to Browns Canyon National Monument, although these 500-acres are located outside of the National Monument boundaries.
- The physical and social component of the setting for this area is primarily front-country due to the ease of access, modified landscape, volume of people, visitor contacts and evidence of use. The operational setting is back country since travel management designations are in place, but the area has very little regulatory signing or evidence of management controls. Staff are infrequently present due to staffing limitations and workload.
- In recent years these lands have been discovered by campers as an alternative for other nearby AHRA fee campgrounds. As a result, the area is seeing an increase in camping impacts and concerns from adjacent private property owners. The majority of inventoried sites are in the Browns Grotto Area. Other sites were inventoried off of CR 194 and BLM Road #5613 This does not include the Hecla Junction Campground managed by AHRA.
- This area has become a popular destination for those wishing to visit the greater Arkansas River Area with visitors participating in all the recreation activities that the area has to offer, not just river activities. There isn't one primary recreation activity for the area and a variety of camping setups are often found in the area ranging from tents, van campers to large Class A motorhomes and 5th Wheels. Turning around at the end of the dead-end road is currently limited to smaller vehicles.
- Some of the sites and access roads are seeing high levels of erosion and soil loss associated with visitor use.

See ePlanning, Hecla Area Sub-Unit Maps

1.3. Background

As stated in Section 1.2, the Chaffee County Camping and Travel Management Plan has two major components. The first component is a travel management plan to evaluate and designate routes for motorized vehicles, following the guidance provided in the 1996 Royal Gorge RMP, on approximately 13,000-acres, or 2% of the BLM lands managed by the field office in Chaffee County. The second component is to establish a camping management framework for 38,200 acres of public lands within the proposed management area. This includes the 13,000 acres that fall under the travel management component of this plan as well as acreage where a designated route network is already in place. These 38,200 acres constitute 6% of the public lands the field office manages in Chaffee County.

Camping has long been a traditional use of public land and is an important part of American heritage and is often an integral part of other outdoor recreation activities. Coinciding with population growth in western states and increased participation in outdoor recreation, “dispersed camping”, or camping where there are not agency provided facilities, have also seen increases. With this increased demand there has also been an increase in negative impacts to resources. This includes vegetation loss, which is important for wildlife and grazing, increases in human waste due to lack of facilities, trash, wildfire risk, as well as impacts to other public land users such as grazing operations.

Given these impacts the BLM has identified a need to increase management of this use to ensure ongoing camping experiences are free of trash and human waste while also addressing the negative impacts to resources. This management plan attempts to address issues and concerns associated with dispersed camping as well as providing a range of camping opportunities to meet public demand while putting into place monitoring and adaptive management strategies to respond to issues as they arise.

While many of the locations that are seeing these camping pressures already have a plan in place that designates the legal routes available for public use, many do not. In some cases, such as the Shavano sub-unit, this has resulted in an extensive network of user created routes that is causing impacts to various resources. This situation has made it very challenging for staff to install signs, educate visitors or even enforce existing regulations. In a concern for spillover effects and the direction provided by the BLM’s RMP the proposed plan also incorporates travel management to establish a baseline route network.

The BLM recognizes that management on public lands may have unintended consequences on adjacent lands and is therefore coordinating this planning effort with the U.S. Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, including implementation timing and messaging. Additionally, the BLM intends to continue to monitor areas adjacent to the proposed management area to determine if additional management for similar issues outside of this initial focus area is warranted.

The proposed management area does not include lands within the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area or within Browns Canyon National Monument, as these areas have their own

management plans that address camping and travel management. The proposed management plan includes areas where a travel management plan and designated route network have not been established, including high visitation areas like Shavano. It also covers areas where travel management plans are in place already but have high levels of camping use that are causing, or have the potential to cause, impacts to resources if not addressed. Many areas adjacent to the proposed management were considered for incorporation into this planning effort but were viewed as a lower priority by the field office, due to less visitor pressures and resource concerns. These adjacent areas would be monitored, and plans may be developed in the future to address route designations and camping management.

This analysis outlines alternatives for both camping management and route designations. These alternatives are based on public input received during a public input period held in April/May 2021 and a public scoping period held December 2021/January 2022. The alternatives and each individual route were evaluated with input from BLM resource management specialists and considered public input. The analysis breaks the project area into sub-units and identifies management strategies for each based on known concerns and management issues.

1.4. Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose is for BLM to respond to observations by both staff and other public land users indicating that impacts associated with increased camping demand are starting to impact the land health standards and that balance in certain areas is not being achieved. In addition, the regulations for motorized and bicycle travel differ throughout the proposed management area based on past planning efforts making it challenging for BLM to currently message and enforce existing requirements. BLM's response is intended to include development of a management framework and strategy for managing camping and establishing a designated route network on public lands that is cohesive across the Chaffee County proposed management area.

The need for this proposed action stems from laws that direct the management of public lands including the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) outlining BLM's multiple use mandate. FLPMA also establishes the requirement to develop Land Use Plans specifying how resources will be managed for each Field Office. For the BLM Royal Gorge Field Office this is the 1996 Royal Gorge RMP. While this plan is currently undergoing revision, the 1996 plan is the plan that is in effect until the new plan is signed and adopted. The RMP directs that off-highway vehicles will be limited to designated roads and trails and this use will be "limited to existing roads and trails until road designations are determined within activity plans." Several of the sub-units identified within the Chaffee County Camping and Travel Management plan fall under this interim guidance and lack a designated route network. Also, the Resource Management Plan directs that recreation "development will be provided to enhance visitor health and sanitation," address "upland recreation opportunities with emphasis on balance between resource protection and tourism," and "provide monitoring and visitor contact to ensure visitor safety and resource protection." The plan also directs the agency to maintain land health standards for continuity in providing healthy and productive working landscapes.

1.5. Decision to be Made

Based on the analysis contained in this Environmental Analysis (EA), the BLM will decide whether to approve or deny the Proposed Action or an Alternative Action and if so, under what terms and conditions. This decision would amend the existing Arkansas River and Fourmile Travel Management Plan's that established the original route networks for portions of the proposed management area. Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the BLM must determine if there are any significant environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action or Action Alternatives warranting further analysis in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Field Manager is the responsible officer who will decide one of the following:

- To approve the Proposed Action or an Action Alternative with design features as submitted;
- To approve the Proposed Action or an Action Alternative with additional mitigation added;
- To analyze the effects of the Proposed Action or an Action Alternative in an EIS; or
- To deny the Proposed Action or Action Alternatives.

1.6. Conformance with the Land Use Plan

The Proposed Action is subject to and is in conformance (43 CFR 1610.5) with the following land use plan:

Land Use Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 5/13/1996

Decision Number and Language:

Decisions Common to All Alternatives:

- C-104: Limit vehicle use seasonally, as needed, by public notice
- C-105: Maintain a comprehensive transportation plan
- C-106: Implement an active signing/barricading program on road closures and problem areas.
- C-108: Roads will avoid historical/archaeological sites if possible; if not, sites will be recorded and mitigated.
- C-138: Determine on a case-by-case basis special restriction to be imposed on OHV related activity causing significant damage to wildlife, cultural, historical, paleontological or other natural resources.
- C-139: Limit OHV use to designated roads and trails when seasonal stipulations are not in effect.
- C-145: Determine desired plant community in all areas disturbed by OHV activities and take necessary actions to mitigate the impacts.
- C-148: Areas shown as limited to OHV use will be limited to existing roads and trails until road designations are determined within integrated activity plans.
- C-156: Continue a pro-active approach in the pursuit of volunteers and the development of partnerships in support of recreational opportunities.
- C-157: Provide visitor safety and resource protection as necessary.

- C-160: Manage the Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMA) for a variety of dispersed recreation opportunities and experiences in semi-primitive motorized, nonmotorized and primitive settings.
- C-161: Facility development in the ERMA will be less intensive than in Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and will provide for reduction of user conflicts and impacts to the natural resources and public health and sanitation.
- C-162: In the ERMA, continue to evaluate new initiatives or demands for benefits to the public and impacts to the natural resources.

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- Transportation and Access 1-50: The transportation system will be improved and maintained to facilitate public access and administrative monitoring through: unnecessary and unmaintained roads being closed and rehabilitated; the degree of public access needed is guided by the recreation opportunity spectrum
- Off-Highway Vehicle Use 1-68: Motorized recreation off-highway vehicle opportunities will be enhanced; use will be managed through limitations or closures to protect values; responsible use will be encouraged throughout this sub-region where use is allowed.
- Off-Highway Vehicle Use 1-76: All activity planning for off-highway vehicle use will be accomplished within integrated activity plans.
- Recreation Management 1-82: 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; facility development will be accomplished to reduce user conflicts and to improve visitor health and safety.
- Recreation Management 1-86: Various actions will occur to enhance recreation; river corridor and upland recreation opportunities emphasizing a balance between resource protection and tourism; coordination with various volunteer and user groups; monitoring and visitor contacts to ensure visitor safety, resource protection, and visitor information availability.

1.7. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Other NEPA Documents

The Arkansas River (CO-200-2006-0086 EA) and Fourmile (CO-200-2002-0034 EA) Travel Management Plan's established the original route networks for portions of the proposed management area including the allowance distance for off-highway vehicles off of designated routes. These have subsequently been modified through implementation plans to add additional trails and trailheads.

Code of Federal Regulations; Title 43. Public Lands: Interior; Subtitle B. Regulations Relation to Public Lands; Chapter II. Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior; Subchapter H. Recreation Programs provides the regulatory framework for the management of recreation including off-highway vehicles and developed recreation sites. Part 2930 covers Permits for Recreation on Public Lands. This includes fee sites.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA; 16 U.S.C. §§6801-6814) gives the Secretary of the Interior the authority to establish, modify, charge and collect recreation fees at DOI recreational lands and waters. This includes specifics on where fees can be charged and the process for establishing fees.

The Federal Advisory Committee Act formalized a process for establishing, operating, overseeing, and terminating advisory bodies. For BLM, this is their Resource Advisory Council. This is the only group that the BLM has established or managed to provide advice to the agency. The BLM has not established or managed any other advisory group to seek advice on this plan. The plan was presented to the Resource Advisory Council on August 18, 2022.

1.8. Public Involvement

The BLM uses a scoping process to identify potential significant issues in preparation for impact analysis. The principal goals of scoping are to identify issues, concerns, and potential impacts that require detailed analysis. Scoping is both an internal and external process.

Internal scoping was initiated when the project was presented to the Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO) interdisciplinary team in June and July, 2021. External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the BLM's on-line NEPA register (ePlanning) on December 17th, 2021. A press release to local and regional media sources was also issued at this time.

The BLM received over 400 comments through both email and the ePlanning comment tool through this scoping period. These comments were reviewed by BLM staff and helped to clarify sections of this analysis and help inform the BLM's Proposed Action. The comments are available as a public record through the official Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process.

In general comments were split between being supportive of the various action alternatives and support of the No Action Alternative or an alternative with fewer camping restrictions. Support for the action alternatives cited a need to increase management of camping due to impacts to resources and other concerns cited in the purpose and need, including wildfire concerns. Those not supportive of the action alternatives as presented expressed concern about loss of camping opportunities, displacement from closures, impacts to recreation experiences due to increased regulations, and road closures in association with the travel management portion of the action alternatives. In response to the comments the BLM refined the alternatives, including the Proposed Action. The BLM also clarified the two-fold purpose and need – respond to increased impacts from camping and route designations, as directed by the RMP.

The EA was made available for a 30-day public review and comment period starting September 8, 2022 and was announced through a press release to local and regional media sources.

2. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The Action Alternatives have two components in response to the stated purpose and need. The first component is in response to the RMP's direction on the management of off-highway vehicles by establishing a travel management plan for the parcels where such a plan is not already in place. The second component is to address the increased camping demand and

associated issues by establishing a comprehensive camping plan for the public lands within the proposed management area.

Due to the differences in route designations, recreation demands and recreation settings for various parcels, the BLM has broken out the proposed management area into sub-units. A brief description of these sub-units was provided in section 1.2 General and Recreation Setting. For each sub-unit the action alternatives identify both the existing and the desired recreation setting including the physical, social and operational components following BLM's Recreation and Visitor Services Planning Handbook (ePlanning page). This is similar to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) used by other agencies. Additionally, each action alternative establishes a camping management objective for each sub-unit to align with the desired recreation settings along with specific management, administration, education, and monitoring actions. The action alternatives provide route designations for each sub-units with travel management planning needs.

2.1. Proposed Action (Alternative D)

The Proposed Action management strategies are outlined in this section.

2.1.1. Management Strategies Common to All Sub-Units

2.1.1.1. Travel Management

Under the Proposed Action the BLM proposes to establish a designated route network for all lands within the proposed management area where a travel management plan has not been already completed per the direction provided by the 1996 Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan following site specific analysis. This route network establishes the routes that off-highway vehicles may travel on, including by vehicle type and if any seasonal restrictions apply. These decisions would also apply to over the snow travel as the planning area is lower elevation seeing low levels of snow and cross-country over snow travel would likely damage vegetation. The following would apply for travel management decisions:

- Full-sized vehicle routes allow vehicles 50 in. and wider.
- 50 in. trails allow vehicles 50 in. and less.
- Motorcycle trail designation allows motorized vehicles that are single-track, two wheeled only.
- Routes should avoid riparian areas and wetlands. A buffer distance of at least 100-feet from water should be maintained. Where this is not feasible, a buffer of vegetation would be maximized between the disturbance and the water.
- Route design would consider erosion potential and impacts. Routes should be constructed and maintained in a way that will minimize erosion and may be closed if erosion is excessive and cannot be reasonably mitigated.
- All route designations also allow non-motorized forms of travel.
- Routes within ¼-mile of any boundary of BLM managed lands would be analyzed for survey status and spatial reliability of the Public Land Survey System (PLSS) in the BLM Corporate GIS.

- Prior to any ground-disturbing activities for route construction or closure, evidence of the Public Land Survey System (PLSS) would be located and protected per 43 CFR 3809.420.
- Seasonal closures based upon species and associated high priority habitat would be as follows unless otherwise noted on specific routes:
 - Elk production area: May 15 to June 30
 - Elk and mule deer severe winter range/winter concentration area: December 1 to April 30
- Routes closed through this plan, that do not require future administrative use, would be physically barricaded with a variety of methods based on staff expertise and judgement.
- Routes that are closed may be reclaimed, if necessary. Reclamation practices may include, but are not limited to, recontouring, ripping, seeding, installation of water bars, and other erosion control measures.
- Route designations considered potential impacts of localized dust emissions including dust deposition on snowpack expediting snow melt and dust deposition on vegetation impacting plant health. In addition, route designations considered potential noise impacts to adjacent areas including private lands.
- Routes would be allowed to re-vegetate over time.
- Routes would be signed following BLM route designation best management practices including identification of allowed uses.
- The route network would be monitored annually. Any new user created routes would be signed or blocked as warranted.
- If legal public access to BLM parcels changes, then BLM could revisit route designations in the future through subsequent travel management plan amendments.

2.1.1.2. Camping Management

Under the Proposed Action the following implementation strategies are proposed for all the sub-units in response to increased camping demand and potential for impacts to resources. For all sub-units, the following management strategies would apply:

Management

- Vehicles would be limited to one vehicle width off designated routes throughout the planning area and individual camp spurs would be designated through subsequent site-specific analysis based on the selected alternative and decision record.
- Walk-in camping would continue to be permitted in areas a ½-mile or more away from roads open to motorized use.
- Any sites that are not designated would be physically closed and signed and monitoring would continue to ensure rehabilitation is occurring naturally and that new sites are not created.
- Sites that are closed may be reclaimed, if necessary. Reclamation practices may include, but are not limited to, recontouring, ripping, seeding, installation of water bars, and other erosion control measures.
- Since this is a management planning document the number and specifics of designated sites within each sub-unit is approximate and is intended to provide guidance as opposed

to specific locations based on the established objectives and settings of each sub-unit. When implementing site designations, the guidance provided in the final decision record along with the campsite criteria would be applied. An existing site could be closed and replaced with a new site in the same general area if the new site better meets the campsite criteria or the existing site does not meet the criteria.

- The number of sites that BLM staff have observed regular and re-occurring use within each sub-unit is used as an approximate indication of demand and a baseline for number of sites to designate. Simply the presence of a fire-ring or evidence that a site was used infrequently or if a site was inventoried by the public or partner organizations would be taken into consideration but not used to determine the final number of campsites for a particular sub-unit.
- Subsequent site-specific design based on campsite criteria would determine the final number of designated campsites for a particular sub-unit.
- Designated sites would eventually include a permanently installed campground grade fire ring, barriers to prevent expansion as necessary, a signpost and numbering scheme by sub-unit. Vegetation would be sufficiently cleared around the fire ring to reduce wildfire risk. At this level of development sites would not be considered developed and stage one fire restrictions would apply.
- Where alternatives and sub-units call for the installation of camping management infrastructure as a result of monitoring, including restrooms and increased agency presence such as a campground host, then a site would be considered a “developed site” and BLM developed site regulations would apply. This includes establishing limits on number of vehicles and people per site to assist with management and resource protection. As with designated sites, fire rings would be permanently installed, and vegetation sufficiently cleared to reduce wildfire risk.
- Camp sites should avoid riparian areas and wetlands. A buffer distance of at least 100-feet from water should be maintained. Where this is not feasible, a buffer of vegetation would be maximized between the disturbance and the water.
- Camp site designation and design would consider erosion potential and impacts. Routes should be constructed and maintained in a way that would minimize erosion and may be closed if erosion is excessive and cannot be reasonably mitigated.
- Where outlined in the alternatives and sub-units for adding additional sites and if demand warrants; consider developing a carrying capacity or final number of sites per sub-unit based on user experience, resources, resource uses, and affected stakeholders. This could include step-down planning including public involvement.
- Overflow areas, where identified, would include a hardened site with barriers to prevent expansion. These are intended to be a place where people can stay for one or two nights if campsites are not available. These are not intended to provide a camping experience but employed as a strategy to avoid the creation of new campsites during high demand periods. Fires would not be allowed in these areas and regulations would be put in place to limit the extent of stays. This could include trailheads where appropriate.
- Avoid designating campsites near developed water stock tanks and other range infrastructure that could cause livestock distribution issues or damage to infrastructure.

Education

- The BLM would continue to educate visitors on camping ethics and regulations including engaging volunteers, partner groups and exploring the use of volunteer campsite hosts as practicable/appropriate.
- Signing with ethics and regulations would be posted conspicuously at key entrance sites.
- The BLM would work with community partners on the best way to share information about the location of designated sites depending upon sub-unit and associated settings and objectives. This could include mapping of sites where appropriate.

Administration

- Regulations for camping would be established including fires would only be allowed in agency provided fire rings (if provided) and human waste must be packed out or visitors must use a restroom facility.
- Regulations could be considered to limit number of vehicles/persons per site if monitoring indicates that this is a cause of resource impacts.
- A regulation could be considered limiting “walk-in” camping in key areas if monitoring indicates this is resulting in increases in impacts to resources and health and human safety.
- Any changes in fees would follow the process outlined in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA).
- The BLM could consider developing a “donation/pay what you think it’s worth” type option for dispersed camping to assist in ongoing management.
- The BLM could explore a “camping permit/registration” for sites outside of developed campgrounds to assist in visitor education and accountability. This could be employed if conditions warrant and is deemed the most appropriate management direction at the time. Any associated fees would follow agency policy.

Adaptive Management

BLM expects that initial management strategies outlined in the action alternatives would be effective in managing camping on public lands within the planning area. Monitoring, outlined below, would track the effectiveness of these changes and highlight if/when additional management steps are needed. Below are monitoring indicators, thresholds, and triggers. Adaptive management strategies that the agency could consider employing would vary by sub-unit based on objectives and settings. It is important to note that the adaptive management actions outlined for each indicator may require site specific analysis or follow additional processes outlined in FLREA. It is also recognized that the designation of campsites may require reconsideration after more thorough field evaluation at the implementation phase. Any designation changes would require site-specific analysis and follow the criteria outlined elsewhere in this document.

Monitoring

The following monitoring standards have been identified to determine if the management actions outlined in this plan are successful or if additional management actions or strategies are necessary to achieve desired future conditions. For all adaptive management strategies there

would first be an attempt to identify the cause for triggering a threshold and management could be adjusted accordingly.

<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Threshold</u>	<u>Trigger</u>	<u>Action</u>
Number of visitors camping outside of designated campsites or campsites are expanding in size	All campers will camp only in designated (dispersed or developed) campsites and not cause an increase in campsite size	A sub-unit sees a 25% increase in barren ground (no vegetation) from new sites or increase in size of sites despite management efforts, monitored annually.	Consider increased visitor education and enforcement of regulations and/or installation of additional signs and barriers through partner and community engagement. Consider adding campsites or changing campsite design following campsite criteria if demand or trend is deemed to be the primary causing factor and is appropriate for the decision, sub-unit and setting. Consider additional administrative actions if warranted following policy.
Evidence of human waste at campsites (actual human waste or toilet paper)	Visitors will pack out human waste at campsites or use a provided restroom.	25% of campsites within a sub-unit have evidence of human waste or increasing volume of human waste. Monitored monthly or as staff is available and determined on an annual basis.	Consider increased visitor education and enforcement of regulations through partner and community engagement. Consider working with the community to determine if installation of temporary restroom facilities would be effective and funding is available. Depending upon sub-unit and associated setting consider if restroom facilities and a fee are appropriate. Consider additional administrative actions if warranted following policy.
Trash left at campsites	Visitors will pack out all trash at campsites.	It is necessary for staff or volunteers remove trash from 25% of the campsites on a regular basis throughout the season. Monitor weekly or as staff is available.	Consider increased visitor education and enforcement of regulations through community and partner engagement. Depending upon cause, consider if additional infrastructure

<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Threshold</u>	<u>Trigger</u>	<u>Action</u>
			and fee is warranted and appropriate for the decision, sub-unit and setting. Also consider other administrative actions such as a camping permit following policy.
Increase in the number of fire rings and associated fire scars	No increase in the number of fire rings and associated fire scars (standard is one fire ring per designated campsite)	It is necessary for staff or volunteers to break up fire rings on a regular basis throughout the season. Monitor weekly or as staff is available.	Consider increased visitor education and enforcement of regulations through community and partner engagement. Depending upon cause, consider if additional infrastructure and fee is warranted and appropriate for the decision, sub-unit and setting. Also consider other administrative actions such as a camping permit following policy.
Visitors staying beyond established stay limits	Once per week a visitor during the busy season stays beyond the established stay limits despite being educated on this regulation.	Staff or volunteers document more than 2 violations per month within a sub-unit. Monitor weekly or as staff is available or violations are reported.	Through community and partner engagement work across all public and private lands to work towards community-based solutions. Consider increased visitor education and enforcement of regulations. Depending upon cause, consider if additional infrastructure and fee is warranted and appropriate for the decision, sub-unit and setting. Also consider other administrative actions such as a camping permit following policy.
Visitors violating federal fire regulations	Once per week a visitor violates a federal fire restriction including fire during BLM fire restrictions or leaving an unattended campfire.	Staff or volunteers identify more than 1 violation a week during BLM fire restrictions. Monitor weekly or as staff is available or violations are reported.	Consider increased visitor education and enforcement of regulations through community and partner engagement. Depending upon cause, consider if additional infrastructure and fee is warranted and appropriate for the decision, sub-unit and

<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Threshold</u>	<u>Trigger</u>	<u>Action</u>
			setting. Also consider other administrative actions such as a camping permit following policy.
Demand for more campsites than what is available	On all federal and state lands within the planning area, campsites are 100% full with people looking for additional sites	In comparing data with state and federal agencies full occupancy of designated campsites occurs more than 50% of the days throughout the busy season and other indicators are also exceeding thresholds. Monitor daily or as staff is available and annually coordinate with other agencies.	Through community and partner engagement work across all public and private lands to work towards solutions. Consider adding campsites following campsite criteria and in a manner that is appropriate for the decision, sub-unit and setting.
Low levels of visitor satisfaction with camping experience	More than 30% of Visitors camping within the planning area report a dissatisfaction with the camping experience.	Visitor satisfaction surveys of camping visitors conducted every five years exceeds the threshold of greater than 30% dissatisfaction would trigger an evaluation and assessment of cause.	Consider increased visitor education and enforcement of regulations through community and partner engagement. Depending upon cause, consider if additional infrastructure and fee is warranted and appropriate for the decision, sub-unit and setting. Also consider other administrative actions such as a camping permit following policy.

Designated Campsite Criteria/Evaluation

The following criteria would be applied when implementing campsite designation and considering adding new sites if conditions warrant per the decision record and monitoring.

- The campsite spur is a reasonable length to minimize impacts to resources, the end of the route is visible from the main route to assist in monitoring and visitors determining if it is vacant while still providing a suitable camping experience.
- Campsites would be sized and arranged for the typical vehicle size/type for the sub-unit and typical recreation uses.
- Historic properties are not present.
- Sensitive plants are not present.
- Any boundary of BLM managed land within ¼-mile of campsite designation would be analyzed for survey status and spatial reliability of the PLSS in BLM Corporate GIS
- Is far enough away from other campsites to maintain a quality camping experience commensurate with the setting and goals of the sub-unit.
- Considers potential air quality including dust and campfire smoke and noise impacts to adjacent areas including private lands.

- Containment is reasonable and primarily relies on natural barriers (not in wide open areas) if feasible.
- Ideally is not on slopes greater than 10% and does not require leveling and grading
- Fuels and vegetation are sufficiently cleared to allow for the installation of a fire ring to mitigate wildfire risk.
- Does not present additional resource concerns.
- Fits within the established recreation objectives and settings for the area.
- If a developed campground is constructed, dispersed sites in the adjacent area would be closed and camping not allowed.
- Considers visual resources and lighting impacts.
- Coordinate final campsite location and layout with grazing permittees and agency management partners.
- Ability to clear brush/fire mitigation
- Not within 100 feet of streams or wetlands.
- Not within undisturbed meadows.

Cost and Funding Strategies

It is recognized that the camping management plan would require additional resources to be successful in continuing to provide camping experiences on public land in a manner that does not increase impacts to natural resources and is free of trash and human waste. There is a need for an increase in both on the ground presence as well education of visitors and infrastructure to support ongoing camping.

In order to be successful, the agency must continue to be creative in both internal and external funding as well as partner and community engagement. The following strategies would be employed to increase visitor education, visitor contacts, site maintenance and add infrastructure where warranted.

- Increase engagement with volunteers, friends groups and partner organizations to the greatest extent possible to increase visitor contacts, visitor education and maintenance of sites.
- Grants and other external funding sources would be pursued to install infrastructure as well as assist in ongoing maintenance, monitoring and education. This could include soliciting donations from users of the sites.
- Volunteers, including campsite adopters and campsite hosts, would be pursued and engaged at high levels to help address ongoing maintenance and monitoring needs.
- Additional permanent vault restrooms would not be installed unless a funding strategy is identified. This could include a fee or a management partner maintenance commitment.
- If monitoring and adaptive management result in the need to install infrastructure to the level of meeting FLREA requirements, then an expanded amenity site fee would be considered per the final decision and sub-unit unless another maintenance source is secured.

Prioritization and Timing

Implementation of this plan would not happen all at once and would require a deliberative approach to ensure that there are not unintended consequences resulting in resource impacts both on BLM lands and adjacent lands. The following criteria would be considered when prioritizing

implementation of the approved plan. Each sub-unit also has specific prioritization and timing direction:

- Coordinate with other federal and state agencies to ensure that plans and implementation is in alignment.
- Consider increasing the number of developed sites or a new developed campground while transitioning away from adjacent dispersed sites in the sub-units with this type of management action.
- Prioritize implementation in areas with few natural barriers and large areas of barren soil and where issues are most prevalent.
- Prioritize implementation of sub-unit management based upon level of management concern.

Design Features

- Construction activities requiring vegetation disturbance would be avoided from May 15 through July 15 unless inventories are conducted prior to disturbance. This is the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds.
- Prior to any ground-disturbing activities, evidence of the Public Land Survey System (PLSS) would be located and protected per 43 CFR 3809.420.
- Campsites and roads would be inventoried for the presence of sensitive plant species prior to designation and avoided through site specific design.
- Monitoring and treatment of noxious weeds following BLM standard protocols and practices would continue. Volunteers could be employed to assist.
- Any equipment used for construction would be washed prior to being brought onto site to minimize the spread of noxious weed species.
- An adequate spill kit and shovels would be on-site during project implementation when gasoline powered equipment is used.
- Seeds used for any post construction reclamation work would be certified weed-free.
- If paleontological resources are discovered during construction all construction activities would cease and BLM specialists would be brought in to advise and supervise.
- The site will be monitored by a paleontologist, qualified to hold a Paleontological Resource Use Permit on a cyclic basis of every 5 years to minimize any impact to protected fossil resources. The purpose of monitoring would be to identify and remove any exposed fossil resources from construction to reduce the chances of fossil theft. A qualified paleontologist shall also be present during any construction that would encounter bedrock.
- If cultural resources are discovered either during construction activities or monitoring, construction activities will cease immediately, and a BLM cultural resources specialist will be contacted.
- Continue to monitor public lands adjacent to the planning area to determine if camping demand and impacts are occurring in these areas.
- Continue to coordinate with adjacent agencies to understand effects of planning decisions, overall campsite capacity, consistent messaging, visitor contacts and adaptive management strategies.
- Consider short term and permanent stormwater/erosion management when constructing roads, campsites, or other infrastructure.

- Close and rehabilitate dispersed or undeveloped sites that are causing unacceptable adverse effects on soil, water quality, and riparian resources
- Avoid areas of sensitive soils and floodplains
- Designate season-of-use periods to avoid periods when soils are particularly prone to unacceptable erosion, rutting, or compaction.
- Maintain the road surface drainage system to intercept, collect, and remove water from the road surface and surrounding slopes in a manner that reduces concentrated flow in ditches, culverts, and over fill slopes and road surfaces.
- Use suitable species and establishment techniques to stabilize and revegetate the site in compliance with local direction and requirements for vegetation ecology and prevention and control of invasive species.
- When decommissioning Roads, implement suitable measures to re-establish stable slope contours and surface and subsurface hydrologic pathways where necessary to the extent practicable to avoid or minimize adverse effects to soil, water quality, and riparian resources.

2.1.2. Sub-Unit Specific Management – Units without Travel Management Plans

2.1.2.1. Shavano

2.1.2.1.1. Travel Management

Motorized vehicle routes would be designated within the Shavano Sub-Unit per the map found on the Shavano Area _Alternative D Map on the projects ePlanning page. There are approximately 19.3-miles of BLM routes inventoried within the sub-unit.

- Approximately 6.3-miles of BLM routes would remain open to full-size vehicles. 2-miles would be constructed or integrated into camping loops.
- Approximately 4.7-miles would be open to full-size vehicles from May 1 to November 30 and closed from December 1 to April 30 to reduce impacts to elk and mule deer winter habitat.
- Approximately 8.3-miles would be open only to authorized vehicles or closed. 4.4-miles of these routes are within the area that sees high levels of camping use and would be replaced with the construction of campsite access loops and designated camp spurs.
- BLM staff determined that closing these routes would reduce impacts to resources and resource uses.
- 0.5-miles of these routes do not have legal public access.
- Motorized vehicle travel would be limited to the routes shown on the map with a one-vehicle width allowance for parking.
- Mountain bikes would be limited to designated routes.

2.1.2.1.2. Camping Management Goal

The overall camping management goal for this sub-unit under the Proposed Action is to adjust the facilities, visitor services and management controls to a more front country setting in alignment with the location and volume of use. This includes a goal of accommodating

approximately 100% of the current camping demand as well as consider accommodating increased camping demand as resources and resource uses dictate and upon completion of a capacity study. Appropriate fees that are commensurate with the services provided and necessary to protect resources and public health would be pursued.

Management

- Phase in the construction of three camping loops and designated campsites off of CR 250 up to the FS/BLM boundary that utilize the existing road network and existing disturbed areas to the greatest extent possible while minimizing impacts to intact forage, water sources, adjacent private property owners and habitat improvement projects.
- Follow the Designated Campsite Criteria/Evaluation when evaluating existing sites and establishing new campsites. Designate approximately 100 campsites that are widely spaced and accommodate a variety of vehicle and group sizes reflecting current trends of visitor use. Consider the potential for future restroom facilities when designating and laying out campsites.
- Following monitoring and adaptive management transition the camping loops to provide basic facilities such as restrooms, fire rings, information kiosks and a campground host site over time as necessary and as funding allows and manage as a basic/primitive campground. A camping permit could also be considered.
- Consider developing an overflow area following the guidelines above including the designated campsite criteria/evaluation if demand exceeds supply of sites.
- Consider opportunities for adding/infilling campsites as demand warrants following the monitoring plan.
- To better facilitate camping management, wildlife habitat, hunting opportunities, and grazing management do not allow camping outside of the CR 250 corridor, except for 3-5 sites within the Droney Gulch ACEC off of BLM Road #5630.
- The Droney Gulch sites would be monitored and could be closed and incorporated into the CR 250 corridor camping area if dumping and vandalism continues to occur despite management efforts.

Education

In addition to the education components outlined above consider establishing a “Friends” group as well as a camping host to assist in educating visitors and managing visitor use that is focused specifically on this area.

Administration

- Transition to a fee following the installation of facilities and consider reservations following the monitoring plan. If reservations are established, consider a strategy that allows for spontaneous camping experiences to the greatest extent possible including short reservation windows.
- Consider requiring a camping permit with associated regulations and fees following agency policy if campground type facilities are not deemed necessary but there is a need for additional regulations and accountability.

Prioritization/Timing

- Given the volume of use and associated impacts the camping management components of this sub-unit is a high priority within the plan. Priority would be given to establishing the campground loops and designated campsites prior to closing any sites that would not be designated.
- Prioritize the installation of the organized camping loops and designated sites along with vehicle controls. Monitor to determine if additional infrastructure is necessary over time.
- Once campsites are established and education and signing are in place, existing sites that weren't designated would be signed and closed followed by education and monitoring.
- A fee for this area would be included in an overall campground business plan in order to react in a timely fashion if facilities are installed following the monitoring plan. A fee would only be implemented if facilities are deemed necessary following the monitoring plan.
- Travel Management implementation such as signing and rehabilitating routes would prioritize areas that are having an impact to grazing resources and adjacent private landowners.

2.1.2.2. Pass Creek

2.1.2.2.1. *Travel Management*

Motorized vehicle routes would be designated within the Pass Creek Sub-Unit per the map found on the Pass Creek Area _Alternative D Map on the projects ePlanning page. There are approximately 13.9-miles of BLM routes inventoried within the sub-unit.

- Approximately 2.3-miles of BLM routes would remain open to full-size vehicles with none having a seasonal restriction.
- Approximately 11.6-miles would be open to administrative use only or closed to public use. Of these miles, 10.7 do not have legal public access. If legal public access is secured in the future, then these route designations could be revisited.
- Motorized vehicle travel would be limited to the routes shown on the map with a one-vehicle width allowance for parking.
- Mountain bikes would be limited to designated routes.

2.1.2.2.2. *Camping Management Goal*

The overall recreation management goal for this sub-unit under the Proposed Action is to maintain the current recreation setting for each parcel to the greatest extent possible while accommodating approximately 100% of the camping demand as indicated currently while directing future increased demand to other sub-units or agencies. This includes minimal signing and obvious management controls unless monitoring indicates a need otherwise.

Management

- Designate approximately 5 campsites if feasible while installing management controls only where necessary to protect resources. This would include assessing current sites to

determine if a different arrangement or vehicle controls could still allow a camping experience while also reducing impacts to riparian resources.

- If camping demand in this sub-unit increases discourage designating additional campsites and attempt to accommodate this demand in other sub-units.
- In line with the recreation setting do not install basic facilities and install only minimal signing as necessary to protect resources and educate visitors.

Education

Regularly patrol the area and monitor campsites but do not publicly map campsites in this area unless conditions warrant following the monitoring plan.

Administration

Focus on visitor education and vehicle controls to protect resources in alignment with the recreation setting.

Prioritization/Timing

Given the low volume of use within this sub-unit implementation of camping and travel management is a low priority unless monitoring warrants more timely actions.

2.1.2.3. Miscellaneous Lands

2.1.2.3.1. Travel Management

Motorized vehicle routes would be designated within the Miscellaneous Lands Sub-Unit per the map found on the Misc Lands _Alternative D Map on the projects ePlanning page. There are approximately nine-miles of BLM routes inventoried within the sub-unit.

- Approximately 0.4-miles of BLM routes would remain open to full-size vehicles.
- Approximately 0.7-miles would be open seasonally. Dates would mirror the seasonal restriction on the US Forest Service Route #386 that this route provides access to.
- Approximately eight-miles would open to administrative use only or closed to motorized vehicles to reduce impacts to resources and resource uses. 4.2 of these miles have no legal public access or easements through adjacent private land. Most of the closed routes lead to private land or non-designated routes on USFS land and see very little public use.
- Motorized vehicle travel would be limited to the routes shown on the map with a one-vehicle width allowance for parking.
- Mountain bikes would be limited to designated routes.

2.1.2.3.2. Camping Management Goal

The overall recreation management goal for this sub-unit under the Proposed Action is to maintain the current recreation setting for each parcel to the greatest extent possible while attempting to accommodate approximately 100% of the camping demand and camping experiences as indicated currently. Future increased demand would be directed to other sub-units or agencies where appropriate. This includes minimal signing and obvious management controls unless monitoring indicates a need otherwise. Certain areas may need higher levels of signage, visitor services and management controls due to current demand and location.

Management

- In an appropriate location with private land, site distances, and resources considered designate 10-15 campsites off of CR 371 based on a previously disturbed area. Following monitoring and adaptive management the site could be phased into a campground with facilities and fees. The final size and number of campsites in the campground would be based on demand, resource constraints and follow the campsite criteria. The campsites would be closed seasonally from December 1 to April 30 to reduce negative impacts to mule deer winter habitat.
- If camping demand in this sub-unit increases discourage designating additional campsites and attempt to accommodate this demand in other sub-units or non-BLM locations that are more appropriate and setup for camping management.

Education

- Regularly patrol the area and monitor campsites. Encourage volunteers to monitor, maintain and educate visitors.
- Consider a campground host or “Friends” group to assist with management of this area.

Administration

- Transition to a fee following the installation of facilities and consider reservations following the monitoring plan. If reservations are established, consider a strategy that allows for spontaneous camping experiences to the greatest extent possible including short reservation windows or first-come first-served.
- Consider partnering with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to assist with management of the CR 371 campground.
- Consider requiring a camping permit with associated regulations and fees following agency policy if campground type facilities are not deemed necessary but there is a need for additional regulations and accountability.

Prioritization/Timing

Given the low volume of use within most of this sub-unit implementation of camping and travel management is a low priority unless monitoring warrants more timely actions. Certain areas that have a high likelihood of expanding could be prioritized if implementation is relatively simple and straightforward such as installing a sign or short stretches of fencing.

2.1.3. Sub-Unit Specific Management – Units with a Travel Management Plan

2.1.3.1. Burmac/Salida Area

Camping Management Goal

The overall camping management goal for this sub-unit under the Proposed Action is to adjust the facilities, visitor services and management controls to a more front country setting in alignment with the location and volume of use. This includes a goal of attempting to

accommodate approximately 100% of the current camping demand including a variety of camping experiences as well as consider accommodating increased camping demand as resources and resource uses dictate. Appropriate fees that are commensurate with the services provided and necessary to protect resources and public health would be pursued.

Management

- Near the Burmac Trailhead designate 10 to 15 campsites as terrain and topography allow and that are near a restroom at the trailhead.
- Construct a larger trailhead as well as a vault toilet and consider overflow camping options in the design as well as additional campsites.
- Transition the Burmac area to provide basic facilities such as restrooms, fire rings, information kiosks and a camp host following the monitoring plan. Manage this area as a basic/primitive campground.
- In the rest of the sub-unit designate 8 to 12 campsites based on the campsite criteria. This includes considering designating campsites off BLM Route #5677 as well as the powerline road based on already disturbed areas.
- Through subsequent public planning efforts and in coordination with partner organizations, including Chaffee County, consider other areas in the sub-unit where a developed campground could be constructed given level of resource concern, ability to manage, access, proximity to adjacent private lands, road maintenance, and resources. If developed then designated sites could be considered for closure depending upon location in relation to the campground location.
- No designation changes to route #5672 would occur at this time however monitoring for violation of regulations would continue. This decision could be revisited in the future per the direction provided in the Arkansas River Travel Management Plan if other management actions are deemed ineffective.

Education

- In addition to the overall education components work closely with management partners as well consider a camping host to assist in educating visitors and managing visitor use that is focused specifically on this sub-unit.
- Given the level of demand for camping in this sub-unit signing, visitor controls and off-site education through partners would be substantial.

Administration

- Transition campsites that meet the FLREA requirements to fee sites and consider reservations following the monitoring plan. If reservations are established, consider a strategy that allows for spontaneous camping experiences to the greatest extent possible including short reservation windows.
- Any future developed campground/high density camp area would be a fee site.
- Given the potential for high demand consider a fee structure for undeveloped sites to assist in ongoing management following the monitoring plan.

- Consider requiring a camping permit with associated regulations and fees following agency policy if campground type facilities are not deemed necessary but there is a need for additional regulations and accountability.

Prioritization/Timing

- Implementation of actions outlined in this sub-unit would be a high priority.
- Priority would be given to designating campsites and installing vehicle controls in the Burmac area as well as vehicle controls and signing to prevent the establishment of new sites throughout the sub-unit.
- The next priority would be expanding the trailhead including overflow camping options.
- Fees for Burmac would be included in a camping plan and pursued immediately following the FLREA process.
- Once camping management at Burmac is established the BLM would begin the planning process for considering other areas in the sub-unit where a developed campground could be constructed and/or where designated campsites may be appropriate.

2.1.3.2. Fourmile

Camping Management Goal

The overall camping management goal for this sub-unit under the Proposed Action is to adjust the facilities, visitor services and management controls to a more front country setting in alignment with the location and volume of use. This includes a goal of attempting to accommodate approximately 100% of the current camping demand and a variety of camping experiences as well as consider accommodating increased camping demand as resources and resource uses dictate. Appropriate fees that are commensurate with the services provided and necessary to protect resources and public health would be pursued.

Management

- Consider expansion of the Turtle Rock Campground to accommodate both current and future demand including coordinating with the US Forest Service to determine if expansion is possible north of the campground as well as south. The number of sites would be driven by topography and resources.
- In the CR 375/376 area, designate 8 to 12 campsites in appropriate locations and following campsite criteria while installing management controls where necessary to protect resources. Attempt to accommodate increased future demand through expansion of the Turtle Rock Campground.
- Continue to allow camping at the Carnage Canyon and Dumbob Trailheads. Work with partners to manage use and install management controls as necessary. Monitor for crowding between trailhead use and camping to determine if management changes are needed.
- In the CR 304 area do not designate any campsites West of the CR 304 trailhead to minimize traffic and safety concerns. Designate 8 to 12 campsites in appropriate locations closer to the trailhead at the junction of CR 304 and 376. This would follow the

campsite criteria while installing management controls where necessary to protect resources including visitor facilities and commensurate fees following the monitoring plan and adaptive management.

- Construct a larger CR 304 trailhead as well as a vault toilet and consider overflow camping options and additional campsites in the design if terrain allows.
- In coordination with partner organizations, including Chaffee County and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, consider constructing a developed campground/high density camp area near Collegiate Peaks Overlook if demand warrants and is not able to be accommodated elsewhere in a sustainable manner.

Education

- In addition to the overall education components work closely with management partners as well consider camping hosts to assist in educating visitors and managing visitor use that is focused specifically on this sub-unit.
- Given the level of demand for camping in this sub-unit; signing, visitor controls and off-site education through partners would be substantial.

Administration

- Begin charging a fee and requiring reservations at the Turtle Rock Campground following the FLREA process. Consider a strategy that allows for spontaneous camping experiences to the greatest extent possible including short reservation windows.
- Following the monitoring plan consider a fee for sites outside of developed campgrounds if FLREA conditions are also met and following the monitoring plan.
- Any future developed campground/high density camp area would be a fee site.
- Outside of Turtle Rock Campground, consider requiring a camping permit with associated regulations and fees following agency policy if campground type facilities are not deemed necessary but there is a need for additional regulations and accountability.

Prioritization/Timing

- Implementation of actions outlined in this sub-unit would be a high priority.
- Priority would be given to evaluating and designating existing campsites, installing vehicle controls and educating visitors.
- Funding would be pursued through multiple sources for the expansion of the Turtle Rock Campground.
- Fees for Turtle Rock would be included in a camping business plan and pursued immediately following the FLREA process.
- Once camping management of existing undeveloped sites is established the BLM would begin looking at replacing sites north of CR 304 and those that currently do not fit the campsite criteria.

2.1.3.3. Browns Canyon National Monument Entrance/Hecla Junction

Camping Management Goal

The overall camping management goal for this sub-unit under the Proposed Action is to adjust the facilities, visitor services and management controls to a more front country setting in alignment with the location and volume of use. This would be done in a professional and attractive manner that aligns with its location as the entrance to Browns Canyon National Monument attempting to accommodate approximately 100% of camping demand while directing future increased demand to other sub-units or non-BLM sites. Appropriate fees that are commensurate with the services provided and necessary to protect resources and public health would be pursued.

Management

- In the Browns Grotto area designate 10 to 15 campsites in appropriate locations following the campsite criteria while installing management controls where necessary to protect resources.
- If monitoring and adaptive management indicate a need for visitor facilities a campground could be constructed including visitor facilities and commensurate fees. This could include engineering roads and additional campsites to improve access and visitor services.
- Design the camping area so that it is attractive, professional and takes into account access to rights-of-ways held by adjacent private landowners.
- To protect soils do not designate the campsites #CCOM 176, CCOM177, CCOM432 or CCOM433 and close/rehabilitate the access routes.
- Designate 3 campsites off route #5613 following the campsite criteria. Do not designate a campsite at the intersection of this route and CR 194 (CCOM178) to better manage visual resources or at the very end of the route (CCOM 181) since it is challenging to patrol. If strategies outlined in this management plan do not address the purpose and need of this plan, then designated sites in this area could be revisited in the future including the designation of route #5613.
- Consider improving the beginning of road #5613 to facilitate access and reduce erosion and impacts to soils.

Education

- In addition to the overall education components work closely with management partners as well consider a campground host to assist in educating visitors and managing visitor use that is focused specifically on this sub-unit.
- Given the level of demand for camping in this sub-unit; signing, visitor controls and off-site education through partners would be substantial.
- Consider partnering with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to assist in patrolling these locations.

Administration

- If warranted based on monitoring and adaptive management begin charging a fee and requiring reservations at Browns Grotto camping area following the FLREA process. Consider a strategy that allows for spontaneous camping experiences to the greatest extent possible including short reservation windows and first come first served.

- Consider requiring a camping permit with associated regulations and fees following agency policy if campground type facilities are not deemed necessary but there is a need for additional regulations and accountability.

Prioritization/Timing

- Implementation of actions outlined in this sub-unit would be a high priority.
- Priority would be given to designating campsites in the Browns Grotto campground area and installing management controls to reduce impacts to vegetation and right-of-way holders.
- Add additional sites in the Browns Grotto area prior to closing campsites.
- Funding would be pursued through multiple sources for the development of the Browns Grotto campground.
- Fees for Browns Grotto would be included in a camping business plan and pursued if infrastructure is installed and additional management is needed.

2.2. Alternative C-Motorized Access Priority Alternative

The Management Strategies under Alternative C are the same as the Proposed Action (Alternative D) including the goals, management actions, education, administration, and monitoring for all of the sub-units.

Differences between Alternative C and D are found in the recommended route designations for the sub-units based on BLM inter-disciplinary team input and public comments received.

2.2.1. *Shavano*

Travel Management

Motorized vehicle routes would be designated within the Shavano Sub-Unit per the map found on the Shavano Area_Alternative C Map on the projects ePlanning page.

- Approximately 12-miles of BLM routes would remain open to full-size vehicles. 2 miles would be constructed or incorporated into campground loops.
- Zero miles would be open only seasonally.
- Approximately 7.3-miles would be open only to authorized vehicles or closed. 4.4 miles of these routes are within the area that sees high levels of camping use and would be replaced with the construction of campsite access loops and designated camp spurs.
- BLM staff determined that closing these routes would reduce impacts to resources and resource uses.
- 0.5-miles of these routes do not have legal public access.
- Motorized vehicle travel would be limited to the routes shown on the map with a one-vehicle width allowance for parking.
- Mountain bikes would be limited to designated routes.

2.2.2. Pass Creek

Travel Management

Motorized vehicle routes would be designated within the Pass Creek Sub-Unit per the map found on the Pass Creek Area _Alternative C Map on the projects ePlanning page. Below is a summary of miles of routes by designation.

- Approximately three-miles of routes would remain open to full-size vehicles.
- None of the routes would have a seasonal restriction.
- Approximately 11-miles would be open to administrative use only or closed to public use. Of these miles, 10.7 do not have legal public access. If legal public access is secured in the future then these route designations could be revisited.
- Motorized vehicle travel would be limited to the routes shown on the map with a one-vehicle width allowance for parking.
- Mountain bikes would be limited to designated routes.

2.2.3. Miscellaneous Lands

Travel Management

Motorized vehicle routes would be designated within the Pass Creek Sub-Unit per the map found on the Misc Lands _Alternative C Map on the projects ePlanning page.

- Approximately 2.6-miles of BLM routes would remain open to full-size vehicles.
- Approximately 0.7-miles would be open to full-size vehicles seasonally. The dates would mirror the seasonal restriction on the US Forest Service Route #386 that this route provides access to.
- Approximately 5.8-miles would open to administrative use only or closed to motorized vehicles to reduce impacts to resources and resource uses. 4.2 of these miles have no legal public access or easements through adjacent private land. Most of the closed routes lead to private land or non-designated routes on USFS land and see very little public use.
- Motorized vehicle travel would be limited to the routes shown on the map with a one-vehicle width allowance for parking.
- Mountain bikes would be limited to designated routes.

2.3. Alternative B-Resource Priority Alternative

Under Alternative B the Management Strategies Common to All Sub-Units as found under the Proposed Action would be the same. Differences would lie in the proposed Route Designations and Camping Management Strategies where noted.

2.3.1. Sub-Unit Specific Management – Units without Travel Management Plans

2.3.1.1. Shavano

2.3.1.1.1. Travel Management

Motorized vehicle routes would be designated within the Shavano Sub-Unit per the map found on the Shavano Area_Alternative B Map on the projects ePlanning page.

- Approximately 1.5-miles would be constructed or incorporated into camping loops. No other BLM routes would be designated as open to full-size vehicles.
- Zero miles would be open only seasonally.
- Approximately 19.3-miles would be open only to authorized vehicles or closed. 4.4 miles of these routes are within the area that sees high levels of camping use and would be replaced with the construction of campsite access loops and designated camp spurs.
- BLM staff determined that closing these routes would reduce impacts to resources and resource uses.
- 0.5-miles of these routes do not have legal public access.
- Motorized vehicle travel would be limited to the routes shown on the map with a one-vehicle width allowance for parking.
- Mountain bikes would be limited to designated routes.

2.3.1.1.2. Camping Management Goal

Under Alternative B, the overall camping management goal for this sub-unit under the Proposed Action is to adjust the facilities, visitor services and management controls to a more front country setting in alignment with the location and volume of use. This includes a goal of accommodating approximately 75% of the current camping demand with a priority given for resources and resource uses. Appropriate fees that are commensurate with the services provided and necessary to protect resources and public health would be pursued. Demand for additional camping beyond what is provided within this sub-unit would be provided through other agencies or private lands within the region.

Management

- Construct three camping loops and campsites off CR 250 up to the FS/BLM boundary that utilize the existing road network and existing disturbed areas to the greatest extent possible while minimizing impacts to intact forage, water sources, adjacent private property owners and habitat improvement projects.
- Follow the Designated Campsite Criteria/Evaluation when evaluating existing sites and establishing new campsites. Designate approximately 75 campsites that are widely spaced and accommodate a variety of vehicle and group sizes reflecting current trends of visitor use. Consider the potential for future restroom facilities when designating and laying out campsites.

- Transition the site to provide basic facilities such as restrooms, fire rings, information kiosks and a campground host site following the monitoring plan, including consideration of visitor satisfaction.
- Develop an overflow area following the guidelines above including the designated campsite criteria/evaluation.
- DO NOT consider opportunities for adding/infilling campsites as demand warrants following the monitoring plan.
- To better facilitate camping management, wildlife habitat, hunting opportunities, and grazing management do not allow camping outside of the CR 250 corridor, including sites within the Droney Gulch ACEC off of BLM Road #5630.

Education

Same as the Proposed Action.

Administration

Same as the Proposed Action.

Prioritization/Timing

Same as the Proposed Action.

2.3.1.2. Pass Creek

2.3.1.2.1. *Travel Management*

Motorized vehicle routes would be designated within the Pass Creek Sub-Unit per the map found on the Pass Creek Area _Alternative B Map on the projects ePlanning page.

- Approximately 0.4-miles would be open to full-size vehicles from May 1 to November 30 and closed from December 1 to April 30 to reduce impacts to elk winter habitat.
- Approximately 13.6-miles would be open to administrative use only or closed to public use. Of these miles, 10.7 do not have legal public access. If legal public access is secured in the future then these route designations could be revisited.
- Motorized vehicle travel would be limited to the routes shown on the map with a one-vehicle width allowance for parking.
- Mountain bikes would be limited to designated routes.

2.3.1.2.2. *Camping Management Goal*

The overall recreation management goal for this sub-unit under the Proposed Action is to maintain the current recreation setting for each parcel to the greatest extent possible while accommodating approximately one-third of camping demand as currently indicated with a priority given for resources and resource uses. Future or displaced camping demand would be directed to other sub-units or agencies. Maintaining the setting would include minimal signing and obvious management controls unless monitoring indicates a need otherwise.

Management

- Designate up to three of the inventoried campsites outside of riparian areas and install additional management controls only where necessary to protect resources.
- If camping demand in this sub-unit increases discourage designating additional campsites and attempt to accommodate this demand in other sub-units or agencies.
- In line with the recreation setting do not install basic facilities beyond fire rings and install only minimal signing as necessary to protect resources and educate visitors.

Education

Same as the Proposed Action.

Administration

Same as the Proposed Action.

Prioritization/Timing

Same as the Proposed Action.

2.3.1.3. Miscellaneous Lands

2.3.1.3.1. *Travel Management*

Motorized vehicle routes would be designated within the Miscellaneous Lands Sub-Unit per the map found on the Misc Lands _Alternative B Map on the projects ePlanning page.

- Approximately 0.1-miles of BLM routes would remain open to full-size vehicles.
- Approximately 0.7-miles would be open to full-size vehicles seasonally. The dates would mirror the seasonal restriction on the US Forest Service Route #386 that this route provides access to.
- Approximately 8.3-miles would open to administrative use only or closed to motorized vehicles to reduce impacts to resources and resource uses. 4.2 of these miles have no legal public access or easements through adjacent private land. Most of the closed routes lead to private land or non-designated routes on USFS land and see very little public use.
- Motorized vehicle travel would be limited to the routes shown on the map with a one-vehicle width allowance for parking.
- Mountain bikes would be limited to designated routes.

2.3.1.3.2. *Camping Management Goal*

The overall recreation management goal for this sub-unit under the Proposed Action is to maintain the current recreation setting for each parcel to the greatest extent possible while accommodating camping approximately 50% of camping demand. Future or displaced camping demand would be directed to other sub-units or agencies. Maintaining the setting would include minimal signing and obvious management controls unless monitoring indicates a need otherwise. Certain areas may need higher levels of signage, visitor services and management controls due to current demand and location.

Management

- Designate approximately 5-7 campsites within this sub-unit and install management controls where necessary to protect resources. This includes signage to make the public aware of camping restrictions and installing barriers and signage if new sites are established. This could include adding sites and vehicle controls to a cluster of campsites off CR371.
- If camping demand in this sub-unit increases discourage designating additional campsites and attempt to accommodate this demand in other sub-units or non-BLM locations that are more appropriate and setup for camping management.
- In line with the recreation setting do not install basic facilities beyond fire rings and install only minimal signing as necessary to protect resources and educate visitors.

Education

Same as the Proposed Action.

Administration

Same as the Proposed Action.

Prioritization/Timing

Same as the Proposed Action.

2.3.2. Sub-Unit Specific Management – Units with a Travel Management Plan

2.3.2.1. Burmac/Salida Area

Camping Management Goal

The overall camping management goal for this sub-unit under this alternative is to adjust the facilities, visitor services and management controls to a more front country setting in alignment with the location and volume of use with a goal of accommodating approximately 75% of the current camping demand primarily within a developed campground with a priority given for resources and resource uses. Appropriate fees that are commensurate with the services provided and necessary to protect resources and public health would be pursued. Demand for additional camping beyond what is provided within this sub-unit would be provided through other agencies or private lands within the region.

Management

- Near the Burmac Trailhead designate 10 to 15 campsites as terrain and topography allow and that are near a restroom at the trailhead.
- Construct a larger trailhead as well as a vault toilet and consider overflow camping options in the design as well as additional campsites.
- Transition the Burmac area to provide basic facilities such as restrooms, fire rings, information kiosks and a camp host following the monitoring plan.
- Under this alternative do not consider the development of a campground in this sub-unit.

- Do not designate any other dispersed campsites within this sub-unit.
- Same as the Proposed Action for the designation of route #5672.

Education

Same as the Proposed Action.

Administration

Same as the Proposed Action.

Prioritization/Timing

- Implementation of actions outlined in this sub-unit would be a high priority.
- Priority would be given to designating campsites in the Burmac area and expanding the trailhead including overflow camping options.
- Fees for Burmac would be included in a camping plan and pursued immediately following the FLREA process.
- Once camping management at Burmac is established the BLM would work towards closing dispersed campsites.

2.3.2.2. Fourmile

Camping Management Goal

The overall camping management goal for this sub-unit under Alternative B is to adjust the facilities, visitor services and management controls to a more front country setting in alignment with the location and volume of use. This includes accommodating approximately 75% of the current camping demand while considering resources and resource uses. Appropriate fees that are commensurate with the services provided and necessary to protect resources and public health would be pursued. Demand for additional camping beyond what is provided within this sub-unit would be provided through other agencies or private lands within the region.

Management

- Consider expansion of the Turtle Rock Campground to accommodate current demand.
- In the CR 375/376 area, designate 5 to 8 campsites in appropriate locations and following campsite criteria while installing management controls where necessary to protect resources. Attempt to accommodate increased future demand through expansion of the Turtle Rock Campground.
- Continue to allow camping at the Carnage Canyon and Dudbob Trailheads. Work with partners to manage use and install management controls as necessary.
- In the CR 304 area do not designate any campsites West of the CR 304 trailhead to minimize traffic and safety concerns. Designate 5 to 8 campsites in appropriate locations closer to the trailhead at the junction of CR 304 and 376. This would follow the campsite criteria while installing management controls where necessary to protect resources including visitor facilities and commensurate fees following the monitoring plan and adaptive management

- Construct a larger CR 304 trailhead as well as a vault toilet and consider overflow camping options in the design.
- In coordination with partner organizations, including Chaffee County and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, consider constructing a developed campground/high density camp area near Collegiate Peaks Overlook if demand warrants.

Education

Same as the Proposed Action.

Administration

Same as the Proposed Action.

Prioritization/Timing

- Implementation of actions outlined in this sub-unit would be a high priority.
- Priority would be given to evaluating and designating existing campsites, installing vehicle controls and educating visitors.
- Funding would be pursued through multiple sources for the expansion of the Turtle Rock Campground.
- Fees for Turtle Rock would be included in a camping business plan and pursued immediately following the FLREA process.
- Once camping management of existing undeveloped sites is established the BLM would begin exploring options for a fee-based campground/high density camp area near Collegiate Peaks Overlook. In the interim, sites not designated would be closed and rehabilitated.

2.3.2.3. Browns Canyon National Monument Entrance/Hecla Junction

Camping Management Goal

The overall camping management goal for this sub-unit under Alternative B is to adjust the facilities, visitor services and management controls to a more front country setting in alignment with the location and volume of use. This would be done in a professional and attractive manner that aligns with its location as the entrance to Browns Canyon National Monument accommodating approximately 75% of camping demand while directing future increased demand to other sub-units or non-BLM sites. Appropriate fees that are commensurate with the services provided and necessary to protect resources and public health would be pursued.

Management

- In the Browns Grotto area designate 7-10 campsites in appropriate locations following the campsite criteria while installing management controls where necessary to protect resources.
- If monitoring and adaptive management indicate a need for visitor facilities a campground would be constructed including visitor facilities and commensurate fees. This could include engineering roads and additional campsites to improve access and visitor services.

- Design the camping area so that it is attractive, professional and takes into account access to rights-of-ways held by adjacent private landowners and has appropriate facilities including restrooms, fire rings and established campsites.
- To protect soils do not designate the campsites #CCOM 176, CCOM177, CCOM432 or CCOM433 and close/rehabilitate the access routes.
- Do not designate any campsites off route #5613.

Education

Same as the Proposed Action.

Administration

Same as the Proposed Action.

Prioritization/Timing

Same as the Proposed Action.

2.4. No Action Alternative (Alternative A)

NEPA regulations require agencies to identify a No Action Alternative along with disclosing the impacts of this alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM would stay in alignment with the Resource Management Plan by continuing to manage off-highway vehicles as “limited to existing roads and trails until road designations are determined within activity plans”.

Since a thorough inventory does not exist from 1996 when the plan was signed the agency would attempt to manage motorized travel based on current inventories and comparison of available aerial imagery. A 300’ off route travel allowance for the purposes of parking would remain in effect per the resource management plan. For areas where a travel management plan is already in place the 100’ allowance for parking would remain in place and changes in travel or camping management would not occur.

Under this alternative the BLM would still engage with partners and organizations in increased monitoring and education of visitors including working with volunteers. Education and enforcement would be focused on ethics and regulations that currently exist. This could result in the installation of signs and barriers to protect resources or where new damage to resources is occurring. Camping management actions such as cleaning up trash and fire rings would also occur.

While motorized travel is limited to existing routes it is assumed that under this alternative the number of vehicle-based campsites would increase in number and size under this alternative. This is due to the 300’ and 100’ allowance that would continue to remain in place. It is assumed that these new campsites would occur in areas where it is relatively flat and accessed off an existing or designated route based on past monitoring and staff observations.

2.5. Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Through the scoping process several suggestions for alternatives or specific management actions were suggested and reviewed by BLM staff and ultimately not included for detailed analysis.

Some comments suggested the BLM address changes in designations for routes that were established by other travel management plans that are within the planning area. The BLM reviewed these suggestions and determined that the changes suggested did not fit the purpose and need of the document since they did not directly relate to camping management and were also part of a designated route network. The only route considered for change was route #5672 in the Burmac area. It directly relates to camping management issues and the Arkansas River Travel Management Plan specifically identified this route for adaptive management, including closure, if issues continue to persist. The issues identified for the other routes in question could be addressed through future planning efforts specifically focused on those routes and issues.

Some comments suggested either a complete ban on campfires or a complete ban on camping or certain types of camping, such as RVs. The BLM reviewed these comments and determined that the Action Alternatives adequately addressed the concerns when combined with the fire management programs conditions-based fire restrictions management. Since having a campfire is a popular aspect of camping a complete ban was not considered. The Action Alternatives consider increased education and visitor contacts regarding campfire safety. A complete ban on camping or certain types of camping was also not considered further. Staff determined that the measures proposed in the Action Alternatives are adequate to address the concerns associated with the comments suggesting this type of regulation such as limiting camping to designated sites and containing these sites with appropriate barriers.

Several comments suggested that the BLM consider an alternative that considers designating all routes as open and not changing the 100' rule in established travel management areas including increasing the number of campsites. In review of this comment and the Resource Management Plan BLM staff determined that the result of this type of alternative would be the same as the No Action Alternative and therefore was not considered further. The RMP establishes that off-highway vehicle use would be limited to existing roads and trails until road designations are determined within integrated activity plans. Since the existing routes would be the same as the designated routes under this type of alternative the impacts would be identical. The 100' rule established in the Arkansas River and Fourmile Travel Management Plans would not be changed under the No Action Alternative and based on staff observations, would likely result in additional campsites over time. This alternative would have identical anticipated impacts as the No Action Alternative.

Several comments were received that indicated or implied that areas within the project area should provide temporary work force housing or serve as a location for homeless individuals to reside. Per 43 CFR 8365.1-6 it is illegal to "establish occupancy, take possession of, or otherwise use public lands for residential purposes". This regulation would remain in place and therefore providing housing or allowing people to violate this regulation was not considered further.

One comment suggested that the BLM institute some type of method to allow people of lower income to offset any fees that would be generated through the Action Alternatives, such as a scholarship or voucher. While the BLM is concerned about equity and inclusion in its land management policies and practices the agency is also directed to treat all citizens and visitors

equally and therefore this management action was not carried forward. The BLM encourages the commentor to consider the development of this type of program through local organizations or governments that would have more flexibility to address this concern.

A comment suggested that the BLM apply different regulations to visitors than to local residents. Since the BLM is required to treat all citizens and visitors to public lands equally and does not discriminate, including place of residence, this alternative was not carried forward.

Several comments were received suggesting that the agency increase the fines and penalties for violating current and proposed regulations such as littering. In reviewing this comment, the BLM determined that the fine schedule is not within the delegation of authority of the local authorized officer who signs the decision record for this plan and therefore this management action was not able to be carried forward. This concern was brought up to local law enforcement who can share this concern with higher levels within the organization.

A comment received suggested that the BLM exchange or dispose of BLM parcels that are surrounded by private land. It was determined that the identification of parcels for disposal is done at the Resource Management Plan level and is therefore outside of the scope of this document.

Some comments suggested the need for additional trails in certain sub-units. While non-motorized forms of recreation fall within travel management, staff determined that given the purpose and need of the document focused on camping management and establishing a designated route network, adding, and considering additional new trails through this planning effort is not the appropriate avenue for this type of proposal. It is suggested that the consideration for new trails be done through a separate planning effort that focuses solely on that issue versus trying to integrate them into this plan.

3. ISSUES AND AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations state that environmental assessments (EA)s should “briefly provide sufficient evidence and analysis” for determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) (40 CFR 1501.5) and that agencies should only briefly discuss issues other than significant ones (40 CFR 1500.4(e)). While many issues may arise during scoping, not all the issues raised warrant analysis in an EA. Issues will be analyzed if: 1) an analysis of the issue is necessary to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, or 2) if the issue is associated with a significant impact, or where analysis is necessary to determine the significance of the impact. The following sections list the resources considered and the determination as to whether they require additional analysis.

3.1. Issues Analyzed

The following issues were identified through the public scoping process or by BLM’s interdisciplinary team of resource specialists and were carried forward for further analysis in Section below. Other issues were identified through public scoping and were considered, but not carried forward for detailed analysis. The rationale is provided in the below.

1. What are the impacts to recreation visitor's ability to achieve desired experiences and outcomes from the proposed action and alternatives changes in the operational setting (increased regulations, visitor contacts, health and human safety, trash and human waste)?
2. How would the changes in travel management and the designation of routes, including closures and seasonal closures, impact recreation, including hunting?
3. What is the impact of the alternatives for camping management on wildlife; big game winter migration routes, habitat fragmentation, shrinking habitat?
4. What is the impact of the alternatives on riparian and wetland resources?
5. What is the impact of the alternatives for camping management on upland vegetation resources in relation to Public Land Health Standard 3?
6. What is the impact of alternatives for camping management on Range Management?
7. How would the changes in travel management and the designation of routes, including decommissioning and seasonal closures impact soil resources under Proposed Action (Alternative D) and other alternatives?
8. How would the changes in travel management and the designation of routes, including decommissioning and seasonal closures impact water resources under Proposed Action (Alternative D) and other alternatives?
9. What is the impact of the alternatives for camping management on increasing wildfire potential/risk?

3.2. Issues Considered but not Analyzed in Detail or Issues not Identified

Program area (in alphabetic order)	Reason there is no issue or that further analysis is unnecessary
Air / GHGs / Noise	Overall / cumulatively, there would be no significant increases in air pollutant or GHG emissions as a result of implementing the proposed action alternatives. For future project-level action analyses, potential local / acute impacts should be considered on a case-by-case basis. As described for the travel and camping management objectives / strategies in this EA, considerations should be given for potential noise, dust and campfire smoke impacts to nearby resources (snowpack and vegetation for air pollutant emissions) and areas including private lands (for all emissions) for project-level assessments.
Cadastral Survey	The areas included in this EA cover public land in multiple townships. The survey status of those townships is considered mixed with both antiquated and modern surveys. The positional reliability of BLM Corporate Land Status data ranges from 1 ft. to 400 ft. Project design features are included to minimize potential impacts to evidence of the Public Land Survey System (PLSS). The reliability of the boundary of public land should be re-evaluated when site-specific projects are proposed; therefor it is determined that the present plan would not impact any evidence of the PLSS or boundaries adjacent to public land.
Cultural Resources	BLM conducted an extensive preliminary reconnaissance investigation to identify and record historic properties in the area of potential effects (see Report CR-RG-22-034 P). Existing

Program area (in alphabetic order)	Reason there is no issue or that further analysis is unnecessary
	<p>historic properties were relocated, and new ones were identified in the course of the inventory. All historic properties will be re-evaluated when site-specific activities are proposed, therefore, it was determined that the present plan would not impact any of them.</p>
Economics	<p>As noted in the EA, proposed camping restrictions affect only six per cent of BLM managed lands in the County. Proposed travel restrictions affect only two per cent of these lands. The EA does not prohibit camping or motorized recreation, but puts restrictions on some uses. BLM expects these additional restrictions would affect only a small number of visitors, and have only a minor socioeconomic impact relative to the County's overall economy. Examples of the impact from much more expansive actions undertaken by other BLM field offices may be instructive:</p> <p>Since FY2009 (when the Moab Resource Management Plan was signed) to FY2021, visitation to BLM land managed by the Moab FO has increased over 58 per cent. This is despite closing approximately 2,000 miles of inventoried routes to motorized travel (representing about half of all the unmaintained roads in Grand County, Utah). Since FY2009, additional routes have been closed due to lack of purpose and need combined with potential resource damage, but again there has been no discernable effect on visitation. In the same period of time, the BLM has limited approximately 207,000 acres to camp only in campgrounds or camping limited to designated sites. The great majority of this acreage has been in the most popular recreation areas within the field office. These actions have had no measurable impact on visitation and no subsequent negative impact on the local economy. Some of the routes closed to motorized travel have ben repurposed as biking and/or hiking routes, likely attracting additional recreationists to the area. Some of the increased visitation, based on anecdotal evidence, may be due to some visitors desiring a more controlled camping environment with less resource damage than dispersed camping sometimes produces.</p> <p>The above is not unique to Moab, as other BLM offices, such as the Fruita, Colorado, area managed by the Grand Junction field office, have had similar experiences.</p>
Environmental Justice	<p>Low income environmental justice communities were identified in the study area. It is not anticipated, however, that there would be any disproportionately adverse impacts on these populations. The purpose of the project is to reduce damage from off-road travel and dispersed camping. Ninety-eight per cent of the field office would undergo no changes to the current RMP-approved travel plan. Ninety-four per cent of the field office would undergo no changes to dispersed camping regulations. The proposed changes would affect all user groups, regardless of income status. Any future fee increases would impose very minor financial burdens relative to overall recreation spending, such as on equipment and transportation costs. The overwhelming majority of field office recreation sites would remain free of charge. Opportunities for OHV use and dispersed camping would continue to be available throughout the field office, including such availability to environmental justice populations.</p> <p>Tribes were consulted on this project and no concerns were identified with the project. Comments were received regarding the planning area and BLM lands playing a role in providing temporary workforce housing and a place for homeless to reside. As identified in the "Alternatives Considered but Not Carried Forward" residing on public lands is illegal and therefore allowing people to live on public lands was not brought forward in any of the alternatives.</p>

Program area (in alphabetic order)	Reason there is no issue or that further analysis is unnecessary
Farmlands, Prime and Unique	Not present
Forest Management	Action alternatives would cause no significant impact to forest resources.
Fluid Minerals	Fluid mineral resources would not be affected by the proposed action or alternatives.
Geology/ Minerals	Minerals in this area are open to exploration and development, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, as well as the governing BLM Resource Management Plan. Coordination between surface uses may be required, as applicable: 1. Prior to any future work that involves ground disturbance or creates a change of available access in an area, BLM would need to determine if an active claim is located in the proposed project area, prior to initiation. If an active claim is documented, then coordination between the entity initiating the work and the active mining claimant needs to occur, prior to initiation. A letter, or similar form of documentation that provides details of the coordination and is signed by the people who conducted the coordination needs to be documented to file, prior to moving forward with the proposed work. 2. If work associated with this proposed plan is anticipated to utilize federal minerals in the construction of roads, parking lots or for any other construction needs, then compliance with 43 CFR 3600 is required.
Invasive Plants	Proposed mitigation measures, as well as the objective of limiting disturbance to vegetation associated with the Proposed Action and alternative B, is expected to reduce the potential for establishment and spread of invasive plants when compared to the no action alternative.
Lands and Realty	The Preferred Action and/or Alternatives would have no significant impact to Land Use Authorizations or other Lands and Realty considerations.
Paleontology	Surface geology of within the planning area and inventoried campsites/routes consists of the Dry Union Formation. The Dry Union is a unit of alluvium sands, silts, and ash that has been classified with a Potential Fossil Yield Classification of 5 due to the possibility of rare Miocene-Pliocene vertebrate fossils. These fossils are considered paleontological resources and are protected under the Paleontological Resources Preservation Act of 2009. Any future ground disturbances that may uncover, damage, or destroy potential fossils will require preliminary survey, inventory, and possible active monitoring of ground disturbing activities by a BLM or contracted paleontologist.
Special Designations: WSAs, ACECs, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Other	The Droney Gulch ACEC is within the planning area. Action Alternatives would avoid designating sites where sensitive plants are present following inventories and therefore there would not be an impact to the Droney Gulch ACEC. No other Special Designations are present within the planning area that would be impacted by the proposed action.
Tribal Concerns	BLM consulted the following tribes for the undertaking: Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Comanche Tribe of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux, Eastern Shoshone, Jicarilla Apache Nation, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Northern Ute Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe,

Program area (in alphabetic order)	Reason there is no issue or that further analysis is unnecessary
	Pawnee Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Southern Ute Tribe, Standing Rock Lakota Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. No tribes identified any concerns (see Report CR-RG-22-056 NA).
Visual Resources	None of the alternatives would result in a change in visual resources as contrasts with the landscape as a result of public use, including camping, would not change. The action alternatives propose taking into account visual resources in the final design to help reduce the potential for designating sites where they would be more visible from key observation points. There would also be no change to dark skies from any of the alternatives since recreation use is already occurring and would continue to occur under all of the alternatives.
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	It is assumed that conditions associated with the proposed management areas are currently clean and that no contamination is evident. If any future work involves some type of oil or fuel use, transfer and/or storage, then an adequate spill kit would be required to be onsite. Any future work would be conducted in accordance with 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.
Wilderness Characteristics	This resource is not present or affected by any of the action alternatives.
Wildlife: Aquatic	The implementation of the proposed action would protect aquatic habitat and aquatic wildlife over the no action alternative. See riparian and wetlands issue statement and analysis for details.
Wildlife: Migratory Birds	Project design features are included in the proposed action to minimize impacts to nesting migratory birds for any surface disturbing activities. The action alternatives propose to reduce and consolidate public use to help reduce overall impact to migratory bird habitat within the planning area.
Wildlife: T&E, Sensitive Species	The Droney Gulch ACEC is within the planning area. Action Alternatives would avoid designating sites where sensitive plants are present following inventories and therefore there would not be an impact to the Droney Gulch ACEC. No federally listed species and/or habitat are present within the action area; therefore, they are not expected to be impacted by any of the action alternatives.

3.3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

3.3.1. Issue Statement #1

What are the impacts to recreation visitors ability to achieve desired experiences and outcomes from the proposed action and alternatives changes in the operational setting (increased regulations, visitor contacts, health and human safety, trash and human waste)?

3.3.1.1. Affected Environment

Most of the planning and analysis area is close to state highways, communities and is easily accessible by well-maintained county roads. Much of the land within the planning area offers

outstanding recreation opportunities such as trail systems, rock climbing and off-highway vehicle recreation as well as camping. The proximity to additional outstanding recreation areas such as the Arkansas River known for whitewater boating and fishing as well trail systems and large mountain peaks lends to the demand for recreation use within the planning area. Shopping, dining, music, art and events within the communities themselves also lend to demand for visitation to this area.

The ease of access to public land combined with outstanding recreation opportunities and outdoor recreation focused communities creates a high demand for recreation use resulting in numerous contacts with other groups during outings and a high degree of evidence of use such as compacted soils, litter, human waste and rock fire rings.

To support recreation activities the field office has constructed numerous trails and trailheads and recently began to provide additional restrooms in partnership with organizations. There is one 22 site BLM campground within the planning area to support camping demand.

There are few regulations for visitor use within the planning area beyond the standard BLM Code of Federal Regulations. Off-highway vehicles and bicycles are limited to designated routes for 25,200 acres of the planning area but there are no regulations regarding camping. There is one target shooting closure in the Burmac/Methodist Mountain Sub-Unit. There are no BLM managed areas where a permit or fee is required within the planning area. As a result, the planning area has only basic user regulations posted at key access points along with some basic maps for some of the areas. Recreation or Law Enforcement staff is infrequently present, so visitors are unlikely to be contacted by agency staff.

There is a high demand for special recreation permits within certain areas of the planning area. This includes commercial activities such as commercial guiding and UTV rentals as well as competitive events that take place on the designated trail networks.

A Recreation Setting Matrix for each sub-unit can be found in Appendix A.

3.3.1.2. Reasonably Foreseeable Environmental Trends and Planned Actions in the Area

It is reasonable to assume that recreation demand for all types of recreation activities will continue to increase in association with population growth, communities shift to outdoor recreation-based economies and changes in work models that allow remote work. This is especially prevalent for the planning area given the proximity to the large metropolitan areas of Denver and Colorado Springs. This is likely to result in increases in evidence of use and number of contacts during a recreation outing as well as the desire by certain community members or groups for additional trails and recreation amenities. Given the recent level of demand and inquiries it is reasonable to assume that there will be an increase in the number of commercial permits and competitive events over time.

3.3.1.3. Effects of Alternative D (Proposed Action)

The Proposed Action would shift the operational setting of the planning area to a more front country classification where additional rules and ethics are clearly posted and use limitations are

in place. Additionally, there would be an increased staff presence and additional vehicle controls to manage camping and use of designated routes. The Proposed Action would also introduce rustic facilities to manage camping, including additional basic/primitive campgrounds and restrooms where warranted, shifting the physical setting as well.

There are no studies or research known to BLM staff that indicates conclusively how these types of changes affect visitor experiences. Based on staff knowledge and information taken from public scoping and conversations with visitors the effect of these changes on a visitor's experience will be largely dependent upon the individual or group. These changes could displace visitors who prefer a more primitive operational setting to other areas with less regulations and facilities. Based on observations of other areas that have gone through similar management changes, such as Moab, Utah, the recreation draw may exceed the visitor preference and these users will likely continue to use these sites but continue to be dissatisfied with the changes or accept the changes over time. For visitors who desire a more managed experience with support facilities such as restrooms and an increased presence to maintain and keep areas clean, they will be more likely to appreciate these changes and it will improve their experience. Given the Adaptive Management strategies outlined in the Proposed Action to accommodate increased demand over time, displacement of visitors due to a lack of campsite supply is not likely to occur in the reasonably foreseeable future. It may occur eventually if demand continues to increase. It is anticipated that under the Proposed Action visitors will still be able to attain the same benefits and outcomes as it relates to physical and mental health and connections with nature.

A visitor's ability to attain their desired recreation experiences and outcomes as it relates to fees and reservations is also not readily understood and is likely dependent upon the individual. Again, based on public scoping and staff observations visitors often view fees differently as well. Many support fees as they understand that it goes to support the management of the site and is necessary to provide facilities that are regularly maintained. At the same time, some people may feel that camping support facilities are not necessary for the type of camping that they prefer, and therefore fees are not warranted. If fees are introduced some visitors may welcome the facilities and accept the fee in turn for the facilities while others may be displaced or be resentful, negatively affecting their experience. As more recreation sites throughout the country and region move to reservation systems due to increased demand and limited supply BLM staff have observed a growing sense of frustration amongst visitors. If adaptive management found in the Proposed Action eventually leads to this type of system to address the increased demand and finite camping supply some visitor's experiences may be negatively affected and could result in displacement. At the same time, there may be an increase in satisfaction and lower levels of stress if a visitor knows they have a site reserved and facilities are available.

As stated above, it is reasonably foreseeable that there will changes in the social setting through increased evidence of use and number of contacts during a recreation outing due to regional trends and forces beyond agency management control. It is not anticipated that the Proposed Action will have an effect on the social setting but simply manage the visitor use that already occurs and will continue to occur in the future.

With the increased management and change in operational setting it is anticipated that under this alternative there would be an increase in visitor safety, a reduction in human waste and litter and increased compliance with regulations, including fire restrictions.

3.3.1.4. Mitigation Measures

N/A

3.3.1.5. Effects of Alternative C

Same as the Proposed Action.

3.3.1.6. Effects of Alternative B

The effects of Alternative B are similar to those of the Proposed Action. Due to less camping supply under this alternative, there could be an increased displacement of visitors either to other areas with less regulations (and likely resulting in increased regulations in those areas) or a decrease in participation. Under this alternative there is likely to be a higher number of participants that are not able to achieve a high level of satisfaction with their experience if camping is part of their typical recreational outing.

As with the Proposed Action, the increased management and change in operational setting is anticipated to increase visitor safety, reduce human waste and litter and increase compliance with regulations, including fire restrictions. Given that this alternative would decrease the number of overall campsites available on BLM likely resulting in additional displacement/overflow it is anticipated that visitor compliance under this Alternative may be reduced due to frustration from lack of opportunities.

3.3.1.7. Effects of the No Action Alternative (No Action Alternative)

Under the No Action Alternative there would be no changes in the operational setting including not introducing new rules or limitations on use or fees to support maintenance of camping sites. As a result, those who desire this condition will likely remain satisfied with their recreation experience and will not be displaced. However, if visitors continue to leave trash, human waste and create new campsites, even those who desire less regulations and fees may eventually have their recreation experiences negatively impacted.

Visitors who value camping support facilities such as restrooms and maintenance of areas may have a lower level of dissatisfaction as human waste, trash and impacts to vegetation increases over time and agency staff is not able to provide basic maintenance. Given the limited supply of developed campgrounds, both regionally and nationally, full displacement or lack of participation is not likely.

3.3.2. Issue Statement #2

How would the changes in travel management and the designation of routes, including closures and seasonal closures, impact recreation, including hunting?

3.3.2.1. Affected Environment

As identified in Section 1.2 “General and Recreation Setting” 13,000 acres of the planning area (2% of the field office) are affected by the travel management portion of the Purpose and Need.

The other 25,200 acres of the planning area already has a travel management plan in place and therefore no changes to public access.

Of the 13,000 acres with travel management related actions, 43 miles of motorized routes, not including county roads, were inventoried in 2020 and evaluated for consideration for inclusion in a formal route network. The BLM's evaluation identified that 14.2 of these miles do not actually have legal public access to them due to adjacent land (private of US Forest Service). These routes may currently see public use, but access is not controlled by the BLM. Inventoried routes managed by BLM include rights-of-ways for various uses such as access to private residences or utility corridors, provide access to US Forest Service designated routes or were used for a variety of recreation purposes such as hunting access, camping access and exploration. The breakdown of routes by sub-unit are found in the table below.

Table 1

	Shavano	Pass Creek	Misc. Lands	Total
Miles of BLM routes	21.3	13.9	9	44.2
Miles with legal public access (% of miles)	20.8 (98%)	3.2 (23%)	4.7 (53%)	28.7 (65%)

All of the motorized routes inventoried within the planning area were documented as being used by full-sized vehicles. No routes were inventoried as just being used by narrower vehicles such as All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) or motorcycles.

3.3.2.2. Reasonably Foreseeable Environmental Trends and Planned Actions in the Area

As noted in Issue #1, all forms of recreational use is anticipated to increase throughout the planning area over time, including permitted commercial and competitive recreation use. This is likely to result in increased uses of the route network. It is also anticipated that there will be increased demand for rights-of-ways across public lands within the planning area as adjacent private land is developed requiring access to residences as well as utilities. BLM administrative use and access needs are anticipated to continue in the future but remain at current levels. This includes access for grazing administration, treatment of noxious and invasive weed species as well as access to forest treatments.

3.3.2.3. Effects of Alternative D (Proposed Action)

Under this Alternative the BLM would designate approximately 11 miles of routes for continued public motorized vehicle use and access. 5.4 miles would be open only seasonally to protect wintering big game or mirror US Forest Service seasonal use periods. 55 routes, totaling 12.6 miles, that have legal public access would be closed to the public (closed and authorized use

only) to address resource or management concerns. The average length of these routes is 0.2 miles. The majority of these routes are short dead-end spurs that end at a private land fence or a non-designated route on US Forest Service lands or serve as driveway to a private residence.

Under this Alternative 57% of routes that have legal public access would remain open and the average length of a closed route is 0.2 miles in length. This would be less of a reduction in motorized public access to public lands than Alternative B but more than Alternative C.

The average length of a closed route of 0.2 miles indicates that only minor short spurs are being contemplated for closure under this alternative and therefore this does not represent a significant loss of motorized public access to public lands. Those wishing to visit these areas would on average only have to travel by foot or horse an additional 0.2 miles from the closest designated motorized route. No major loop opportunities or major public access points would be closed under this alternative so there is not anticipated to be impacts to recreation opportunities.

The 4.7 mile seasonal use period on route #CH1030 in the Shavano area would remain open during big game season therefore it is not anticipated to reduce hunting or hunting access via motorized vehicles. See ISSUE #3 regarding impacts to wildlife in relation to the travel management alternatives. The seasonal closure of this route would result in reduced recreation opportunities for those who wish to utilize this road via a motorized vehicle or bicycle during the seasonal closure period. The route is not a major trail or marketed recreation opportunity and the average level of use on this loop route during this period of time is unknown. Staff observations indicate the route sees relatively low levels of use throughout the season so a seasonal closure would displace at least some users during part of the year but at undeterminable levels.

Restricting exclusive use from adjacent private landowners onto BLM routes that do not have legal public access is anticipated to negatively impact those private landowners who have grown accustomed to traveling on these routes for recreational purposes. It is anticipated that limiting this type of use would have a positive impact to hunters who seek areas without motorized use but have relatively easy access. Several areas fit this description, especially in the Miscellaneous Lands and Pass Creek sub-units.

3.3.2.4. Effects of Alternative C

Under this Alternative the BLM would designate approximately 23.7 miles of routes for continued public motorized vehicle use and access. 0.7 miles would be closed seasonally to mirror US Forest Service seasonal use periods. 39 routes, totaling 8.7 miles, that have legal public access would be closed to the public (closed and authorized use only) to address resource or management concerns. The average length of the route is 0.2 miles. As with the Proposed Action most of these routes are dead-end spurs and end at a private land fence or a non-designated route on US Forest Service lands.

Under this Alternative 83% of routes that have legal public access would remain open and the average length of a closed route is 0.2 miles in length. This would be less of a reduction in motorized public access to public lands than Alternative D but more than Alternative B.

The 4.7 mile loop, road #CH1030 in the Shavano area would be open under this Alternative without a seasonal use period continuing to provide the same level of motorized and bicycle

recreation opportunity and access as the No Action Alternative. While this would not reduce motorized hunting access there would be no seasonal closures or other restrictions to protect wintering big game in this area under this alternative. See ISSUE #3 for a more thorough analysis of travel management designations on wildlife.

As with the Proposed Action, restricting exclusive use from adjacent private landowners onto BLM routes that do not have legal public access is anticipated to negatively impact those private landowners who have grown accustomed to traveling on these routes for recreational purposes. It is anticipated that limiting this type of use would have a positive impact to hunters who seek areas without motorized use but have relatively easy access. Several areas fit this description, especially in the Miscellaneous Lands and Pass Creek sub-units. These impacts are anticipated to be the same as the Proposed Action.

3.3.2.5. Effects of Alternative B

Under this Alternative the BLM would designate approximately 2 miles of routes for continued public motorized vehicle use and access. 1 mile would be opened only seasonally to protect wintering big game or mirror US Forest Service seasonal use periods. 77 routes, totaling 25.9 miles, that have legal public access would be closed to the public (closed and authorized use only) to address resource or management concerns. The average length of these routes is approximately 3 miles. As with the Proposed Action several of these routes are dead-end spurs that end at a private land fence or a non-designated route on US Forest Service lands. However, given that the average length is 3 miles versus 0.2 it can be assumed that several longer length routes are proposed for closure to the public under this alternative.

Under this Alternative 10% of the routes that have legal public access would remain open (including seasonally) and the average length of a closed route is 3 miles in length. This would be more of a reduction in motorized public access to public lands than the Proposed Action and Alternative C. The 3-mile average length of a route under this alternative can represent loss of motorized access to public land given the context of the small parcels within the planning area.

Two of the longer routes proposed for closure under Alternative B are located in the Shavano sub-unit. Route #CH1030 is a 4.7 mile loop that would be closed to public motorized and mechanized use under this Alternative. This would remove this as a motorized and bicycle recreation opportunity and would restrict motorized access to a tract of land that is up to a mile wide with no legal public access from the west. As with Alternative D, the level of use of this route is unknown but staff estimates it receives relatively low use. Public comments did indicate that it is valued by some people for recreation including off-highway vehicle driving and exploring as well as hunting access. Staff has observed bicycle tracks on the routes as well. Given the reduction in recreation use through this alternative the area could become more productive and attractive for big game species improving hunter success in this area. The closure of this route could increase the level of use by hikers or equestrian users who may have been displaced by the motorized use at undeterminable levels.

The 4.4 mile route in Droney Gulch bisects an area that is approximately 1.4 miles wide and a closure under this alternative would reduce motorized and bicycle public access to this area and associated recreation opportunities this route provides. The closure of this route could increase the level of use by hikers or equestrian users who may have been displaced by the motorized use

at undeterminable levels. Public comments indicate that some value this road for a variety of recreation opportunities including off-highway vehicle driving and exploring, bicycle use and is connected to an equestrian trail.

As with the Proposed Action, restricting exclusive use from adjacent private landowners onto BLM routes that do not have legal public access is anticipated to negatively impact those private landowners who have grown accustomed to traveling on these routes for recreational purposes. It is anticipated that limiting this type of use would have a positive impact to hunters who seek areas without motorized use but have relatively easy access. Several areas fit this description, especially in the Miscellaneous Lands and Pass Creek sub-units. These impacts are anticipated to be the same as the Proposed Action.

3.3.2.6. Effects of Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

Under the No Action Alternative there would not be a formal designation of routes and travel would continue to be limited to existing routes in the 13,000 acres of public land where travel management planning has not been completed. There would be no change in public access through BLM management actions under this alternative. BLM staff would continue to monitor these areas and could install signage or barriers to minimize the creation of new routes. For 15.5 miles of routes that are only accessible through private land, adjacent private landowners could continue to use these routes but prevent use by the general public. This could result in conflict between private landowners and the public, especially with visitors who are hunting, if private landowners decide to deny the public access across their land to BLM land but still legally drive in the area themselves. BLM staff has reports of frustrated visitors who hike to an area to hunt with the expectation that there is no motorized vehicle use but adjacent private landowners legally drive through the area disrupting the hunt or their experience.

3.3.3. Issue Statement #3

What is the impact of the alternatives for camping and travel management on wildlife; big game winter migration routes, habitat fragmentation, shrinking habitat?

3.3.3.1. Affected Environment

Most of the planning area overlaps priority habitats for big game species, which are identified and delineated by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). The big game species with priority habitats extensively overlapping the planning area are bighorn sheep, mule deer, and elk. Overlap with priority pronghorn habitat is very minimal (<0.5 miles of routes and little to no camping), thus pronghorn were excluded from more detailed analysis. The priority habitats for these species include bighorn sheep production areas, bighorn sheep winter range, bighorn sheep migration corridors, mule deer severe winter range, mule deer winter concentration areas, mule deer migration corridors, elk production areas, elk severe winter range, and elk winter concentration areas. The habitats listed above are important for the survival and reproduction of those species.

Research has found negative impacts of human disturbance and a broad range of outdoor recreation activities on bighorn sheep, mule deer, and elk. In Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park, the use of important habitats by bighorn sheep was negatively affected by the

number of vehicles and humans within those areas (Keller and Bender 2007). OHV use, mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding have all been found to negatively impact elk movements, and human disturbance found to negatively impact elk reproduction (Naylor et al. 2009, Phillips and Alldredge 2000). Elk reproduction was found to rebound once human disturbance during the calving season was removed (Shively et al. 2005). Multiple studies have similarly found effects on mule deer movements from human disturbance (Stankowich 2008). When these human disturbances are multiplied across a broad temporal and spatial scale within priority big game habitats such as in Chaffee County, there is potential for population-level impacts. Recently completed Herd Management Plans for local bighorn sheep and mule deer herds point to increasing recreation and development as primary threats to those populations (Grigg 2020, Deschenes and Lamont 2022). Areas of bare ground due to unregulated camping and OHV use also degrade habitat by removing vegetative forage for herbivores and native flowering plants for pollinators.

The planning area encompasses a significant portion of the upper Arkansas River valley. During winter months, many wildlife species seasonally migrate down from surrounding peaks and down the river corridor to escape the deep snow and cold temperatures at higher elevations. Since BLM lands in the area are primarily at lower elevations, most of the overlap between the planning area and priority habitats occurs within winter range and migration corridors. Big game winter range and migration corridors are a high conservation priority in Colorado due to their susceptibility to human development and recreation (Cooley et al. 2020). Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3362: *Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors* and Colorado Executive Order D –2019-011: *Conserving Colorado's Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors* direct federal and state agencies to collaboratively conserve these habitats.

3.3.3.2. Reasonably Foreseeable Environmental Trends and Planned Actions in the Area

A 50% increase in Chaffee County's population is predicted by 2030 (Denver Post 2017). Likewise, the statewide population of Colorado is predicted to increase by 50% to 8.5 million people, mostly focused along the Front Range within close driving distance of Chaffee County. Considering rates of population growth, the frequency and scale of human disturbance within priority habitats for big game species will continue to increase without a management framework in place for camping and travel on BLM lands. Increased disturbance resulting from camping and associated recreational activities will compound habitat degradation occurring from other factors, which include urban/suburban development, forest degradation due fire suppression and climate change, and a drying climate. Over the past 20 years, CPW population estimates have detected declines in local herds of bighorn sheep (-29%) and elk (-11%), and mule deer remain approximately 35% below the population objective set by CPW (Grigg 2020, Deschenes and Lamont 2022, CPW Post Hunt Population & Sex Ratio Estimates).

3.3.3.3. Effects of Alternative D (Proposed Action)

Alternative D would reduce the length of routes that are open to full-size vehicles and dispersed camping year-round within priority big game habitats. The area covered by routes and dispersed camping in priority habitats under the Proposed Action is greater than Alternative B, but lesser

than Alternative C (Table 2). Human disturbance to wildlife and negative impacts on vegetation from camping and OHV use would be reduced under this alternative, while maintaining year-round access to camping and other recreational activities within all sub-units.

Of all alternatives, Alternative D has the greatest mileage of routes limited by seasonal use in priority habitats. In many cases, routes that would be limited by seasonal use under Alternative D would be closed under Alternative B. Limiting routes by seasonal use mitigates negative impacts on wildlife when most sensitive to human disturbance (e.g. when females are pregnant or birthing young), while still providing motorized access and camping opportunities during popular times for recreation (e.g. summer and hunting seasons). The combined mileage of routes open year-round and limited by seasonal use under Alternative D is largely similar to the mileage of routes open year-round under Alternative C. Thus, Alternative D maximizes motorized access while mitigating negative impacts on wildlife. Since there are some motorized routes open year-round in priority habitats, some negative impacts on big game populations are still possible.

The current lack of management has resulted in the proliferation of dispersed camping across tens of thousands of acres of BLM land in Chaffee County, most of which is big game winter range. Alternatives B, C, and D would all ensure the impacts to wildlife from camping are reduced to varying degrees. By focusing camping away from sensitive areas and rehabilitating degraded areas, these alternatives would not only reduce negative impacts on wildlife but likely have positive impacts as areas are restored. Revegetation of closed areas would increase the quality and quantity of vegetative forage and pollinator habitat.

3.3.3.4. Effects of Alternative C

Aside from Alternative A (No Action), Alternative C would result in the greatest mileage of motorized routes remaining open year-round within priority habitats (Table 2). There would be some routes limited by seasonal use, but less so than under Alternatives D or B. Alternative C would also result in the least closures of motorized routes than other alternatives, aside from Alternative A.

Alternative C has some of the greatest potential to negatively impact big game populations in the planning area. The mileage of motorized routes open year-round in priority habitats is nearly 300% greater than the Proposed Action for elk and mule deer. Disturbance from full-size vehicles and OHVs would occur in winter range while females are pregnant and in production areas in the time surrounding birth and young rearing. Reductions in reproductive success and winter survival of bighorn sheep, elk, and mule deer are possible under this alternative. Since some routes would be closed and camping management will take place under this alternative, there would be improvements in the quality and quantity of vegetative forage and pollinator habitat.

3.3.3.5. Effects of Alternative B

Alternative B would result in zero miles of motorized routes being open year-round in big game priority habitats (Table 2). There would be some routes limited by seasonal use, but less so than under Alternative D. Many of the routes that would be open under the other alternatives would be closed or for authorized use only under Alternative B.

Alternative B would result in the least impacts to wildlife and big game species in particular. Human disturbance to big game in priority habitats would be limited to foot traffic and walk-in camping, thus the potential to negatively impact reproduction and winter survival would be less than other alternatives. Since Alternative B results in closing the greatest mileage of routes and associated camping, it would also result in the greatest area being rehabilitated and revegetated. Revegetation of closed areas would increase the quality and quantity of vegetative forage and pollinator habitat.

3.3.3.6. Effects of Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

Under the No Action Alternative all existing routes would remain open and dispersed campsites could continue to proliferate. Based on trends of land use and population growth, the rates of human disturbance on wildlife and habitat would increase. Increased disturbance to wildlife and reduced habitat quality would likely have negative impacts on important wildlife population parameters such as overwinter survival, reproduction, and recruitment of young. As a result, the decline and stagnated growth of big game populations currently being observed could be exacerbated. Continued degradation of ground vegetation would have negative impacts on native pollinator species through the removal of flowering plants.

Table 2. Mileage of BLM motorized routes within big game priority habitats. Priority habitats, listed in the first paragraph of Issue #3, are combined for each species. Mileage is summarized by species and proposed designation under each alternative.

Species	Bighorn sheep				Elk				Mule deer			
Alternative	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Open	2.7	0	0.5	0	40.6	1.5	17.8	10.6	43.8	1.5	19.4	11.0
Closed	0	1.4	1.0	1.4	0	11.9	8.3	9.8	0	14.3	8.9	11.2
Limited by Seasonal Use	0	0	0	0	0	1.0	0.7	5.4	0	0.7	0.3	5
Authorized Use Only	0	1.3	1.2	1.3	0	26.1	13.8	14.8	0	27.0	15.2	16.7

3.3.4. Issue Statement #4

What is the impact of the alternatives for camping and travel management on riparian and wetland resources?

3.3.4.1. Affected Environment

The Pass Creek and Fourmile units have riparian and wetlands within them associated with Pass Creek and Fourmile Creek, which are perennial creeks. These resources provide important habitat for fish and aquatic species, as well as terrestrial species that rely on them for forage, cover and water.

Although the other units do not have any major riparian or wetland areas within them, they are located within the watersheds that drain into streams that contains riparian and wetland vegetation, which supports aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species.

Impacts caused by camping and routes impact riparian and wetland areas (and the wildlife that depend on them) resulting from vegetation damage and removal and surface compaction in upland as well as riparian/wetland areas. This results in increased water runoff and soil erosion, which results in more vegetation loss and more erosion. Sedimentation decreases water quality and flash flooding cause damage to riparian, wetland areas and aquatic habitat.

Damage and removal of vegetation within riparian and wetland areas also directly impact these areas by decreasing stream stability (and increased sedimentation and vulnerability to withstand high flows), increasing water temperature, loss of cover and forage for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, and loss of forage, and loss of habitat for aquatic invertebrates, which are necessary to support aquatic wildlife.

3.3.4.2. Reasonably Foreseeable Environmental Trends and Planned Actions in the Area

Over the last several years Colorado's population (including Chaffee County) has increased significantly and is expected to continue to increase. In addition to the population growth, tourism associated with outdoor recreation in Colorado and Chaffee County has and is expected to continue to increase significantly. Camping on BLM lands within these areas has greatly increased with this increase of population and tourism, as have impacts to riparian and wetland areas resulting from camping in these areas.

In addition to the increase of impacts to aquatic resources on BLM managed lands due to the increase of camping on BLM managed lands, this trend of increasing population and tourism to the area has resulted in impacts to aquatic resources due to surface disturbance and development on non-BLM lands. The magnitude of these impacts is also expected to increase.

3.3.4.3. Effects of Alternative D (Proposed Action)

Alternative D includes the closure of some routes and camp sites as well as the ability to regulate camping and mitigate impacts. Reducing and limiting the expansion of surface disturbance and allowing revegetation, as well as the ability to employ best management practices is expected to result in improvements to riparian areas and wetlands, as well as aquatic wildlife.

3.3.4.4. Effects of Alternative C

Alternative C would allow for more routes and campsites than alternatives D or B, resulting in more surface disturbance and greater negative impacts to riparian areas, wetlands and aquatic wildlife than would be expected under the other two alternatives. The ability to regulate camping and employ mitigation measures and BMPs under alternative C, however would still benefit riparian, wetland and aquatic resources over the No Action Alternative.

3.3.4.5. Effects of Alternative B

In addition to the ability to regulate camping, employ mitigation measures and best management practices as in alternative D, alternative B includes more closures of routes and campsites, which would result in even less surface disturbance than alternative D. Due to this, the benefits to riparian, wetland and aquatic wildlife is expected to be similar to, but likely greater than alternative D.

3.3.4.6. Effects of Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

Under the No Action Alternative all existing routes would remain open and dispersed camping will continue without regulation. With the reasonably foreseeable trend in increasing demand for camping and recreation use on BLM lands in the planning area, it is expected that impacts resulting from these activities would continue to increase. This is expected to result in degradation and loss of riparian and wetland areas, degradation of water quality and loss of suitable habitat for aquatic wildlife species both on and off BLM managed lands.

3.3.5. Issue Statement #5

What is the impact of the alternatives for camping and travel management on upland vegetation resources as it relates to Public Land Health Standard 3?

3.3.5.1. Affected Environment

The analysis area is located on BLM lands in Chaffee County at an elevation between 7,000 and 8,500 feet. The dominant vegetation in these areas is pinyon-juniper intermixed with open grassland parks and shrublands. The higher elevation contains mixed conifer and shrublands associated with open grass dominated parks.

Impacts to vegetation are associated with camping and travel management since the establishment of a road or campsite precludes vegetation from occupying the same location. The lack of management has resulted in the proliferation of routes and expansion of camp sites. The environmental consequences of vegetation loss due to roads and campsites have a substantial impact on other resource values (soil compaction/erosion, forage for permitted livestock and wildlife, etc.). In order to achieve the desired future conditions of the planning area, and to conform with BLM's mission to manage for sustainable landscapes that are meeting the Standards for Public Land Health, management of recreation is proposed to control travel and camping use to the most appropriate areas, levels, and limit proliferation.

The analysis area has been assessed for Public Land Health Standards. Public Land Health Standard No. 3 relates specifically to vegetation conditions and states, "Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential. Plants and animals at both the community and population level are productive, resilient, diverse, vigorous, and able to reproduce and sustain natural fluctuations and ecological processes".

The most recent land health evaluation was conducted in the Mt. Shavano sub-unit in 2017. The interdisciplinary evaluation identified recreation (travel route and campsite proliferation) in this area as the greatest concern. Under current management it was anticipated the area would

gradually move away from achieving the Standards for Public Land Health based on future trends of use in the area. Based on current observations of the Mt. Shavano sub-unit and other areas within the analysis area, it would be expected that some areas are no longer achieving Standards for Public Land Health due to the lack of recreation management.

3.3.5.2. Reasonably Foreseeable Environmental Trends and Planned Actions in the Area

Chaffee County has seen a significant increase in population and recreation over the last several years. Both population and outdoor recreation is expected to continue to increase in Chaffee County into the future. In addition, the cost of living in Chaffee County has increased dramatically compared to adjacent counties. This has led to illegal residential camping on BLM lands within this analysis area. Chaffee County is working on affordable housing in the area but has not been able to meet the demand. It is anticipated that illegal residential camping would continue and may become worse if there is a major economic downturn. The trend favors increased pressure on public lands for recreation and residential camping. This would have further impacts to upland vegetation and result in more areas unable to achieve Standards for Public Land Health.

3.3.5.3. Effects of Alternative D (Proposed Action)

Alternative D establishes a designation for route networks and camping areas. Designation is based on Management Strategies that would minimize impacts to vegetation and includes management that inhibits the potential for disturbance expansion. Routes and campsites identified for closure would be reclaimed and vegetated. Monitoring standards are in place to determine if the management actions outlined in this plan are successful or if additional measures are required. Overall, the effects of Alternative D would reduce surface disturbance to vegetation and supports achieving Standards for Public Land Health.

3.3.5.4. Effects of Alternative C

Alternative C incorporates designation and management of routes and campsites where more areas are open to motorized use (compared to Alt D & B). There are more negative impacts to vegetation under this alternative but to a lesser degree compared to Alternative A. The Management Strategies under Alternative C are the same as Alternative D including the goals, management actions, education, administration, and monitoring for all of the sub-units. The effects of Alternative C is still an improvement over the current situation and should help areas achieve Standards for Public Land Health.

3.3.5.5. Effects of Alternative B

In addition to the ability to regulate camping, employ mitigation measures and best management practices as in alternative D, alternative B includes more closures of routes and campsites, which would result in even less surface disturbance than alternative D. Overall, the effects of Alternative B would reduce surface disturbance to vegetation and supports achieving Standards for Public Land Health.

3.3.5.6. Effects of Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

As stated in the Affected Environment, there may be areas not achieving Standards for Public Land Health or trending away from meeting due to the density of routes and campsites. Upland vegetation is negatively impacted at this time. The long-term effects of Alternative A would promote further expansion of existing routes and campsites and new areas would be established without any control. Overall, this alternative would have a negative impact to upland vegetation and areas would not achieve Standards for Public Land Health.

3.3.6. Issue Statement #6

What is the impact of the alternatives for camping and travel management on Range Management?

3.3.6.1. Affected Environment

The planning area contains active grazing allotments where permitted livestock grazing is authorized during various times of the year. Grazing use and recreation conflicts are becoming more common throughout the Royal Gorge Field Office as Colorado becomes a popular destination to live and recreate. Chaffee County is probably the one county where conflict between the two uses is becoming more of an issue and creates frustration between all user groups and land managers.

There are two primary impacts to range management that are associated with recreation uses on public lands in Chaffee County. They are impacts to allotment infrastructure and loss of available livestock forage. Active grazing allotments contain infrastructure designed as a management tool to promote better grazing management on the allotment. This infrastructure includes pasture fences designed to keep livestock within a planned area for a certain amount of time. Pasture fences contain gates and/or cattle guards to allow the public to move freely from one area to another. More often pasture fences are being cut for trail or road proliferation and gates left open, all causing livestock to escape and disrupt management on an allotment. Another critical tool impacted by recreation is stock water tanks. Stock water tanks are strategically placed throughout a pasture to promote better livestock distribution and provide needed water. In Chaffee County, BLM staff have observed more camping at or near stock water tanks resulting in livestock not using those tanks. This disruption creates uneven utilization within a pasture and places more livestock pressure on critical resources such as riparian areas.

The second primary impact is loss of livestock forage to recreation. The popularity in camping has promoted a higher density of dispersed campsites and those sites have expanded in size due to the recent demand. In most cases, dispersed camping on BLM lands displaces vegetation down to the bare soil and sites become permanently void of any vegetation due to the frequent use and soil compaction.

Other issues experienced include dogs and human harassment of livestock, vandalism and increased travel route proliferation.

3.3.6.2. Reasonably Foreseeable Environmental Trends and Planned Actions in the Area

Chaffee County has seen a significant increase in population and recreation over the last several years. Both population and outdoor recreation is expected to continue to increase in Chaffee County into the future. In addition, the cost of living in Chaffee County has increased dramatically compared to adjacent counties. This has led to illegal residential camping on BLM lands within this analysis area. Chaffee County is working on affordable housing in the area but has not been able to meet the demand. It is anticipated that illegal residential camping would continue and may become worse if there is a major economic downturn. The trend favors increased pressure on public lands for recreation and residential camping. This would have further impacts to range management into the future.

3.3.6.3. Effects of Alternative D (Proposed Action)

Alternative D establishes a designation for route networks and camping areas. Designation is based on Management Strategies that would minimize impacts and disruption to range management infrastructure and help protect forage resources. Routes and campsites identified for closure would be reclaimed and vegetated. Education and administration would inform the public about other uses on public lands and BLM would have the ability to enforce regulations. Overall, the effects of Alternative D would reduce negative impacts associated with range and recreation uses.

3.3.6.4. Effects of Alternative C

Alternative C incorporates designation and management of routes and campsites where more areas are open to motorized use (compared to Alt D & B). There would continue to be some negative impacts to range management under this alternative, but to a lesser degree compared to Alternative A. The Management Strategies under Alternative C are the same as Alternative D including the goals, management actions, education, administration, and monitoring for all of the sub-units. The effect of Alternative C is still an improvement over the current situation and should help reduce conflicts with grazing operations on the allotments.

3.3.6.5. Effects of Alternative B

Alternative B is similar to Alternative D where a designation framework is implemented for routes and camping areas. However, Alternative B identifies more closures of routes and campsites compared to Alt D and would probably have the greatest positive impact to range management.

3.3.6.6. Effects of Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

As stated in the Affected Environment, there are negative impacts to grazing management as a result of recreation associated with the density of routes, dispersed campsites and continued expansion of these uses. Based on the current trend recreation is expected to increase on these areas into the future. The long-term effects of Alternative A would promote further conflict between user groups to the point where permitted grazing use on public lands would no longer be feasible.

3.3.7. Issue Statement #7

How would the changes in travel management and the designation of routes, including decommissioning and seasonal closures impact soil resources under Proposed Action (Alternative D) and other alternatives?

3.3.7.1. Affected Environment

The project area for the soil analysis includes areas of proposed route network and camping sites within BLM land. Past and present actions include activities that have influenced and affected the current condition of the environment around and within the project area. The existing condition of soil health results from natural and anthropogenic impacts. Clear Creek-Arkansas River (HUC: 1102000104), South Arkansas River (HUC: 1102000106), and Trout Creek-Arkansas River (HUC: 1102000107) watersheds on BLM land encompass the proposed route network and Camping Management Plan sites, where the area has been impacted due to mining, wildfire, recreation, grazing, roads, OHV use and other activities in the past and present. Roads, trails, and compacted soils have created an impervious surface that has reduced the infiltration rate and contributes to surface runoff and soil erosion, which is often deposited along roads, depressions, and streams. Erosion potential is higher on steep slopes and adjacent to less permeable surfaces such as rock outcrops or compacted areas, such as roads. The area is managed for multiple uses and ground disturbing activities, and associated impacts to soil resources are generally unavoidable.

The soil within the project area is described in the BLM GIS Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Database, which is derived from NRCS Web Soil Survey database (USDA 2022). Various soil types on the proposed routes and campsite areas are situated on flat to extremely steep gradient (1 to 60 percent slopes). The parent materials for the majority of the soils are mainly calcareous gravelly alluvium and/or calcareous gravelly outwash, highly stratified sandy and gravelly alluvium, and loamy alluvium over very cobbly, coarse-textured outwash. Some properties of soils located on proposed route and campground areas are described in the following sections. Although there are several soil types found within the project sites, only major soils that largely cover proposed routes and campgrounds are presented here (Table 3). Additional detail analysis would be required for any specific project or site planning.

Table 3 Description of soil properties for major soils under the existing/proposed routes and campgrounds within BLM land

<i>Map Unit Symbol</i>	<i>Map Unit Description</i>	<i>Representative Slope (%)</i>	<i>Surface texture</i>	<i>Erosion K- factor (ws)</i>	<i>Percent</i>
TgE	Tigiwon-Turret cobbly sandy loams, 3 to 25 percent slopes	14	Cobbly sandy loam	0.1	18.64
SeD	St. Elmo gravelly sandy loam, 3 to 9 percent slopes	6	Gravelly sandy loam	0.05	16.84
SsC	San Isabel stony sandy loam, 1 to 5 percent slopes	3	Stony sandy loam	0.1	11.37
Ru	Rough broken land	37	Very gravelly sandy loam	0.1	9.62

CaE	Cabin gravelly sandy loam, 9 to 25 percent slopes	17	Gravelly sandy loam	0.1	8.12
RcF	Rockland, 15 to 60 percent slopes	38	Unweathered bedrock	-	7.88
PgD	Pierian gravelly sandy loam, 3 to 9 percent slopes	6	Gravelly sandy loam	0.1	7.46
Ba	Badland	55	Unweathered bedrock	-	6.70

<i>Map Unit Symbol</i>	<i>Hydrologic Soil Group</i>	Erosion Hazard Rating for Roads/Trails	<i>Depth to Any Restrictive Layer (cm)</i>	Soil Rutting Hazard rating	<i>Percent</i>
TgE	B	Moderate	>200	Slight	18.64
SeD	A	Moderate	>200	Slight	16.84
SsC	A	Slight	>200	Moderate	11.37
Ru	B	Severe	>200	Moderate	9.62
CaE	B	Moderate	>200	Slight	8.12
RcF	D	Not rated	0	Not rated	7.88
PgD	A	Moderate	>200	Slight	7.46
Ba	D	Severe	0	Slight	6.70

Erosion factor K indicates the susceptibility of a soil to sheet and rill erosion by water and the values range from 0.02 to 0.69. Other factors affecting soil erosion being the same, the higher the value, the more susceptible the soil is to sheet and rill erosion by water. Based on erosion factor - K, all soils have low susceptibility to sheet and rill erosion by water (Table 3). However, some of the areas rated as less susceptible to erosion based on erosion factor – K may also have soil erosion potential due to steep slope gradient, shallow restrictive layer, and/or high runoff potential areas.

Depth to any restrictive feature is greater than 200 centimeters for all soils, except for Rockland and Pierian gravelly sandy loam soils that have zero-centimeter depth to the restrictive features due to exposed unweathered bedrock. Areas with shallow depth to a restrictive feature have Hydrologic Soil Group-D. Group-D soils have very low infiltration rate (high runoff potential) when thoroughly wet (Table 3). The natural drainage class is well and excessively drained and depth to water table is greater than 200 centimeters for almost all soils on the project sites.

Erosion Hazard rating for Roads/Trails for most sites is mainly moderate and slight, except for Rough broken land and Badland soils that have severe rating (Table 3). Erosion Hazard Rating for Roads/Trails indicates the hazard of soil loss from unsurfaced roads and trails and the ratings are based on soil erosion factor K, slope, and content of rock fragments. A rating of slight indicates that little or no erosion is likely; moderate indicates that some erosion is likely, that the roads or trails may require occasional maintenance, and that simple erosion-control measures are needed; and severe indicates that significant erosion is expected, that the roads or trails require frequent maintenance, and that costly erosion-control measures are needed. Soils with severe Erosion Hazard rating for Roads/Trails are located mainly some portions of route network located on Pass Creek area (Rout ID – CH: 2022, 2021, 2018, 2063, 2023, 1304, 1099, 1102, and 2056), Shavano area (Rout ID – CH: 1002, 1000, 4000, 7028, and 7027), and Misc. area (Rout

ID: County Road CH5022, CH: 6018, 5003, 5036, 5037, 5038, 5006, and 5007). Severe rating occurred on Rough broken land (Ru) and Badland (Ba) soil types (Table1).

Soil rutting hazard for most sites is mainly slight and moderate (Table 3). The ratings indicate the hazard of surface rut formation. Soil displacement and puddling (soil deformation and compaction) may occur simultaneously with rutting. Ratings are based on depth to a water table, rock fragments on or below the surface, depth to a restrictive layer, and slope. The hazard is described as slight, moderate, or severe. A rating of slight indicates that the soil is subject to little or no rutting. Moderate indicates that rutting is likely.

3.3.7.2. Reasonably Foreseeable Environmental Trends and Planned Actions in the Area

The Chaffee County Camping and Travel Management Plan would establish a designated route network and a Camping Management Plan for the entire planning area. The proposed actions also include installations of new routes, designation of existing routes, closure and classification of routes, implementation of campsite designation and consideration of adding new sites if conditions. Soil erosion, roads, grazing, drought, recreation activities, and development of private lands impacted soil health in the watersheds. A continuing travel management actions, which includes monitoring road and campsite maintenance would improve the condition of the watersheds by reducing impacts due to soil erosional sediment transport to nearby streams.

3.3.7.3. Affected Environment

The environmental effect analysis for alternatives D, B, and C is based on Table 4. These alternatives have various route-miles for various route management use as well as open and closed routes (Table 4).

Table 4 Types of route designation by alternatives and area name.

Alternate B					
Sub-unit Name	Admin/Authorized Use Only	Closed	Limited by Seasonal Use	Open/Open with Management	Total
Misc Lands	3.83	4.50	0.67	0.05	9.04
Pass Creek	11.86	1.71	0.38	0.00	13.94
Shavano	11.74	7.59	0.00	1.46	20.79
Sub-total	27.43	13.79	1.04	1.51	43.77
Alternate C					
Sub-unit Name	Admin/Authorized Use Only	Closed	Limited by seasonal use	Open/Open with Management	Total
Misc Lands	3.77	1.99	0.67	2.61	9.04
Pass Creek	9.95	1.04	0.00	2.96	13.94
Shavano	1.47	5.87	0.00	13.95	21.29
Sub-total	15.18	8.90	0.67	19.52	44.27
Alternate D					
Sub-unit Name	Admin/Authorized Use Only	Closed	Limited by Seasonal Use	Open/Open with Management	Total

Misc Lands	4.89	3.11	0.67	0.37	9.04
Pass Creek	10.06	1.58	0.00	2.30	13.94
Shavano	1.79	6.49	4.72	8.29	21.29
Sub-total	16.74	11.18	5.39	10.96	44.27

3.3.7.4. Effects of Alternative D (Proposed Action)

Direct and Indirect Effects: Alternative D (Proposed Action) includes 10.96 miles of potential routes to be open/open with management and 16.74 miles of admin/authorized use routes are proposed. Most of the open routes are proposed on Shavano area. This alternative has the highest route-miles (5.39 miles) for limited by seasonal use, compared to the other alternatives (Table 4). Approximately 11.18 miles of closed routes, which is higher than alternative C (8.9 miles) but lower than alternative B (13.79 miles) are proposed. Most of the routes already exist on the ground with an old road system and would primarily be rebuilt in portions or brought up to maintenance standards. The additional miles of BLM routes in Alternative D are distributed across the three watersheds but mostly located within Trout Creek-Arkansas River and South Arkansas River watersheds. Most of the new BLM routes are not located on soils with severe erosion hazard rating for roads and trails, except few portions of routes (Route ID: CH-1002 and 140).

Existing routes and campground areas are unvegetated and compacted features that cross the landscape for different modes of travel. Slight changes are proposed under the alternatives, and a base motorized use system exists across the alternatives. In general, trail and motorized routes use on BLM lands can contribute to site disturbances that could affect soil resources when soil related design features are not implemented by the BLM or when regulations are not followed by the public. Improperly constructed roads and poor road maintenance can increase the risk of erosion, and slope failure endangering the health of watersheds.

Soils outside the road/trail prism may be affected by erosion, leading to decreases in soil productivity for areas designated for other uses beyond the network of routes and campground areas. Localized direct and indirect effects to soils from BLM routes and campground areas are expected to continue. Most routes are designed to limit erosion and sedimentation. However, lack of maintenance in some areas leads to rutting and loss of surfacing, as well as increased erosion and sedimentation. Primitive two track routes have little engineering and are prone to rutting and erosion if not maintained regularly. Proposed routes under this alternative may have differing levels of use, but the travel way is usually bare and compacted with the risk of accelerated erosion and sedimentation as well.

Decommissioning or closing BLM routes (11.18 miles) under this alternative can reduce erosion risk to the entire route area. Soils in and around routes can slowly re-vegetate, decreasing the ability of water to detach soil particles and destabilize slopes and move sediment. Some of the closed routes are located on soils with severe erosion hazard rating for roads/trails. Differences in effects from route closure between Alternatives D, B, and C are negligible, though these closures are expected to have beneficial effects at the local (and potentially watershed) scale.

Similar to the effects expected from route closure, additional seasonal restrictions would likely benefit soil resources at a local or watershed level, and soil stability is expected to improve on vulnerable route segments under a seasonal restriction.

Construction activities associated with route/campground development, expansion, maintenance, and upgrade would require excavation, grading, and associated soil disturbance. These activities would result in soil displacement, soil horizon mixing, disturbance, vegetation removal, compaction, and increased potential for surface runoff, erosion, and sediment delivery. Some of these activities would occur within previously disturbed areas, but some of the work would occur in areas of undisturbed soils. Erosion can be severe when soil-surface horizons are lost, and long-term soil productivity is decreased. Soil contamination would also occur due to machinery involved with construction activities that may deposit small amounts of Petro-hydrocarbons onto soils through equipment failure or normal operations. Exposed soil material during construction would be subject to erosion until stabilized or revegetated and this condition will be worse at moderately steep or steeper slopes. Planned use of temporary erosion-control measures would reduce the potential for short-term erosion and soil loss during construction. Routes designated as Admin/authorized use would generally be expected to have decreased use and thereby retain vegetative cover to a degree that would enhance soil stability. The impact on soils would be short-term, moderate, and adverse from route and campground construction disturbances.

Impacts on soil resources would continue at a reduced degree after completion of new route and campground construction activities due to use and maintenance of new and existing routes and campsites. Soil erosional processes in the project and downslope areas, including surface and channel erosion from runoff would continue after new route construction and campground development activities. Soil erosion from runoff events and soil compaction near campsites would continue, resulting in increased runoff that further contributes to soil erosion. Continued erosion and soil loss would reduce soil productivity, which would affect existing vegetation and any revegetation efforts. In general, adverse impacts on site soil resources would be minimal with little substantial change in topography or impact on important soil features or processes. A long-term beneficial effect on soils would occur from drainage improvements, road reconfiguration, and route/campsite layout improvements that reduce erosion and soil loss.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: The design and construction of all facilities should employ soil erosion and sediment control measures to prevent possible accelerated surface, rill, and gully erosion and subsequent water quality impacts. Implement routine road maintenance practices to avoid making windrows with the soils once grading activities are complete and use any excess soils on site to raise and shape the road surface. Use the applicable recreation planning process to develop measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to soil resource during recreation activities. Identify areas where the adverse effects of recreational use to soil health and land cover condition outweigh the benefits and select site locations for recreation facilities that avoid or minimize the potential for adverse effects to soil health. Design recreation sites to limit the amount of exposed or disturbed soil at any one time to the minimum necessary to complete construction operations. Plan, develop and implement a post-construction site vegetation plan using suitable species.

3.3.7.5. Effects of Alternative C

Direct and Indirect Effects: Alternative C includes 19.52 miles of potential routes to be open/open with management and 15.18 miles of admin use routes are proposed. Most of the open routes are proposed on Shavano area. This alternative has the least route-miles (0.67 miles) proposed for limited seasonal use, compared to Alternatives D (5.39 miles) and Alternative B (1.04 miles). Approximately, 8.90 miles of closed routes, which is less than alternative D (11.18 miles) and B (13.79 miles), are proposed (Table 4).

This alternative proposes the least number of route closure and admin/authorized use routes and would likely to have less beneficial effects to increasing soil stability when compared with Alternatives D and C, though the extent of such effects is negligible (Table 4). The beneficial effect of Alternative C is the same as Alternative D but slightly lower than that of Alternative B because there is an increase in the amount of total proposed routes (44.27 miles) compared to Alternative B (43.77 miles). As Alternative D, Alternative C is also expected to improve the function and viability of the soil resources due to designation of routes for admin/authorized use only, closed, and limited by seasonal use. In general, differences in effects between all the alternatives are negligible, though Alternatives D and B are expected to have beneficial effects due to more route closures and admin/authorized use routes are proposed compared to Alternative C.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: The same Protective/Mitigation Measures as indicated under Alternative D will be applied.

3.3.7.6. Effects of Alternative B

Direct and Indirect Effects: Alternative B includes the highest length of (27.43 miles) of authorized/admin use routes and the least millage (1.51 miles) of potential routes to be open/open with management are proposed, compared to Alternative D and C. Most of the open routes are proposed on Shavano area. This alternative has lesser route-miles (1.04 miles) proposed for limited seasonal use, compared to Alternatives D (5.39 miles). Approximately 13.79 miles of closed routes, which is higher than alternative D (11.18 miles), are also proposed (Table 4).

This alternative proposes the highest number of route closure overall, and the highest percentage of admin/authorized use only routes and would likely have the most beneficial effects to increasing soil stability when compared with Alternatives D and C though the extent of such effects is negligible (Table 4). The beneficial effects of Alternative B are slightly lower because there is a decrease in the amount of total proposed routes (43.77 miles) compared to Alternative D (44.27 miles). As Alternative D, Alternative B is also expected to improve the function and viability of the soil resources due to designation of routes for authorized use only, closed, and limited by seasonal use. In general, differences in effects between all the alternatives are negligible, though Alternatives D and B are expected to have beneficial effects due to more route Closures are proposed compared to Alternative C.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: The same Protective/Mitigation Measures as indicated under Alternative D will be applied.

3.3.7.7. Effects of Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

Direct and Indirect Impacts: No new disturbance to soils resources would be introduced under the No Action Alternative, except the ongoing activities needed to maintain existing routes recreation campgrounds sites. Soil erosional processes in the campground and downstream lands would remain similar to historical conditions, including continued surface and channel erosion from runoff. Soil erosion from runoff events would continue to occur without improvements to surface drainage in the campground. Soil compaction near campsites would remain, resulting in increased runoff, which further contributes to soil erosion. Continued erosion and soil loss would reduce soil productivity, which would affect existing vegetation and any revegetation efforts. The no action alternative would have a long-term minor adverse effect on soils resources from continued erosion related to insufficient route designation and inadequate campsite capacity.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: No protective/Mitigation measures are required except the ongoing activities that require application erosion-control measures to maintain existing campground roads, campground sites, and operations to reduce impacts and protect soil resources from erosion.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Not required

3.3.8. Issue Statement #8

How would the changes in travel management and the designation of routes, including decommissioning and seasonal closures impact water resources under Proposed Action (Alternative D) and other alternatives?

3.3.8.1. Affected Environment:

The groundwater and surface water data, described in this section, is available in the BLM GIS hydrology database. The Project Area drains to waterways within the Clear Creek-Arkansas River (HUC 10: 1102000104), South Arkansas River (HUC 10: 1102000106), and Trout Creek-Arkansas River (HUC 10: 1102000107) watersheds and about 10.1% of these watersheds is on BLM land. Approximately 65.6% USFS lands is located within the watersheds. The rest 21.1% and 3.2% are Private and State lands, respectively. Elevation within the watersheds ranges from approximately 7,100 feet in the southeastern portion of Trout Creek-Arkansas River watershed (at the outlet of Arkansas River) to over 13,900 feet in northeast part of the Clear Creek-Arkansas River watersheds. Precipitation varies widely with elevation. Lower areas of the watershed receive about 9 inches and high elevation areas receive about 37 inches of precipitation. The network route and campground areas receive between 13 and 17 inches of precipitation.

Approximately, 51 miles of Arkansas River is located within the Clear Creek-Arkansas River and Trout Creek-Arkansas River watersheds, while about 24.56 miles of South Arkansas River is located within the other South Arkansas River. All streams within the project area drain into Arkansas River. Several major streams are situated within the watersheds (Table 5).

Table 5 Major streams within the watersheds

Clear Creek-Arkansas River watershed		Trout Creek-Arkansas River watershed		South Arkansas River watershed	
Name	Miles	Name	Miles	Name	Miles
Arkansas River	21.37	Arkansas River	29.72	South Arkansas River	24.56
Clear Creek	13.38	Browns Creek	15.28	Poncha Creek	15.61
Pine Creek	11.83	Trout Creek	9.71	North Fork South Arkansas River	12.25
Fourmile Creek	9.96	Squaw Creek	9.01	Little Cochetopa Creek	11.30
Frenchman Creek	7.23	Dry Creek	7.12	Silver Creek	9.40
Three Elk Creek	6.42	Maxwell Creek	6.35	Green Creek	8.62
North Fork Clear Creek	6.15	Little Browns Creek	5.70	Pass Creek	7.70
Cache Creek	5.93	Threemile Creek	4.71	Cree Creek	5.18
South Fork Clear Creek	5.92	Gas Creek	3.30	Middle Fork South Arkansas River	4.97
Lake Fork	5.78	Little Cottonwood Creek	2.10	Grays Creek	4.91
Morrison Creek	4.92	Cottonwood Creek	1.98	Willow Creek	4.18
Sevenmile Creek	4.16	Ute Creek	1.82	Starvation Creek	3.79
Other small streams	30.80	Other small streams	1.62	Other small streams	33.66

Based on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Water Quality Control Commission (2021) impaired water listing, none of the streams or other water bodies within the watersheds are listed under the 303(d) impaired or Colorado's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) list. BLM follows federal, state, and local water quality regulations and provisions. Section 404 permits should be obtained from the Army Corps of Engineers before any work is permitted in perennial stream channels.

None of the routes, located on BLM land, intersect perennial streams. However, most of the routes cross ephemeral deranges at several points. Routes that are located within 100-year floodplains were analyzed and none of the routes intersect with the 100-year floodplains within BLM land. However, County roads (CH: 2000 and 2002) located on Pass Creek area (two miles of Green Creek and Pass Creek) are within 300ft stream buffer. In addition, about 2.6 miles of Arkansas River and small segments of other perennial streams are also located within 300ft buffer of county road (CH5022).

About 189 square miles of major alluvial aquifers (Arkansas River and South Arkansas River aquifers) are located within the three watersheds along the Arkansas River (157 square miles) and South Arkansas River (32 square miles). Some of the Arkansas River alluvial aquifers are located underneath the routes that are mainly located within Clear Creek-Arkansas River watershed on miscellaneous Lands area. No major rock aquifer is located within the watersheds. Groundwater quality around the project area depends on the rate of groundwater flow and type of aquifer. Several wells (428), ditches (282), reservoirs (131), springs (104) and other structures are located within the watersheds. Over pumping of the aquifers or diversion of surface waters has resulted in surface water and groundwater depletion. Diversion ditches and wells are used to pump groundwater and surface water for domestic, agricultural, commercial, and other uses.

3.3.8.2. Reasonably Foreseeable Environmental Trends and Planned Actions in the Area

The Chaffee County Camping and Travel Management Plan would establish a designated route network and a Camping Management Plan for the entire planning area. The proposed actions include installations of new routes, designation of existing routes, closure and classification of routes, implementation of campsite designation and consideration of adding new sites as needed. Soil erosion and sediment deposition, roads, grazing, drought, recreation activities, and development of private lands impacted the watersheds. A continuing travel management actions, which includes monitoring road and campsite maintenance would improve the condition of the watersheds by reducing impacts due to soil erosional and sediment transport to nearby waterways and other waterbodies.

Environmental Effects

The environmental effect analysis for alternatives D, B, and C is based on Table 5 shown in the soils section. These alternatives have various route-miles for various route management use as well as open and closed routes (Table 5).

3.3.8.3. Effects of Alternative D (Proposed Action)

Direct and Indirect Effects: This alternative has the highest route-miles (5.39 miles) for limited by seasonal use, compared to the other alternatives. Approximately 11.18 miles of closed routes, which is higher than alternative C (8.9 miles) but lower than alternative B (13.79 miles) are proposed. Most of the routes already exist on the ground with an old road system (Table 5). New routes/campground development, expansion, and upgrade include a mix of new roads and parking areas, and campground facilities. The primary impacts to surface water quality from roads, trails, and campground use and construction activities result from erosion that increases sedimentation in nearby streams and other waterbodies. Soil erosion and transport from disturbed unvegetated areas has the potential to alter hydrologic regimes through effects to streamflow patterns, sediment loading, transport and deposition, channel morphology, and water quality. sediment contribution to the drainage during project construction would be minor in relation to the supply of sediment and erosion that naturally occurs in the watersheds. Increased sedimentation that affects the water quality of streams and other waterbodies, located at downstream of the project area, would occur because of the additional disturbance due to new and existing route/campsite developments. The net change in the impervious surface area would be minimal that would slightly increase surface runoff but with proposed route closure and designation efforts, the adverse effect on water resources would be minimized. Short-term moderate adverse effects on water quality and hydrologic process are possible during construction, but in the end, these effects would be minor and long-term due to proper application of design features.

Under this alternative, routes designated for closure would be decommissioned and rehabilitated. Restoration would allow for vegetation re-establishment over time, which would help to reduce sedimentation in adjacent waterways. It is expected that soil compaction would persist after restoration and hydrologic functions such as infiltration would not be fully restored on closed routes for years to come. Use of recreation routes and campground sites have the potential to impact surface waters from day-to-day operation of the recreation area. Some of these potential

impacts could include the introduction of oils, lubricants and/or fuels to surface waters, solid waste introduction from trash and debris not properly stored or disposed, improper management of septic waste, and black or grey water discharges to surface waters. These potential impacts can be mitigated by employing mitigation measures. With the use of mitigation measures operational impacts are expected to be minor. Clearing and grading of the Project Area would result in ground disturbance at shallow depths. However, ground disturbances are not anticipated to be at depths that would intersect groundwater or result in significant impacts to groundwater resources.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: keep parking lots clean of trash and debris and maintain adequate garbage pick-up services on-site. Keep camping sites adequately maintained, and ensure that no unpermitted discharges from campsites, restrooms or other facilities are being discharged to the land or to surface waters. Cease work during heavy rains and do not resume work until conditions are suitable for the movement of equipment and materials. Except for emergency repairs required to protect human life, limit work within drainages to dry periods to reduce effects on downstream water quality. Avoid/minimize the introduction of chemical contaminants associated with machinery (e.g., fuel, oil, and hydraulic fluid) used during recreation sites and project implementation.

3.3.8.4. Effects of Alternative C

This alternative has the least route-miles (0.67 miles) proposed for limited seasonal use, compared to Alternatives D (5.39 miles) and Alternative B (1.04 miles). Approximately, 8.90 miles of closed routes, which is less than alternative D (11.18 miles) and B (13.79 miles), are proposed (Table 5). Alternative C includes 19.52 miles of potential routes to be open/open with management (which is higher than Alternative D and B). In addition, this alternative has the lowest length (15.18 miles) of admin use routes compared to the other alternatives.

Direct and Indirect Effects: This alternative proposes the least number of route closure and admin/authorized use routes and would likely have less beneficial effects to reduce sediment transport to waterways and other waterbodies when compared with Alternatives D and B, though the extent of such effects is negligible (Table 5). The beneficial effect of Alternative C is the same as Alternative D but slightly lower than that of Alternative B because there is an increase in the amount of total proposed routes (44.27 miles) compared to Alternative B (43.77 miles). As Alternative D, Alternative C is also expected to improve the hydrologic function and water quality due to designation of routes for admin/authorized use, closed, and limited by seasonal use. In general, differences in effects between all the alternatives are negligible, though Alternatives D and B are expected to have beneficial effects due to more route closures and admin/authorized use routes are proposed compared to Alternative C.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: The same Protective/Mitigation Measures as indicated under Alternative D will be applied.

3.3.8.5. Effects of Alternative B:

This alternative proposes the highest number of route closure overall, and the highest percentage of admin/authorized use only routes and would likely have the most beneficial effects to increasing soil stability when compared with Alternatives D and C though the extent of such

effects is negligible. Approximately 13.79 miles of closed routes, which is higher than alternative D (11.18 miles), are also proposed (Table 5).

Direct and Indirect Effects: All potential direct impacts described under Proposed Action/Alternative D would be applicable for Alternative B. As Alternative D, Alternative B is also expected to improve the function and viability of the soil resources due to designation of routes for authorized use only, closed, and limited by seasonal use. In general, differences in effects between all the alternatives are negligible, though Alternatives D and B are expected to have beneficial effects due to more route Closures are proposed compared to Alternative C.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: All Protective/Mitigation Measures described under Proposed Action/Alternative B would be applicable for Alternative 1.

3.3.8.6. Effects of Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Watersheds, stream channels, and floodplains would remain in their existing condition and would be expected to display current trends. High rainfall events would continue to cause erosion and transport and deposition of sediment in the campground and downstream areas. In addition, Maintenance of the campground sites and roads would continue to have local long-term moderate adverse impacts on water resources.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: No protective/Mitigation measures are required except the ongoing activities that require application erosion-control measures to maintain existing campground roads, campground sites, and operations to reduce impacts and protect water resources.

3.3.9. Issue Statement #9

What is the impact of the alternatives for camping management on increasing wildfire potential/risk?

3.3.9.1. Affected Environment

Fire can affect all aspects of the environment. It not only has impacts on other facets of public land management, but it can directly impact adjacent landowners as well. Even if the first order fire effects (the combustion of vegetation and other material) do not immediately affect public land management or adjacent landowners, second order fire effects (e.g., erosion, flooding, etc.) can. This is why there is so much concern about wildfire and the activities that can cause them. More than 80% of the wildfires in the United States are caused by humans, and local residents get weary when there is an increase in human activities on public lands (i.e., campfires) that can result in destructive wildfires.

3.3.9.2. Reasonably Foreseeable Environmental Trends and Planned Actions in the Area

The planning area has already seen a dramatic increase in recreational use in recent years. This recreational use is only predicted to increase in the foreseeable future. Campfires are synonymous with public land recreation and specifically camping. The more people camping

generally means the more campfires there are. The more campfires there are, the higher the probability of a campfire escaping and causing a wildfire. Unregulated, the public has and could continue to camp wherever they want. They in turn build campfires wherever they want, often doing so in undesirable locations that have a higher probability of causing a wildfire.

3.3.9.3. Effects of Alternative D (Preferred Alternative)

Under this action, designated routes would be created, and designated camp sites will be identified along these routes. This would allow greater control for where people camp and make patrolling these areas easier. This plan also includes the installation of permanent campground grade fire rings. These fire rings are constructed with steel and are anchored to the ground to prevent people from being able to move them to another location. The flammable vegetation around the perimeter of the fire rings would then be cleared a sufficient distance. In addition, agency implemented fire restrictions would still apply at these designated dispersed campsites. These measures should greatly reduce the wildfire risk from an escaped campfire in the planning area.

3.3.9.4. Effects of Alternative C

The wildfire mitigation advantages for this action are the same as Alternative D, as the management actions are the same.

3.3.9.5. Effects of Alternative B

The wildfire mitigation advantages for this action are similar to Alternative D, as the management actions are the similar. It can be assumed that with fewer designed campsites there would be fewer campfires on the landscape at any given time.

3.3.9.6. Effects of Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

Under this action, the public would continue to camp in dispersed locations wherever they choose. They would then continue to have campfires wherever they want as well. A continual increase in recreation combined with unregulated travel and camping will only increase the likelihood of human caused wildfires in the planning area.

4. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1. List of Preparers

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Signed
Forrest Cook	Air Resource Specialist	Air Resources / GHGs / Noise	8/8/2022
Rebecca M. Bruno	Lead Land Surveyor, RMD	Cadastral Survey	8/31/2022
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources	7/21/22
Bill Stevens	Economist	Economics	8/19/2022
Bill Stevens	Economist	Environmental Justice	8/19/2022

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Signed
Jeff Williams	Range Specialist	Farmlands, Prime and Unique, Range Management, Vegetation	8/25/2022
Matt Norden	Asst. Fire Management Officer	Fire/Fuels	8/27/2022
Jeremiah Moore	Forester	Forest Management	7/21/2022
Andrew Laca	Natural Resources Specialist	Fluid Minerals	9/7/2022
Stephanie Carter	Geologist	Geology/ Minerals; Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	9/7/2022
Veronica Vogan	Realty Specialist	Lands and Realty	06/30/2022
Joshua Broussard	Paleontologist	Paleontology	9/7/2022
Kalem Lenard	Assistant Field Manager	Recreation	9/6/2022
Kalem Lenard	Assistant Field Manager	Recreation: Visual Resources	9/6/2022
Kalem Lenard	Assistant Field Manager	Recreation: Wilderness Characteristics	9/6/2022
Kalem Lenard	Assistant Field Manager	Recreation: WSAs, ACECs, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Other	9/6/2022
Negussie Tedela	Hydrologist	Soils	8/25/2022
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist	Tribal Concerns	7/21/22
Negussie Tedela	Hydrologist	Water Quality, Surface, and Ground	8/25/2022
Aaron Richter	Fisheries Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian, Wildlife: Aquatic, Invasive Plants	8/24/22
David McNitt	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife: Migratory Birds	8/20/22
David McNitt	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife: T&E, Sensitive Species	8/20/22
David McNitt	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife: Terrestrial	8/20/22
Stephanie Carter	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	9/8/2022

4.2. Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted

BLM consulted the following tribes for the undertaking: Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Comanche Tribe of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux, Eastern Shoshone, Jicarilla Apache Nation, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Northern Ute Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Pawnee Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Southern Ute Tribe, Standing Rock Lakota Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. No tribes identified any concerns (see Report CR-RG-22-056 NA).

4.3. References

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APPENDIX A

FIGURES

- 1 – Burmac Area Map
- 2 – Fourmile Area Map
- 3 – Hecla Area Map
- 4 – Misc Lands Alternative B Map
- 5 – Misc Lands Alternative C Map
- 6 – Misc Lands Alternative D Map

APPENDIX B

MATRICES

1 – Burmac Matrix

2 – Fourmile Matrix

3 – Hecla Matrix

4 – Misc Lands Matrix

5 – Pass Creek Matrix

6 – Shavano Matrix