



Uncompahgre Field Office Plan Resource Management Plan Amendment

US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

January 2024

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

Project Overview

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued the Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision in April 2020 and received three lawsuits challenging the decision. In spring 2022, the BLM entered into a settlement agreement in which the agency agreed to initiate two plan amendment efforts in response to issues identified in the lawsuits: a statewide RMP amendment for big game and a rangewide RMP amendment for Gunnison sage-grouse. Both planning efforts are currently underway. In summer 2022, the BLM entered into settlement agreements on the remaining two lawsuits stipulating that the BLM would initiate an RMP amendment within 60 days of the Notice of Availability for whichever of the two initial planning efforts occurs later. In response to the terms, the BLM published the Notice of Intent for the Uncompahgre Field Office RMP Amendment in the Federal Register on January 5, 2024.

The BLM needs to undertake this planning process to fulfill its responsibilities under the settlement agreements that resolved litigation challenging the 2020 Uncompahgre Field Office Approved RMP. The purpose of this effort is to consider different management of oil and gas, lands with wilderness characteristics, and previously proposed and analyzed areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) within the specific scope described in the settlement agreements.

What are Lands with Wilderness Characteristics?

Wilderness characteristics are considered a resource or value of BLM-administered lands. The BLM is required to inventory BLM-administered lands for wilderness characteristics, which include size, naturalness, outstanding opportunities for either solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation, and supplemental values. Policy guidance is provided by [BLM Manual 6310](#), Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory on BLM Lands, and [BLM Manual 6320](#),

Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the BLM Land Use Planning Process.

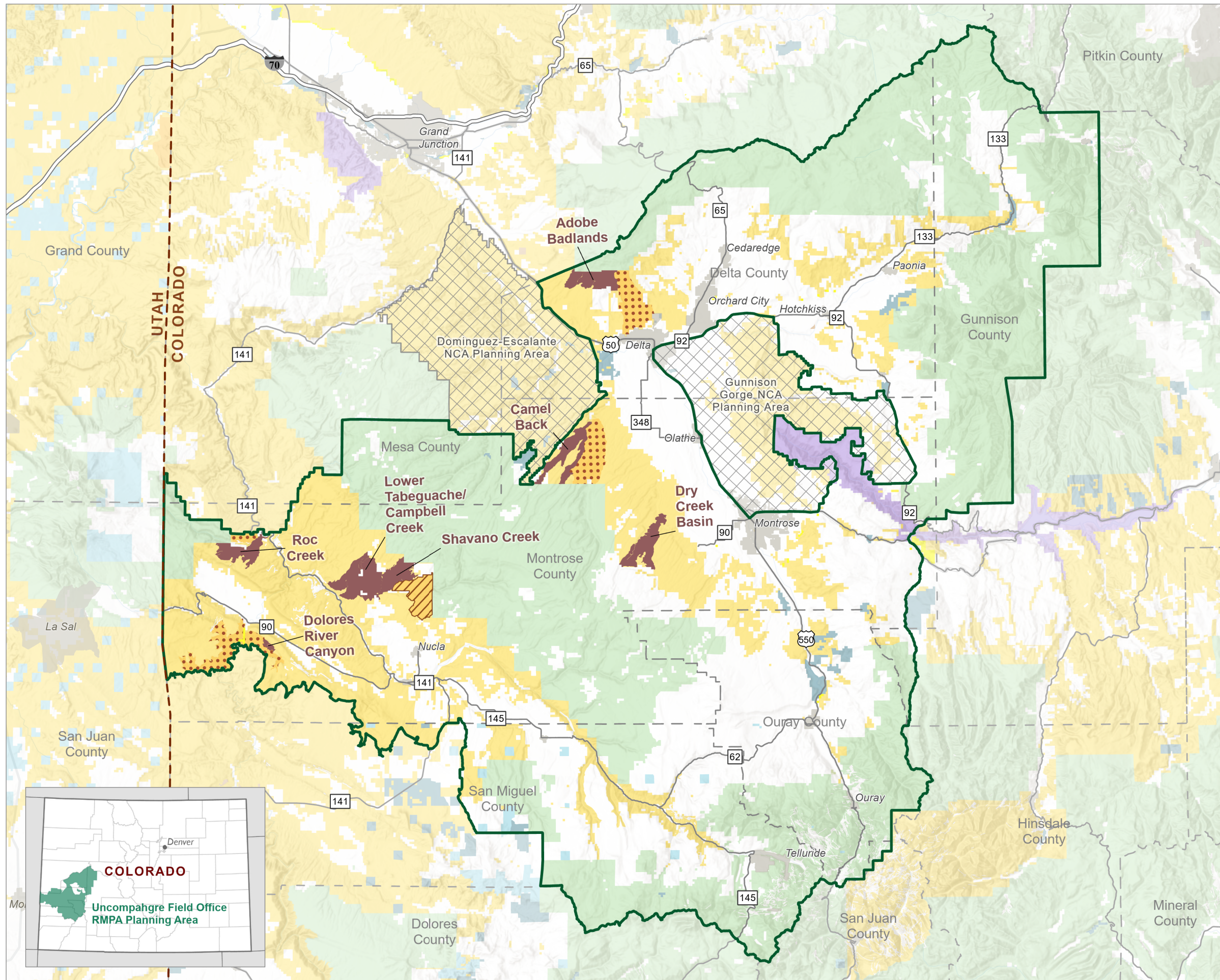
Current Conditions

During the 2019 RMP revision process, the BLM completed an inventory of BLM-administered lands within the decision area to determine whether they possess wilderness characteristics. The BLM's most recent inventory of lands with wilderness characteristics includes areas identified through internal inventory and monitoring as well as monitoring information submitted by wilderness advocacy groups. Of the eight areas identified through the inventory, seven were found to possess wilderness characteristics (see Figure 1, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics). The Uncompahgre Planning Area Wilderness Characteristics Inventory: 2015 Update report provides more detail, including maps of each inventoried area. The 2015 inventory report is available on the UFO RMP Amendment project website: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2026528/510>

Decisions to be Made

In accordance with the terms of the settlement agreements, the BLM will consider an alternative that would manage lands with wilderness characteristics as proposed under Alternative B of the 2019 Proposed RMP/Final EIS. In addition to the settlement alternative, the BLM could formulate alternatives for management of lands with wilderness characteristics. Additional alternatives identified through this planning process must fall within the scope of the settlement agreements and thus are limited to oil and gas leasing, ACECs previously analyzed in the 2019 Proposed RMP/Final EIS, and lands with wilderness characteristics previously analyzed in the 2019 Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

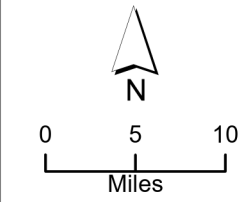
As it becomes available, updated information and documents related to the Uncompahgre Field Office RMP Amendment/EIS will be provided on the project website: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2026528/510>



**Figure 1
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

- Inventoried land with wilderness characteristics
- Tabeguache area
- Wilderness study area (WSA)
- Uncompahgre Field Office RMPA Amendment planning area
- BLM-administered lands outside the planning area

- Surface Management**
- Bureau of Land Management
 - US Forest Service
 - National Park Service
 - Bureau of Reclamation
 - Other Federal
 - State
 - County and local areas
 - Private
 - Private, Incorporated place



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