

Public Scoping Information

Grand Hogback Trail System Proposal

PROPOSED ACTION

Trails. The Proposed Action would:

- 1) designate 18.05 miles of new mechanized routes;
- 2) designate 0.55 miles of new hiking and equestrian trails; and
- 3) reroute 0.144 miles of the Rifle Arch hiking trail (see map below).

Under the Proposed Action the use of Class I, II, and III e-bikes would be prohibited. Horses and hikers would be allowed to use any designated route year-round.

Parking. The Proposed Action would authorize construction of a graveled parking area near the existing roadside parking but on the north side of the Highway 13 fence. This would move parking farther off of Highway 13 and allow visitors to park, turn around and exit in a safer manner. The specific parking area design will occur subsequent to it being authorized in this analysis.

Wintering Big Game. As mitigation to protect wintering wildlife, mechanized travel on these routes would be prohibited from December 1 through April 15. BLM would reserve the option to open these routes earlier than April 15. An earlier opening would be evaluated on a yearly basis. An earlier opening could occur if 1) the routes are dry and 2) in consultation with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) it wouldn't severely impact wintering wildlife.

Timeframes. Trail construction would be anticipated to begin in the spring/summer of 2020 and could continue for several years as funding and volunteer labor become available. The trail construction would generally be phased from the south to the north.

Additional Information. The Proposed Action is part of a larger effort to reduce recreation use conflicts in the Fravert Road area and rehabilitate over 6 miles of unauthorized routes that were constructed west of Fravert Road and outside of the open Hubbard Mesa OHV Area. It is believed that the construction of a planned trail system would offer a nearby high quality biking area as opposed to the user created routes west of the Fravert Road.

The Rifle Area Mountain Bike Organization, the Town of Rifle and Garfield County are partners in helping BLM resolve these issues. They have offered assistance to the BLM in reducing conflicts in the Fravert Road area and the construction of the Grand Hogback trail system.

PROJECT DESIGN FEATURES

- **Trail Standards.** The proposed mountain bike routes would have a tread width of 18-36 inches and a clearance corridor of 5 feet wide by 8 feet high. Native materials in the trail corridor would be preferentially used for route construction (where available) and will incorporate switchbacks, berms, rolling dips, armoring, and other standard trail-design practices to minimize erosion and maintenance needs. These standards can be found in

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International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), BLM, and United States Forest Service (USFS) trail manuals.

- Grade. The average mountain bike trail grade would be 10% or less. Grade reversals, rolling dips, and/or appropriately spaced water bars would be used to minimize soil loss and erosion. On the proposed equestrian trails several areas exist that exceed this grade guideline. In the first year or two after designation, these areas will be evaluated by BLM and its partners to determine if small reroutes are needed. If it is determined small reroutes are needed to meet sustainable grades they would be authorized at that time.
- Slope. A 5% out-slope would be used where appropriate to prevent water from running down the trail.
- Birds of Conservation Concern. If motorized trail building equipment such as a mini trail dozer is used to construct trail, surface-disturbing activities would not be initiated between May 15 and July 15 unless surveyed and cleared by the CRVFO wildlife biologist or a contracted biologist to protect active nests for birds of conservation concern. CPW requested that raptor surveys be conducted to ensure that nesting raptors are not affected by trail construction or new routes. The first year of trail building would involve trails that are closer to existing development and farther from potential nesting habitat. Therefore raptor surveys would not be required prior to the first year of trail construction. Raptor surveys would be required for all construction after the first year. If nests are found, the BLM biologist and CPW District Wildlife Manager would determine the applicable timing limitations and/or if new trails need to be rerouted to avoid the nest(s).
- Noxious Weeds. The community partners would be the primary parties responsible for weed spraying. The trails would be monitored for noxious weeds. If monitoring indicates weeds are present, then spraying and reseeding with a native seed mix will be used to treat weed infestations. All tools and equipment used for trail construction would be cleaned prior to entering the project area to prevent the introduction of weeds.
- Cultural Resources. If subsurface cultural values are uncovered during operations, all work in the vicinity of the resource would cease and the BLM authorized officer would be notified immediately. The operator would take any additional measures requested by the BLM to protect discoveries until they could be adequately evaluated by the permitted archaeologist. Within 48 hours of the discovery, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and consulting parties would be notified of the discovery and consultation would begin to determine an appropriate mitigation measure. The BLM, in cooperation with the operator, would ensure that the discovery is protected from further disturbance until mitigation is completed. Operations could resume at the discovery site upon receipt of written instructions and authorization by the authorized officer.
- Native American Human Remains. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder must notify the authorized officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural

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patrimony on federal land. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (c) and (d), the holder must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery that could adversely affect the discovery. The holder shall make a reasonable effort to protect the human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony for a period of thirty days after written notice is provided to the authorized officer, or until the authorized officer has issued a written notice to proceed, whichever occurs first. On the proposed equestrian trails several sections exist that exceed this grade guideline. Those areas will be evaluated in coming years and if small reroutes are needed to reach a more sustainable grade they would be authorized in a subsequent NEPA document.

- Paleontological Resources. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for disturbing or collecting vertebrate or other scientifically-important fossils, collecting large amounts of petrified wood (over 25lbs./day, up to 250lbs./year), or collecting fossils for commercial purposes on public lands.

If any paleontological resources are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the applicant or any of his agents would be required to stop work immediately at that site, immediately contact the BLM Paleontology Coordinator or Recreation Planner, and would make every effort to protect the site from further impacts, including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage. Work could not resume at that location until approved by the Authorized Officer. The BLM or designated paleontologist would evaluate the discovery and take action to protect or remove the resource within 10 working days. Within 10 days, the operator could be allowed to continue construction through the site, or will be given the choice of either (a) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for stabilizing the fossil resource in place and avoiding further disturbance to the fossil resource, or (b) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for mitigating impacts to the fossil resource prior to continuing construction through the project area.

- Long-term Maintenance. Long-term maintenance would be performed primarily by partners including Rifle Area Mountain Bike Organization, the Town of Rifle and Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association with assistance from the BLM.
- Visitor Information. Trail users would be informed of the trail work through press releases and signage.
- Long-Term Signage. Long-term signage would be installed by the partners with BLM assistance to help users have a better trail experience. These would include trail name signs and maps within the trail system and trailhead signs and/or kiosks at a to-be-constructed trailhead.
- Winter Closure. Partners would work with the BLM to install proper gates and signage. Motorized trail building equipment (e.g., mini trail dozer) would not be used during the winter closure period.

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NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The Grand Hogback trail system would not be constructed. The parking area would also not be expanded.

E-BIKE ALTERNATIVE(S)

On August 29, 2019, Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt issued Secretarial Order (SO) 3376 for the purpose of increasing recreational opportunities through the use of Electric Bikes (e-bikes). BLM offices have the authority to identify trails for e-bike use on BLM-managed lands. BLM will include alternative(s) that would analyze the use of Class I, II, and III e-bikes on the trail system.