

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Gunnison Field Office
DOI-BLM-CO-F070-2017-0012-EA**

DECISION RECORD

DECISION: It is my decision to implement a modified version of Alternative B. Specifically it is my decision to authorize Gunnison Trails to construct and maintain the following single track trails as depicted and described in the description of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative B):

- BLM managed portions Rasta Gulch Trail
- BLM managed portions of Cranor Hill Trail
- Chicken Scratch Trail
- Ridge Trail West Re-route
- Shoelace Trail
- North Woods Trails 1 & 2 including Ridge connectors
- South Rim Trail
- Music Rocks Trail
- Southern Cross Trail
- Tomichi Point Trail
- Midland Trail
- Broadcaster Trail

It is my decision not to authorize construction of 'Lost Sheep' conceptual trail at this time.

**Individual trail names may change.*

The actions included in Alternative B are described in the EA in section 2.0 Actions Common to Both Action Alternatives and in section 2.2 Description of Alternative B (BLM Preferred).

In the Preferred Alternative, all trails on BLM lands in the system will be subject to a closure period that mirrors the current shed antler season closure enforced by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to benefit wintering wildlife. **Shed antler season closure dates are January 1st through April 30th, and then from legal sunset to 10am daily May 1st through May 15th.** In all action alternatives, this closure period could be extended during severe winter years based on the presence and condition of wintering big game animals, and modified accordingly to reflect emergency changes to shed antler collection dates. The trail closure applies to mechanized uses. In severe winters resulting in exceptional hardship or stress on wintering animals, the project area may be closed to all entry.

This alternative will:

- Close BLM roads in the project area to motorized use (including over snow travel by tracked vehicles) from 1/1 - 4/30 to prevent disturbance to wintering deer and elk. The wintering wildlife motorized closure period of 1/1 – 4/30 overlaps with the previously

established Gunnison Sage-grouse motorized closure of 3/15 – 5/15, effectively closing the area to unauthorized motorized use from 1/1 – 5/15.

- Close BLM roads and trails to mechanized use (i.e. mountain bikes) from 1/1 – 4/30 to prevent disturbance to wintering deer and elk. Road and trail closures could begin as early as 12/1 and be extended past 4/30 based on the presence and condition of wintering animals in non-typical years. Trails will be closed to mechanized use when sufficient snow accumulates to: a.) impede mechanized travel, b.) displace big game animals (mule deer and elk) to their winter range; or January 1, whichever comes first.

Alternative B will additionally close the area and all trails surrounding Ridge Trail West (west of Signal Peak) seasonally for Gunnison Sage-grouse conservation. Ridge Trail West, Cranor Hill Trail, Shoelace Trail, Chicken Scratch Trail, and Rasta Gulch Trail will be closed **March 15th – May 15th to all uses** to prevent disturbance to Gunnison Sage-grouse during the lek season. This area closure will apply to BLM lands and will begin at the west entrance to Ridge Trail West (immediately North and East of the radio tower), to be bounded by the BLM boundary to the North, including Shoelace Trail, bounded by but not including BLM 3123 (Signal Peak Road) on the East, bounded by but not including BLM 3211 (powerline road) and the BLM boundary to the South.

To prevent disturbance to wintering wildlife and Gunnison Sage-grouse, dogs will be required to be on leash from 1/1 – 5/15.

All users will be encouraged to avoid road and trail use during wet conditions when damage to the tread surface is likely.

No grooming of winter routes is, or will be, authorized.

The area will be managed for day use, with **NO OVERNIGHT** camping except for the purposes of legal hunting during hunting season(s). BLM 3110 (Lost Canyon Road) and BLM 3107 (Cabin Creek Road) are excluded from these camping restrictions.

Under Alternative B, competitive events within the project area will be prohibited; other than those that are affiliated with WSCU or Gunnison school sponsored cross-country or mountain bike teams. These events will begin and end off of BLM managed lands. Under Alternative B, commercial guiding could occur. No commercial use or competitive events will be considered during established closure periods (wintering wildlife or Gunnison Sage-grouse; 1/1 – 5/15).

All new trails will be non-motorized. All forms of motorized travel, including e-bikes, will continue to be allowed on system roads. Per the Gunnison Basin Travel Management Plan, foot and horse use will continue to be allowed cross-country and on closed routes unless otherwise posted.

Under Alternative B, neighborhood impacts will be limited by encouraging trail access to the area via an improved trailhead located on WSCU property and other adjacent portals (WSCU, City, County) in the urban interface. BLM system roads in the project area will be maintained to their current standards. Secondary access points on BLM lands will have basic features to

contain resource impacts as well as adequate directional, regulatory, and informational signage. BLM will work with partners to ensure that trail, area, and seasonal closures are clearly marked.

RATIONALE: Alternative B provides for a wide spectrum of uses in the Signal Peak project area while creating a positive, healthy experience for the user. Alternative B minimizes visitor resource impacts and potential user conflict while protecting wintering wildlife and Gunnison Sage-grouse.

The importance of the Signal Peak area for wintering big game is well documented by the analysis. Implementation of this decision gives increased protection to wintering big game, notably by closing roads and trails to motorized and mechanized uses from January 1-April 30 each year.

The Signal Peak areas is an important area for Gunnison Sage Grouse. Implementation of this decision increases conservation measures for Gunnison Sage Grouse by implementing an area closure to protect lekking activity. Also, high use trails in brood rearing areas will be rehabilitated and rerouted to more sustainable locations.

The area has long been attractive to recreational users due to its proximity to communities. This decision provides a framework for increased sustainable recreation that meets the needs of a majority of current users.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the referenced environmental assessment (EA), and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was prepared. The Proposed Action implemented by the decision will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not necessary. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the proposal as detailed in the FONSI.

CONFORMANCE AND COMPLIANCE: The decision is subject to, has been reviewed for, and has been found to be in conformance with the Gunnison Resource Area Resource Management Plan, as amended (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3). The plan conformance review included consideration of Standard Management (pgs. 2-1 to 2-19), Management Unit Prescriptions (pgs. 2-19 to 2-39), and Standards for Public Land Health (pgs. 4-7). The decision is in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including the following:

- Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186
- Endangered Species Act
- Clean Air Act
- Executive Order 11988, Floodplains
- Clean Water Act
- Federal Noxious Weed Act and Executive Order 13112
- Executive Order 11990, Wetlands
- National Historic Preservation Act

- Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act
- RCRA and CERCLA
- SMCRA and Farmland Protection Policy Act
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- NEPA (as supported by the documentation of this environmental analysis)

MITIGATION MEASURES: Under Alternative B, trail construction will be authorized on an annual basis upon Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) to ensure protection of natural and cultural resources for each new trail segment. Maintenance of existing routes that will be incorporated into the travel system can occur upon issuance of this Decision to ensure public health and safety.

MONITORING / COMPLIANCE: Trails will be monitored for off-route impacts. The area will be monitored by agency staff and partners to prevent the distribution of noxious weeds and to ensure proper grazing management.

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: BLM considered three alternatives, one of which was the No Action alternative.

Alternative A - The Proposed Action is to construct a community/destination mountain bike optimized trail system accessible from the town of Gunnison as well as Western State Colorado University and outlying neighborhoods. The trail system would utilize 7.8 miles of existing system single-track trails as well as adopt, retrofit, or realign 7.7 miles of existing single-track routes. In addition to the existing routes, approximately 20 miles of new trails would be designed and constructed utilizing sustainable trail building techniques.

Alternative B incorporates many of the elements of the Proposed Action (as well as items common to all action alternatives identified in section 2.0), but with a focused reduction in trail miles and an enhanced seasonal closure to benefit wintering wildlife and Gunnison Sage-grouse. Alternative B recognizes that new trails will have some draw as a regional destination, but takes steps to preserve Community Trail System characteristics. Alternative B was developed with input from the following cooperating agencies: The City of Gunnison, Gunnison County, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Western State Colorado University.

The No Action Alternative maintains the existing condition of the Signal Peak project area. 7.7 miles of existing trails (Rasta Gulch, Cranor Hill, Chicken Scratch, Shoelace, North Woods 1 & 2, Lost Canyon, and Music Rocks) would be closed to mountain bikes. Per the Gunnison Basin Travel Management Plan, these routes would remain open to foot and horse traffic unless otherwise posted. These existing trails would remain in their current alignments and not be subject to maintenance. Existing seasonal closures would remain in place.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COMMENTS: The following Native American tribes were notified of the upcoming Signal Peak project via certified letter and map package in March of 2013, and at face to face meetings in October of 2014, April of 2015, April of 2016 and October of 2016: the Ute Indian Tribe of the Ouray and Uintah Reservation, the Southern Ute Indian

Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. They were asked to identify traditional cultural places or any other areas of traditional cultural importance that need to be considered within the area of potential effect. The BLM did not receive any comments or concerns from the three tribes during these meetings. During the most recent face to face meeting held in August of 2017, several concerns were raised by the Tribal members and these concerns are addressed in this EA.

A Public Meeting was held on April 27, 2017 to discuss the proposed action. BLM accepted public comments on the Proposed Action until May 22, 2017.

A second public meeting was held on January 30, 2018 to discuss alternatives, including a 'BLM Preferred Alternative'. BLM accepted public comments until February 16, 2018.

PROTEST AND APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES: This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4. Appeal and stay procedures are outlined in Form 1842-1, which is attached.

Notice of Appeal: Within 30 days of this notification ("date of service"), a Notice of Appeal must be filed in writing to the office that issued this decision (43 CFR 4.411 and 4.413):

Bureau of Land Management
Gunnison Field Office
210 West Spencer Ave, Suite A
Gunnison, CO 81230

At the same time, a copy of the Notice of Appeal must also be sent to:

Regional Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region
755 Parfet Street, Suite 151
Lakewood, Colorado 80215

Statement of Reasons: Within 30 days after filing the Notice of Appeal, you must also file a complete statement of the reasons why you are appealing. This must be filed with:

U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Hearings and Appeals
Interior Board of Land Appeals
801 N. Quincy Street, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22203.

If you fully stated your reasons for appealing when filing the Notice of Appeal, no additional statement is necessary (43 CFR 4.412 and 4.413).

Within 15 days after each document is filed, each adverse party named in the decision and the Regional Solicitor having jurisdiction over the State in which the appeal arose must be served a copy of: (a) the Notice of Appeal, (b) the Statement of Reasons, and (c) any other documents filed (see 43 CFR 4.413).

Within 15 days after any document is served on an adverse party, you must file proof of that service with the Interior Board of Land Appeals. This may consist of a certified or registered mail "Return Receipt Card" signed by the adverse party (see 43 CFR 4.401(c)).

Petition for a Stay: The decision becomes effective upon the expiration of the time allowed for filing an appeal unless a petition for a stay is timely filed together with a Notice of Appeal (43 CFR 4.21). If you wish to file a petition for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the IBLA, the petition for a stay must accompany your Notice Of Appeal (43 CFR 4.21 or 43 CFR 2804.1). Except as otherwise provided by law, or applicable regulation, guideline, or policy, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based upon the following standards:

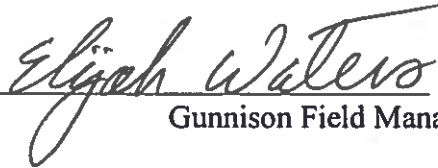
- the relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied;
- the likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits;
- the likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted; and
- whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the motion for stay must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer. Unless these procedures are followed, your appeal will be subject to dismissal (see 43 CFR 4.402).

NAME OF PREPARER: Jim Lovelace (Outdoor Recreation Planner)

DATE: 6/11/2018

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



Gunnison Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

6/20/18