



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area
2815 H Road
Grand Junction, Colorado 81506
www.blm.gov

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To Whom it May Concern:

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (MCNCA) is developing new management alternatives for the Colorado River Corridor through Ruby and Horsethief Canyons. I'd like to take a moment to explain why we are undertaking this analysis and how you can be involved.

MCNCA's Resource Management Plan (RMP) was approved in October 2004. The RMP directed BLM to "continue voluntary campsite reservation system at launch site as long as practical". As recreational floating of Ruby and Horsethief Canyons continues to increase in popularity, we've seen a significant increase in the amount of user conflict due to the voluntary system. For this reason, we are launching a study to determine the best course of action for managing river use. Options to consider may include a system that requires visitors to register and sign up for a campsite at the Loma boat launch.

MCNCA is also developing a fee proposal for the Colorado River Corridor for potential implementation in 2011. We hope you've noticed a lot of changes for the better along the corridor over the past few years as BLM river rangers have been working hard to improve campsites and ecological conditions. We've planted more than 150 new cottonwood trees over the past three years and are now protecting more than 400 cottonwoods throughout the river corridor. We've treated and removed more than 250 acres of invasive species. In 2008, BLM river rangers conducted more than 50 patrols of the river corridor and maintained a consistent presence at the Loma boat launch making visitor contacts. However, increased use of the area has caused additional impacts and damage to resources, including unauthorized campsites, trash and waste build up. By collecting a fair-value fee from visitors to this area we would be able to reduce resource damage and trash buildup and make even more improvements along the Colorado River, including increased river patrols, additional ecological restoration projects, and improvement of the Westwater take-out.

We recognize that there is legitimate debate about the extent to which recreation fees should cover the cost of recreation activities. A large portion of the cost of recreation activities on federal lands is paid through tax revenues. The concept behind recreation fees is that those who use particular services and facilities should pay a larger portion of the costs, rather than

require other taxpayers who never use the amenities to pay the entire bill. Congress recognized the responsibility of visitors to bear a greater portion of the cost when it established broad recreation fee authority in 1965 under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and in 1996 under the Recreation Fee Demo program.

MCNCA staff will be analyzing different alternatives throughout the 2009 season and we'd like you to participate in this process as much as possible. We'll have information posted at the Loma boat launch, Westwater take out, and on our website:

<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/mcnca.html>.

The McInnis Canyons NCA Advisory Council will host a public meeting on July 16th to discuss possible management alternatives and gather public input. This meeting will begin at 5pm in the Whitewater Room of the Two Rivers Convention Center in Grand Junction. For more information, please contact Outdoor Recreation Planner Matt McGrath at 970-244-3029 or via email at rubyhorsethief@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/ Katie A. Stevens

Manager, McInnis Canyons NCA