



DECISION RECORD

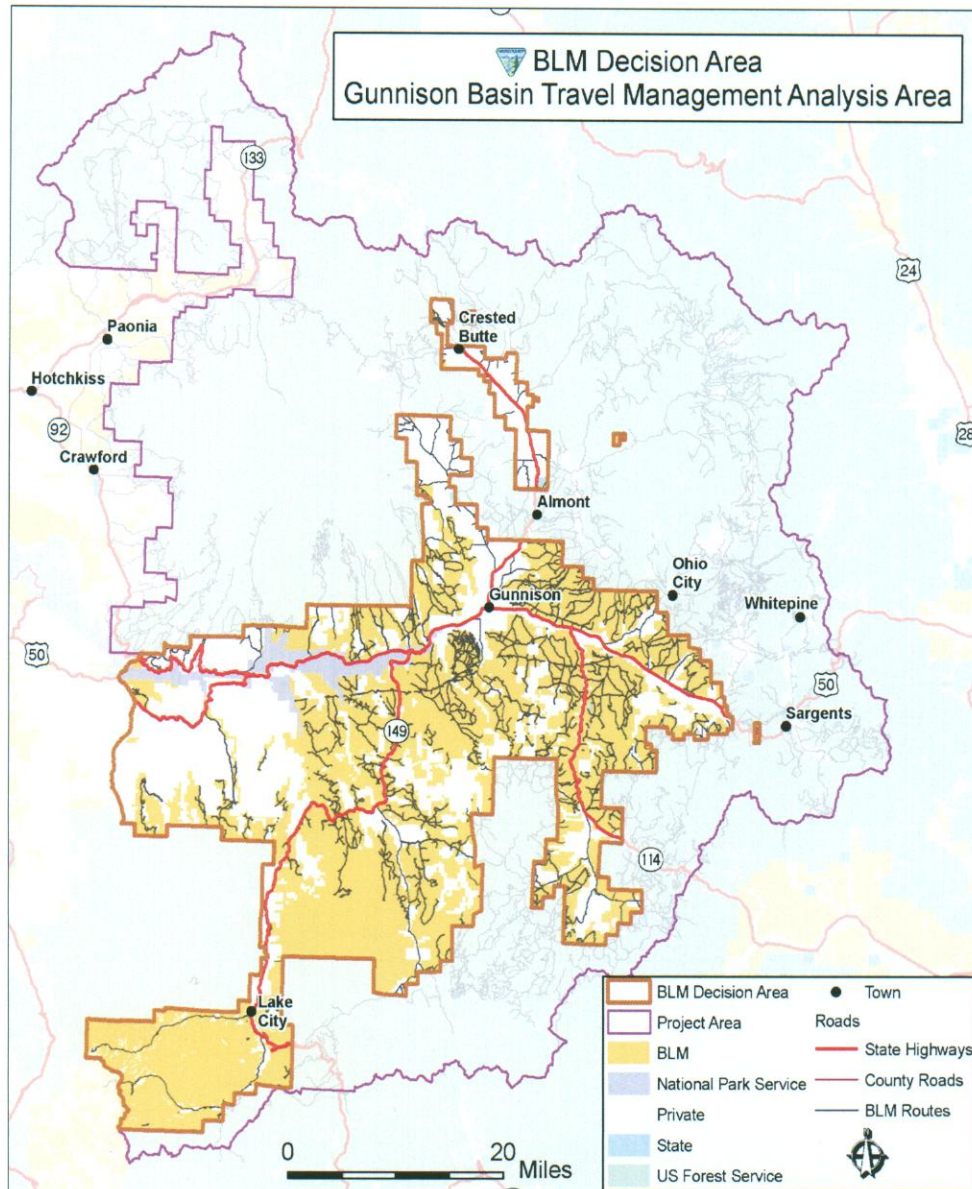
CO-160-2008-025-EIS

Gunnison Basin Federal Lands Travel Management

USDOI Bureau of Land Management
Gunnison Field Office

Gunnison, Montrose, Hinsdale and Saguache Counties, Colorado

June 28, 2010



1. INTRODUCTION: This document describes my decisions and supporting rationale concerning specific travel management implementation actions in the upper Gunnison Basin on land administered by the Bureau of Land Management. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed jointly with the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management and each agency is completing a separate decision record representing the lands each agency manages.

The BLM Record of Decision (ROD) document describes my decision as to which routes will be designated as the transportation system of routes open to public travel, the mode of travel for designated open routes, and specific restrictions regarding the season of use where appropriate on Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Gunnison Field Office. These decisions do not cover over-snow winter travel nor do they address travel needs in designated Wilderness Areas. This decision does not change previous NEPA decisions at Hartman Rocks Recreation Area or Alpine Triangle Recreation Management Area.

My decision advances goals and objectives defined in the February 1993 Gunnison Resource Area Management Plan (RMP) and are in conformance with:

1. BLM policy on Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV) use of public land as covered under Executive Order 11644 and Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 8340 0-5); and,
2. BLM Colorado guidance on *Comprehensive Travel Management Planning and OHV Designations* as defined under BLM Instruction Memorandum No. CO-2007- 020 (2/12/2007) and No. WO-2008-014.

Under these rules, any change to the designation of *areas* as Open, Limited, or Closed requires a Resource Management Plan (RMP) plan amendment and is subject to a public protest period and governor's consistency review whereas designation of roads and trails are considered implementation decisions and are subject to USDI appeal regulations via the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA).

Comments received by the public and interested parties during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) comment period were considered and evaluated during the process of completing the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) by revising, updating and adding the Preferred Alternative(Alternative 5) to the FEIS. The development of the FEIS included consideration of the Forest Service and BLM Preferred Alternative and identification of four other alternatives. These alternatives were identified pursuant to NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14(e)) for the FEIS. The public comments and responses to those comments are contained in an Appendix to the FEIS. The FEIS was open to public review for no less than 30 days before the RODs were completed by the Forest Service and BLM responsible officials. The public provided review and comments to the Forest Service and BLM managers before the final decisions were documented in the ROD.

2. BACKGROUND: Prior to this decision, the regulations regarding motorized travel were guided by the BLM's Transportation Plan (1980) and the Forest Service and BLM's Gunnison Travel Interim Restrictions Decision Notice (April 2001).

The final decisions resulting from the Gunnison Travel Interim Restrictions Environmental Assessment (EA) are documented in the Forest Service Decision Notice and Finding of No

Significant Impact (FONSI) (April 2001) and the BLM Decision Notice (April 2001) and corresponding FONSI. The EA and the Forest Service Decision are on the web at http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug/policy/travel_mgmt/gun/deis.shtml/, under "Travel Management," then "Gunnison." The BLM decision is available on request.

In the late 1990s, the Forest Service and BLM initiated a travel planning process that was expected to help stop unplanned user-created route proliferation, limit authorized travel to established roads and trails, and prohibit off-route, cross-country travel. Scoping letters, pursuant to agency procedures under NEPA, were sent to interest groups and the public outlining a proposal to restrict motorized and mechanized travel to existing routes and to prohibit cross-country or off-route travel of motorized or mechanized vehicles. Following scoping, the Forest Service and BLM jointly prepared an environmental assessment. The EA disclosed environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and alternatives and was released for public comment in August 2000.

Prior to the 2001 Interim Travel Decision, cross-country travel was allowed on many areas of federal land in the Gunnison Basin travel analysis area. The public could legally drive or ride motorized and mechanized vehicles cross-country, off established roads and trails. The Gunnison Interim Travel Restriction Decision restricted motorized and mechanized travel (wheeled-vehicles used for human transport) to established routes. Established routes are roads and trails recognized by the agencies as existing on the ground as of January 12, 2001 and receiving enough use to remain recognizable as a route. Some unplanned, user-created routes were included in the inventory of existing routes in 2001. These user-created routes were tracked for management purposes to fund maintenance, if needed, to correct resource damage, but no decision was made in 2001 about the need for or the appropriateness of their continued existence.

Prior to the 2001 Interim Travel Decision, the public could legally drive or ride motorized and mechanized vehicles cross-country, off established roads and trails. The only constraint was that such travel could not result in resource damage. Therefore, the majority of user-created routes established prior to 2001 were not considered illegal or unauthorized.

BLM Travel Management Direction

The 2001 Interim Travel Decision called for a future planning process to identify a specific travel system open to public travel. The BLM and USFS committed to designating routes open to public travel, designating the mode of travel for open routes, and identifying specific restrictions regarding the season of use where appropriate. The intent of the current BLM travel management planning effort is to move toward the management goals outlined in the 2001 Interim Travel Decision.

The National Management Strategy for Motorized OHV Use on Public Lands (2001) and Colorado's Final Recreation Guidelines for Managing Recreation to Meet Public Land Health Standards (2000) provide direction and outline a variety of management goals to provide opportunities for recreation activities while reducing the potential impacts of motorized and mechanized uses on other resources. These include:

- Eliminating or minimizing routes in wetland areas, riparian areas, and areas with erosive soils;
- Reducing stream crossings to the minimal number dictated by the topography in order to reduce sedimentation;

- Managing to promote the survival and health of native plants and animals, especially species that are endangered, threatened, or sensitive;
- Trying to protect against the establishment or spread of noxious weeds;
- Abandoning routes that are duplicative or unneeded;
- Identifying a system that is within the agency's ability to manage and maintain;
- Educating the public on how to operate vehicles on public land in a way that minimizes impacts to other resources;
- Building collaborative partnerships with individuals, groups, and other stakeholders to assist with education, management, and maintenance; and
- Utilizing regulations, designations, and seasonal closures as necessary to achieve these management goals.

The need to evaluate existing routes and decide which routes would best comprise a defined and manageable system of designated routes on BLM lands is necessary to meet these management goals for travel.

2010 Gunnison Basin Federal Lands Travel Management Planning

The purpose of Gunnison Basin Federal Lands Travel Management planning is to determine those roads and trails on federal lands that are needed to provide a sustainable transportation system that balances resource protection and public safety needs with recreation and access needs. The lands addressed in the analysis are the federal lands administered by the Forest Service on the Gunnison and Paonia Ranger Districts of the Gunnison, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest (GMUG) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the Gunnison Field Office area.

The following issues were addressed in the plan and analyzed during the evaluation of alternatives for the Gunnison Basin Federal Lands Travel Management planning process:

- Scope of Draft EIS Analysis
- Recreation Experience and Opportunity
- Route Integrity
- Resource Protection
- Access
- Compatibility and Safety
- Maintenance and Funding
- Enforcement and Education
- Social Issues
- Future Demands
- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and Monarch Crest Trail

The Project Record, including the FEIS that discusses and analyzes the Preferred Alternative, Proposed Action and other alternatives, is available for review at the Gunnison Field Office, CO. Please direct questions about this Implementation Decision Record to Brian St. George, Field Office Manager, Gunnison Field Office, at (970) 641-0471 or by submitting your questions to [Brian St. George@blm.gov](mailto:Brian.St.George@blm.gov). The FEIS is available at the following web address: http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug/policy/travel_mgmt/gun/deis.shtml/.