

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Royal Gorge Field Office
3028 E. Main Street
Cañon City, CO 81212**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-200-0019 EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT NAME: Recreation – Garden Park and Shaws Park Acquisition Area Travel Management Planning

PLANNING UNIT: Gold Belt, #5

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Fremont County, 6th Principal Meridian

Garden Park parcel (320 acres): T. 17 S., R. 70 W.
Sec. 23 SE¹/₄SW¹/₄, SW¹/₄SE¹/₄;
Sec. 26 NE¹/₄, SE¹/₄NW¹/₄, NE¹/₄SE¹/₄

Shaws Park parcel (1,280 acres): T. 17 S., R. 70 W.
Sec. 19 SW¹/₄NE¹/₄, SE¹/₄NW¹/₄, NE¹/₄SW¹/₄, SE¹/₄;
Sec. 20 SW¹/₄NE¹/₄, SE¹/₄NW¹/₄, S¹/₂;
Sec. 29 N¹/₂, SE¹/₄SW¹/₄, W¹/₂SE¹/₄;
Sec. 30 NE¹/₄

APPLICANT: BLM

ISSUES AND CONCERNS:

Garden Park Parcel

1. Designating travel uses that are compatible with the goals and objectives established in the Gold Belt Travel Management Plan (TMP) - Travel designations for the public lands that adjoin the Garden Park parcel were guided by the desired future conditions (DFCs) and management objectives (MOs) for the Garden Park and Cooper Mountain subunits of the Gold Belt TMP. It is important that the travel designations for the Garden Park parcel be compatible with achieving the DFCs and MOs that were identified for these subunits ([See Subunit DFCs](#)).

2. Fossil Resources - Portions of the Garden Park parcel include geologic formations that are known to contain dinosaur bones and other fossils. There is concern that fossil resources could be exposed to higher risks of vandalism if portions of the area are opened to motorized uses.

3. Sensitive Plants - Portions of the Garden Park parcel include occurrences of Brandege buckwheat. There is concern that occurrences of Brandege buckwheat could be degraded if the area is opened to motorized uses.

4. Visual Resources and Unique Geologic Features - Portions of the Garden Park parcel contain clay hill formations that are highly erosive. There are concerns that the visual quality of the clay hills could be degraded by scarring and erosion caused by off-road activities if the area were opened to motorized and mechanized uses.

Shaws Park Parcel

1. Designating travel uses that are compatible with the goals and objectives established in the Gold Belt TMP - The Shaws Park parcel is situated between the Garden Park and Seep Springs subunits of the Gold Belt TMP. It is important that the travel designations for the Shaws Park parcel be compatible with achieving the DFCs and MOs that were identified for these subunits ([See Subunit DFCs](#)).

2. Proliferation of new routes - Most of the Shaws Park parcel consists of flat to gently sloping open grasslands that are free of trees and other natural obstacles that confine the operation of motor vehicles to developed roadways. There is a concern that confining motorized uses to designated routes would be difficult to control in the Shaws Park parcel and could result in the proliferation of new roads and trails.

3. Dispersed recreation impacts - Due to the open nature of the terrain, there is concern that the natural and quiet setting of the landscape could be adversely impacted by dispersed camping, target shooting, and other dispersed recreation activities if the area is opened to motorized uses.

4. Illegal activities - Due to the open nature of the terrain and the proximity of the area to Cañon City, there is concern that the area could be adversely impacted by dumping of household trash and hazardous wastes, unauthorized rock gathering, long-term camping, and other illegal activities if the area is opened to motorized uses.

5. Conflicts with grazing uses - The lands in the Shaws Park parcel have been used historically for cattle production and are well-suited for this purpose. There is concern that motorized uses in the area could conflict with cattle grazing.

6. Fossil Resources - Portions of the Shaws Park parcel includes geologic formations that are known to contain dinosaur bones and other fossils. There is concern that fossil resources could be exposed to a greater risk of vandalism if the area is opened to motorized uses.

7. Utility Access - Access requirements for Black Hills Energy related to the electrical transmission line that runs through this parcel need to be clarified. The existing utility easements

are vague. If possible a letter of agreement or other document between Black Hills Energy and BLM is desired to document access requirements.

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: The property consists of two separate parcels of land located north of Cañon City that were formerly part of the Dilley family ranch ([See Location Map](#)). The Garden Park parcel is located east of Red Canyon Red adjacent to Oil Well Flats and includes 320 acres. The Shaws Park parcel is located east of FCR 69 and includes 1,280 acres. Both parcels were recently acquired by BLM through a land exchange with the City of Black Hawk.

The physical settings of both parcels are substantially different. The terrain in the Garden Park parcel is generally steep, very rocky, and dissected by numerous small washes and canyons. The area is mostly wooded with mixed piñon pine and juniper and contains a few small open meadows. Portions of the Garden Park parcel were burned in the 1988 Dinosaur Fire.

The terrain in the Shaws Park parcel includes large expanses of gently-sloped open grasslands surrounded by steeper rocky terrain with scattered stands of piñon-juniper woodlands.

Both parcels have been used historically for cattle grazing and mining. The Garden Park parcel includes bentonite clay deposits that have been mined in the past. The Shaws Park parcel has been used primarily for grazing but portions of it appear to have been used for collecting building stone. A section of the Black Hills Energy electrical transmission line from Cañon City to Cripple Creek also crosses the Shaws Park parcel.

Both parcels contain primitive roads that were developed and used for ranching and mining operations, and in the case of the Shaws Park parcel, for maintaining the power line. The property in the Garden Park parcel is not fenced where it borders adjoining public lands and the land owner has historically allowed public entry into it. Consequently, the public has used the roads and lands in the Garden Park parcel for hunting and other recreational uses. The lands in the Shaws Park parcel are fenced and posted to discourage unauthorized entry and the roads and surrounding lands show little evidence of public use.

The Garden Park parcel adjoins public lands that were included in the Garden Park and Cooper Mountain subunits of the Gold Belt TMP. The public lands located in the eastern part of the Garden Park Subunit are only accessible via the road that runs through the private parcel to be acquired. BLM did not possess a public easement for the use and maintenance of the road crossing these private lands and did not have authority to designate it for public use in the TMP. As a result of the decisions that were made in the TMP, the existing roads that extended from the Garden Park parcel onto adjoining public lands were closed to motor vehicles. Several new trails were included in the TMP to provide legal public access to the affected public lands but that limited travel uses in the area to mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding.

The acquisition of the Garden Park parcel changes the access situation and reduces the need for constructing some of the new trails that were identified in the Gold Belt TMP. Public

access to the affected public lands could be provided by the existing road through the Garden Park parcel, eliminating the need for the new trails.

The Shaws Park parcel is situated between the Dinosaur Flats portion of the Garden Park subunit and the southern portion of the Seep Springs subunit. The northern half of the Seep Springs subunit includes numerous primitive roads adjacent to Fremont County Road 69 that are legally accessible to the public. The existing roads in the southern half of the subunit can only be reached by roads crossing the Shaws Park parcel. Because BLM did not possess a public easement for crossing these private lands, the existing roads on public lands in the southern portion of the Seep Springs could be not designated for public uses.

The acquisition of the Shaws Park parcel changes the access situation and prompts the need to reevaluate previous travel management decisions that affected the southeastern portion of the Seep Springs subunit. With this acquisition, the affected public lands could be legally accessed via existing roads on the Shaws Park parcel and opportunities to expand and enhance motorized recreation uses in the subunit could be considered.

Alternative A:

Garden Park Parcel – The following route designations would be established under Alternative A ([See Map](#)):

The existing primitive roads beginning at point A and extending across the parcel and adjacent public lands to points B, D, E, F, H, I, J, K, L, and M would be designated as open to all motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses. A parking area/trailhead would be established in the vicinity of point E.

The existing 4WD primitive road between points E and G that crosses the parcel and adjacent public lands would be designated as open to hikers and equestrians.

The existing primitive road between points B and C that crosses the parcel and adjacent public lands would be designated as open to all motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses.

Except for the above route designations, no other existing roads on the Garden Park parcel would be designated for public uses but instead would be managed for administrative uses. Alternative A would also eliminate the need to construct trails A-C and F-G that were included in the Gold Belt TMP to provide alternate access routes around the parcel. Except for the above route designations, all other current travel designations on adjacent public lands would stay the same as established by the Gold Belt TMP.

Shaws Park Parcel - The following route designations would be established under Alternative A ([See Map](#)):

The existing primitive roads extending across the parcel and adjacent public lands consisting of segments A-B, B-C, H-D, H-G, H-I, J-K, J-L, and M-G would be

designated as open to all motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses. A parking area suitable for trailers and for unloading/loading ATVs, motorcycles, and horses would be constructed in the vicinity of point A.

The existing 4WD primitive road on public lands between points D and E would be designated as open to ATVs, motorcycles, bicycles, equestrians, and hikers.

A new segment of trail would be constructed between points E and F to provide a connection for ATVs, motorcycles, bicycles, equestrians, and hikers.

Except for the above route designations, no other existing roads on the Shaws Park parcel would be designated for public uses but instead would be managed for administrative uses. All other current travel designations of routes on adjacent public lands would stay the same as established by the Gold Belt TMP.

Alternative B:

Garden Park Parcel – The following route designations would be established under Alternative B ([See Map](#)):

The existing primitive road between points A and E that crosses the parcel and adjacent public lands would be designated as open to all motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses. A parking area/trailhead would be established in the vicinity of point E.

The existing 4WD primitive road between points E and G that crosses the parcel and adjacent public lands would be designated as open to equestrians and hikers.

The existing primitive roads that cross the parcel and adjacent public lands consisting of segments B-C and D-F would be designated as open to bicycles, equestrians and hikers.

Except for the above route designations, no other existing roads on the Garden Park parcel would be designated for public uses but instead would be managed for administrative uses. Alternative B would also eliminate the need to construct trails A-C and F-G that were included in the Gold Belt TMP to provide alternate access routes around the parcel. Except for the above route designations, all other current travel designations of routes on adjacent public lands would stay the same as established by the Gold Belt TMP.

Shaws Park Parcel - The following route designations would be established under Alternative B ([See Map](#)):

The existing primitive roads extending across the parcel and adjacent public lands consisting of segments A-B, B-C, C-D, C-H, B-G, G-H, G-I, G-M, I-H, I-J, J-L, and J-K would be designated as open to bicycles, equestrians, and hikers. A parking area suitable for parking trailers and for unloading/loading ATVs, motorcycles, and horses, would be constructed in the vicinity of point A.

Except for the above route designations, no other existing roads on the Shaws Park parcel would be designated for public uses but instead would be managed for administrative uses. All other current travel designations of routes on adjacent public lands would stay the same as established by the Gold Belt TMP.

Alternative C:

Garden Park Parcel – The following route designations would be established under the Alternative C ([See Map](#)):

The existing primitive road between points A and I that crosses the parcel and adjacent public lands would be designated as open to all motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses.

The existing primitive road between points B and C on the parcel and adjacent public lands would be designated as open to bicycles, equestrians, and hikers.

The existing primitive road between points D and E on the parcel would be designated as open to all motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses, and a parking area/trailhead would be established in the vicinity of point E.

The existing primitive 4WD road between points E and G on the parcel and adjacent public lands would be designated as open to equestrians and hikers.

Except for the above route designations, no other existing roads on the Garden Park parcel would be designated for public uses but instead would be managed for administrative uses. Alternative C would also eliminate the need to construct trails A-C and F-G that were included in the Gold Belt TMP to provide alternate access routes around the parcel. Except for the routes and uses identified above, all other travel designations for the routes located on adjacent public lands would stay the same as established by the Gold Belt TMP.

Shaws Park Parcel – The following route designations would be established under the Alternative C ([See Map](#)):

The existing primitive road between points A and C that crosses the parcel and adjacent public lands would be designated as open to ATVs, motorcycles, bicycles, equestrians, and hikers. A parking area suitable for parking trailers and unloading/loading ATVs, motorcycles, and horses, would be constructed in the vicinity of point A.

The existing primitive 4WD road between points C and E on public lands would be designated as open to ATVs, motorcycles, bicycles, equestrians, and hikers.

A new segment of trail would be constructed between points E and F to provide a connection for ATVs, motorcycles, bicycles, equestrians, and hikers.

The existing primitive roads between points B-G, G-I, I-J, J-L, G-H, and H-I that cross the parcel and portions of adjacent public lands would be designated as open to bicycles, equestrians, and hikers.

Except for the above route designations, no other existing roads on the Shaws Park parcel would be designated for public uses but instead would be managed for administrative uses. All other travel designations for the routes located on adjacent public lands would stay the same as established by the Gold Belt TMP.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative ([See Map](#)) the following route designations would be established:

A parking lot that was originally planned to be constructed on BLM lands just north of the northwest corner of the Shaws Park parcel would be moved onto the parcel, and a short section of the existing primitive road extending north from this area would be designated as open to ATVs, motorcycles, bicycles, equestrians, and hikers.

Except for the above route designations, no other existing roads on the parcels would be designated for public uses but instead would be managed for administrative uses (note: routes designated for administrative uses are open to equestrians and hikers but closed to all other public uses). All other current travel designations of routes on adjacent public lands would stay the same as established by the Gold Belt TMP, with the exception that the new horse and foot trail that was planned for skirting around the southeastern side of the Garden Park parcel would not be constructed. Since all public lands are open to foot and horse travel, access to the Cooper Mountain Horse Trail would be available via the existing road that crosses the Garden Park parcel; thus, the new trail would not be needed to provide this connection.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: No other alternatives were considered.

MILES OF TRAVEL ROUTES PROVIDED BY EACH ALTERNATIVE: [Tables A and B](#) display and compare the miles of travel routes that would be provided under each alternative.

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The action is needed to establish designated travel routes for off-highway vehicles (OHVs) and mountain bikes on two parcels of lands acquired through a land exchange between BLM and the City of Black Hawk. The action complies with direction contained in the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan (RMP) to limit the use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) to designated routes.

In addition, some of the travel management decisions that were made in the Gold Belt TMP were influenced because legal public access was not available through these parcels prior to the land exchange. The acquisition of the Garden Park and Shaws Park parcels changes the public access situation and prompts the need to reevaluate some of the route designations in the Gold Belt TMP. The Gold Belt TMP may need to be amended to reflect changes in route designations from those in the Decision Record for the Gold Belt TMP.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The alternatives are subject to and have been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 05/13/96

Decision Number: 5-11, 5-18, 5-26, 5-49, 5-54, 5-71, 5-72, 5-74, 5-79, 5-80, 5-83, 5-86, 5-87, 5-88, 5-89, 5-90, C-3, C-4, C-7, C-45, C-55, C-59, C-60, C-65, C-73, C-100, C-106, C-138, C-139, C-140, C-142, C-143, C-146, C-147, C-148, C-165

Decision Language: (Please refer to Royal Gorge Resource Area, Approved Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision.)

Standards for Public Land Health: In January 1997, Colorado BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: Air quality in the area is, generally, good. Road and trail use in any one of these alternatives will have negative impacts to air quality over what currently occurs because the parcels are both currently locked to public vehicle use. An assumption can be made that the volume of dust generated in the air column will be greater for those alternatives with the greatest length of miles open for vehicle travel. It should not be assumed, however, that any of these alternatives will generate an “unacceptable” air quality condition for either of these parcels. As an example, the Garden Park parcel was open to unrestricted vehicle traffic for many years but air quality degradation was never seen by BLM as an issue in the area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: None of the suggested alternatives will likely generate a volume of dust as a result of recreational activity that could be categorized as “unacceptable”. Ambient air quality standards for the general area, including large blocks of BLM lands where recreational use levels are high, have never been exceeded to my knowledge. This statement will serve for all alternatives presented.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Because ambient air quality standards are not expected to be exceeded under any of the presented alternatives, mitigation is not proposed or anticipated for any alternative.

Alternative B: Same as Alternative A.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Alternative C: Same as Alternative A.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

No Action: Same as Alternative A.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: None.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Both aboriginal and historic Euro-American sites are present in the vicinity of the proposed undertaking. However, pursuant to an addendum to the BLM Colorado Protocol with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer (Addendum 1, entitled “Section 106 Requirements for Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management Planning”), the area of potential effect has not been comprehensively inventoried for cultural resources. Instead, Class II (literature review and limited reconnaissance) inventories will be performed, followed by Class III (intensive) inventories in the following situations:

1. When BLM identifies historic properties or potential historic properties during a Class II inventory;
2. When new construction involving ground disturbance will occur; or
3. When route closures will cause new ground disturbance.

Class III inventories, followed by Section 106 consultation, will be performed before any new ground disturbance occurs or when BLM identifies historic properties that will be impacted by ongoing route use.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: As a general rule, historic properties that can be accessed with OHVs are more exposed to potential damage than those that cannot be accessed with motor vehicles. This is due to the fact that the weight and power of motor vehicles cause more ground disturbance than non-motorized modes of travel and also facilitate vandalism and the removal of artifacts.

Alternative A: Procedures under “Affected Environment” will be followed before ground disturbance occurs or when use will continue in an area where historic properties are present or anticipated.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Because no cultural resources inventories have been completed and historic properties have not yet been found, it is not possible to identify specific mitigation measures. The range of treatment (mitigation) activities possible is quite large, but a non-exhaustive list includes avoidance (always the first choice), testing, excavation (salvage, partial, or total) and data recovery in the form of archival recording (for standing structures and other historic-era phenomena). A treatment plan is individually tailored to the historic property that will be adversely affected, and review by, and consultation with, the Colorado SHPO is required.

Alternative B: Same as Alternative A.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

Alternative C: Same as Alternative A.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

No Action: This alternative might be slightly more damaging to historic properties, as opportunities for identification, evaluation and treatment, if necessary, would be fewer. Unmanaged use of roads and trails could hasten erosion, thus ultimately adversely affecting historic properties.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: As with mitigation, cumulative effects on historic properties cannot be specifically identified until cultural resources inventories are completed and historic properties have been identified. In general, however, erosion caused by vehicle travel, depending on its proximity to a historic property, could have long-term negative impacts on both buried sites as well as those with standing structures.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: The project affects areas that are rural in nature. The land adjacent to these parcels is open rangeland and recreational areas. As a result, there are no minority or low-income populations in or near the project area. As such, the proposal will not have a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effect on minority or low-income populations.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: None

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None required

Alternative B: None

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None required

Alternative C: None

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None required

No Action: None

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None required

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: None

FARMLANDS, PRIME AND UNIQUE

Affected Environment: There are no prime or unique farmlands involved in any of the alternatives.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: There are no impacts to prime or unique farmlands.

FLOODPLAINS, WETLANDS & RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: Two areas with wetland characteristics are directly involved by the acquisition discussed here; Seep Springs-which flows off of existing BLM onto the Shaws Park parcel, and Felch Gulch which flows off existing BLM onto the Garden Park Parcel. Wilson Creek receives Seep Springs flow, and Felch Gulch flows to Four Mile Creek. Both waters rapidly begin to sub and their lower terminus is variable depending on the current water year as they transition to ephemeral systems on the new BLM parcels. Neither wet area within their respective gulches is directly affected under any alternative as no route travels within either water source, but travel in the Seep Springs watershed, above the named spring, yields some indirect affects. (see also Water Quality and Soils sections). Seep springs draw above the spring has a historic, lightly used, two track ranch style road adjacent to the draw that was used by previous ranching operations coming off then deeded property. The potential continued use of that route by varying modes of travel is really the only indirect decision other than watershed level affects (see Water Quality section) that potentially alters wetland and floodplain resources. Otherwise, the route segments discussed are upland and the decision about each remaining open pertains to watershed health. Seep Springs Gulch is degraded by land use actions, primarily grazing, upstream on existing BLM and on the acquisition parcel around the spring. At present the roads above the spring are lightly used because Blackhawk has blocked access other than some trespass. Further description is within the Acquisition EA; CO-200-2005-0086, which analyzes acquiring the tracts discussed here. Both waterways flow during heavy precipitation events, but are otherwise generally considered intermittent/ephemeral most years on the acquisition parcels.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: Alternative A is really a no change Alternative to the existing condition in that the road up Seep Springs draw is retained, however use can be expected to greatly increase. In addition more miles of full size vehicle-open-route remain open in the entire watershed. This will keep route width wider and not promote vegetation expansion. Although this Alternative does not change routes on site, use will increase and restoration of a high route density is not a part of this Alternative. Felch Gulch is largely unaffected as the route which crosses it remains administrative under any Alternative.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Hydrologic controls need to be implemented upon the road network if these routes remain motorized.

Alternative B: Turning the named routes to the low impact trail network shown does the most to reduce the erosion in the watershed and best protects the actual Seep Spring from siltation. Felch Gulch is largely unaffected as a route that crosses it remains administrative under any Alternative.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Hydrologic controls need to be implemented upon some of the route network if these routes remain open trails and cannot re-vegetate naturally.

Alternative C: This Alternative reduces the size of the route up Seep Springs draw above the named springs and can be viewed as less of an impact than Alternative A, but does not allow for the re-vegetation that would occur under Alternative C. Felch Gulch is largely unaffected as the route which crosses it remains administrative under any Alternative.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Hydrologic controls need to be implemented upon the road network if these routes remain motorized even if only open to ATV, and the remaining non-motorized trails if erosion persists after vehicle traffic is removed.

No Action: No Actions keeps all routes administrative use only. As such they would largely re-vegetate and stabilize. Felch Gulch is largely unaffected as the route which crosses it remains administrative under any Alternative.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Hydrologic controls need to be implemented upon the road network if these routes remain administrative if after a lower use period, some specific locations continue to be erosive.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: There are many routes in the Four Mile watershed. There are continually more roads built annually as private lands have greatly subdivided. The cumulative total affects upon floodplains of any Alternative selected here is minor relative to surrounding lands in the watershed, but Alternative B is the best to offset watershed impacts affecting floodplain resources.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Riparian Systems: Currently Seep Springs is not meeting Land Health Standards on existing BLM, but mainly relative to exotic vegetation and grazing. Improvements are underway. Proposed routes may alter planned

recovery slightly through added erosion depending upon the mode of travel, and Alternative B would best buffer the spring area, but grazing changes should recover the spring regardless of upstream travel plans. Wildlife use of the spring and general area will receive continual disturbance (see wildlife section) under A and C when not under a wet weather closure, but the spring should be able to reach functional condition meeting the riparian land health standard under any Alternative discussed.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The ecological sites found on these parcels are prone to invasion by noxious weeds if severe soil disturbance occurs.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: The type of disturbance that will result from this alternative is generally not severe enough to increase the risk of weed invasion. This alternative does have more miles of roads and trails open to motorized use so there is a slightly higher risk of noxious weed invasion in this alternative compared to other alternatives.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None required.

Alternatives B, C, and No Action: The type of disturbance that will result from these alternatives is generally not severe enough to increase the risk of weed invasion.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None required.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: None.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The assessment area is occupied by a habitat type that consists primarily of piñon pine and juniper. Open areas of mountain grassland are interspersed throughout the area and mountain shrubs such as currant and mountain mahogany are abundant, especially on south slopes. Piñon-juniper habitat supports the largest nesting bird population of any upland vegetation type in the West. Survey tallies in piñon-juniper are similar in species diversity to the best riparian. Several species are found in the piñon-juniper habitat and include: black-chinned hummingbird, gray flycatcher, Cassin's kingbird, gray vireo, piñon jay, juniper titmouse, black-throated gray warbler, Scott's oriole, ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick's wren, mountain chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, and chipping sparrow.

Foothills riparian forests are found in a few isolated portions of the planning area. The most significant riparian resources are found in Felch Creek. A limited amount of riparian habitat is found near water sources in the Shaw Park area. In this area the riparian forest is dominated by a deciduous component, especially narrowleaf cottonwood and willow. The understory of these systems is typically rich, with a wide variety of shrubs and herbaceous plants. The Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas reported that foothills riparian forests dominated by

deciduous trees comprised nearly 85% of all foothills riparian forests. Riparian areas represent a transition zone between the aquatic ecosystem and the drier uplands. The riparian zones are well defined, unique, and highly productive areas which are sensitive to disturbance. However, in most western riparian systems 75% of the bird species use riparian areas during some part of their life cycle. In deciduous foothills riparian systems, yellow warbler is the species most frequently detected, followed by American robin, northern flicker, house wren, warbling vireo, song sparrow, western wood-pewee, and broad-tailed hummingbird.

The following birds are listed on the US Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) – 2002 List for BCR 16-Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau. These species have been identified as species that may be found in the project area, have declining populations and should be protected from habitat alterations.

The golden eagle is a bird of grasslands, shrublands, piñon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests, may occur in most other habitats occasionally, especially in winter. Nests are placed on cliffs and sometimes in trees in rugged areas, and breeding birds range widely over surrounding habitats.

Northern harriers reside throughout Colorado, with highest densities on the eastern plains, mountain parks, and western valleys. These hawks feed on small mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. They hunt by flying low over wetlands, grasslands, shrublands, and croplands.

Peregrine falcons in Colorado breed on cliffs and rock outcrops from 4,500-9000 feet in elevation. They most commonly choose cliffs that lie within piñon-juniper and ponderosa pine zones. These falcons feed on smaller birds almost exclusively, with white-throated swifts and rock doves being among their favored prey.

Prairie falcons nest in scattered locations throughout the state where they inhabit the grassland and cliff/rock habitat types. These falcons breed on cliffs and rock outcrops, and their diet during the breeding season is a mix of passerines and small mammals.

Williamson's sapsuckers breed in forested regions and in Colorado populations are concentrated along the eastern edge of the Rockies. Williamson's sapsuckers nest primarily in ponderosa pine and in aspen components of mixed-conifer. They often place nest cavities in aspen trees, and often choose nest trees in aspen stands adjacent to open ponderosa pine or mixed-conifer forest.

Gray vireos nest along the western tier of counties, with centers of abundance in Mesa, Montrose, and Montezuma counties. They also nest on the Eastern Slope in Las Animas County. Gray vireos are piñon-juniper woodland obligates. Gray vireos usually inhabit stands dominated by juniper or thin stands of pure juniper. They construct nests of dry grasses, plant fibers, stems, and hair, often camouflaging them with sagebrush leaves.

Piñon jays range the semiarid lands of the West. The Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas map shows them south of a diagonal line drawn from the northwest corner to the southeast

corner of the state. Piñon jays are piñon and juniper obligates in Colorado and nest commonly at the lower elevations of piñon-juniper woodlands, often where junipers dominate. A few nest in ponderosa pine. They prefer extensive stands far from high human activity.

Black-throated gray warblers are fairly common summer residents in piñon-juniper woodlands across the southwestern half of Colorado. Some surveys show these warblers to be the most frequently encountered birds in the piñon-juniper woodland. Black-throated gray warblers, in Colorado, are piñon-juniper obligates, preferring tall, dense piñon-juniper woodlands.

Virginia's warblers in Colorado nest between 5,000-9,000 feet elevation. They breed most abundantly in the western quarter of the state, along the eastern slope foothills, and in the Upper Arkansas River drainage. Virginia's warblers nest in dense shrublands and on scrub-adorned slopes of mesas, foothills, open ravines, and mountain valleys in semiarid country. They use scrubby brush, piñon-juniper woodland with a well-developed shrubby understory, ravines covered with scrub oak and dense shrublands--especially Gambel oak. They also breed in open ponderosa pine savannahs that have a dense understory of tall shrubs.

Grace's warblers breed from southwestern Colorado and southern Utah, south through central Arizona, western New Mexico, and into north-central Mexico. Grace's warblers inhabit open ponderosa pine forests with pines 16 ft tall, especially with a shrubby understory, usually Gambel oak.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: In order to be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which requires that BLM avoid actions that “take” migratory birds, it is recommended that all vegetation disturbances be avoided from May 15 thru July 15. This is the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds. Alternative A provides the highest level of motorized use on both parcels (14.36 miles). Alternative A allows motorized use throughout the parcels and could lead to unauthorized use off the established road system due to the easy topography and sparse vegetation. Unauthorized use off established roads leads to damage and destruction of wildlife habitat, thereby affecting migratory birds. Motorized use would be allowed along Felch Creek where the only riparian habitat is found in this area. Alternative A would have the most impacts to wildlife.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Mitigation measures would need to be implemented under Alternative A and would include numerous physical barriers to prevent off road travel. Signs would need to be installed and an increased law enforcement presence would be needed.

Alternative B: In the Garden Park parcel Alternative B provides the least amount of motorized use in the area and would be the preferred alternative for wildlife resources. However, this alternative restricts motorized use and eliminates it from areas where this use has been allowed in the past. This alternative protects the riparian resources along Felch Creek by

not allowing motorized uses in this area. In the Shaw Park area Alternative B does not allow any motorized use in the newly acquired parcel and would provide for maximum benefits for the wildlife resource.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Closures would need to be installed at key locations to prevent unauthorized off road uses. An increase in law enforcement would be needed to enforce closures.

Alternative C: Alternative C is similar to Alternative B in the Garden Park parcel with no motorized use along Felch Creek-the most sensitive resource in this area. This alternative allows for motorized use south of Point D, which traditionally has occurred. This section of road is well established, has minimal resource damage and allows the public to access additional public lands in the area. Impacts to wildlife resources along this section of road are minimal. In the Shaw Park area Alternative C restricts motorized use throughout much of the area. A short section of ATV route (A to C) is allowed on the northwest portion of the unit to provide a loop trail that connects with trails in the Seep Springs area. This section of trail is existing and no construction would be needed. Impacts to wildlife would be minimal in this area.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Closures would need to be installed at key locations to prevent unauthorized off road uses. An increase in law enforcement would be needed to enforce closures.

No Action: From the standpoint of protecting wildlife habitat and preventing disturbances to wildlife, this alternative would be the preferred alternative in that the entire acquisition area is open only for administrative purposes. However this alternative is unreasonable as there is a need to provide reasonable access to public lands.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: The scope of cumulative impacts include the Garden Park, Shaw Park parcels and the surrounding public lands in the immediate vicinity. Cumulative impacts will be minimal if motorized uses are restricted and managed to prevent damage to wildlife habitat and disturbance to animals. Other areas of public land nearby are designated for more intensive motorized use and managing these new parcels of public land with minimal impacts will be a benefit.

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

Affected Environment: A traditional cultural property is defined as:

“...one that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in the community’s history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community” (NRB 38:1).

In Colorado, three types of culturally significant phenomena are present. McBride (1999) identifies traditional cultural properties (TCPs) as locations where wild foods or medicines are gathered, or are landforms associated with aboriginal traditions or beliefs. She also notes that locations with “intangible spiritual attributes” (ISAs) and contemporary use areas (CUAs) are known in Colorado.

Unless specifically identified by Native Americans, many TCPs, ISAs and CUAs are extremely difficult or impossible for a field archaeologist to recognize. Such sites, often considered sacred, include mountain tops, waterfalls, river and trail confluences, the headwaters of streams, ecotones (including the entire Front Range), clay sources, “origin places”, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic rock formations and springs. More readily identifiable are rock art, sweat baths, battle sites, sun dance arbors, vision quest sites, and medicine wheels (McBride 1999: 342-345).

In compliance with regulations interpreting the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, amended 1992, specifically 36 CFR 800.2(c)(3)(i)-(vi), BLM consulted Indian tribes that might have an interest in the surrounding Gold Belt planning area [CR-RG-05-82 (NA)], including the following: Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Cheyenne River Lakota Tribe, Comanche Tribe of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Lakota Tribe, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Northern Ute Tribe, Oglala Lakota Tribe, Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Shoshone Tribe, Southern Ute Tribe, Standing Rock Lakota Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: No sites of concern identified by interested tribes. Because a comprehensive cultural resources inventory of the area of potential effect has not been performed, it is not known whether any others are present.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: If sites of interest to the tribes are found during intensive inventories, the range of treatment (mitigation) activities possible is quite large, but might include avoidance (always the first choice) or providing access to tribes. Treatment is individually tailored to the site of Native American religious concern that will be impacted, and consultation with interested tribes is standard operating procedure.

Alternative B: Same as Alternative A.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

Alternative C: Same as Alternative A.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

No Action: Same as Alternative A.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: As with mitigation, cumulative effects on sites of Native American religious concern cannot be specifically identified until cultural resources inventories are completed and such locales have been identified. In general, however, erosion caused by vehicle travel, depending on its proximity to a site, could have long-term negative impacts on both buried sites as well as those with surface phenomena. The introduction of roads into an area might also increase the potential for vandalism and looting.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: This assessment area is occupied by a habitat type that consists primarily of piñon pine and juniper. Open areas of mountain grassland are interspersed throughout the area and mountain shrubs such as currant and mountain mahogany are abundant, especially on south slopes. Foothills riparian forests are found in a few isolated portions of the planning area. The most significant riparian resources are found in Felch Creek. A limited amount of riparian habitat is found near water sources in the Shaw Park area. In this area the riparian forest is dominated by a deciduous component, especially narrowleaf cottonwood and willow. The understory of these systems is typically rich, with a wide variety of shrubs and herbaceous plants.

One rare species may utilize the assessment area, the bald eagle. Colorado populations of bald eagles typically nest in large cottonwood trees along rivers and reservoirs. Eagle densities reach their peak during the winter months when migrants arrive from the north. The bald eagle is a common winter (December through February) visitor to the Arkansas River valley. Typically, up to five birds can be found from Leadville to Cañon City, and up to five birds can be found from Cañon City to Pueblo Reservoir. An active bald eagle nest is located on private land along Fourmile Creek north of Cañon City. These birds could be expected to forage on public lands. However, use by eagles is so incidental that preferred or critical areas such as roosting or feeding sites have not been identified. Bald eagles could be expected to hunt on the Shaw Park parcel and less so on the Garden Park parcel.

There are three BLM sensitive plant species that may be affected by this project. The Brandegee wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum brandegei*) is listed as a BLM sensitive species. It is found in the valley of the upper Arkansas River in Chaffee and Fremont Counties, Colorado. It occurs on barren clay-loam soil in the Morrison formation. The Colorado Natural Areas Program, in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy, designated a site in Chaffee County as the Droney Gulch State Natural Area. The Droney Gulch site represents the best known occurrence in the world for this species. An equally important site is the Cleora site, located southeast of Salida. This species also occurs in the Garden Park area north of Cañon City. Several thousand individual plants are found in several sites along Fourmile Creek. Much of the area has been disturbed by past mining and increases in off-road vehicle use in recent years. The area that contains the Buckwheat plant is designated as the Garden Park Research Natural Area by the state of Colorado and as a BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Most of the buckwheat plants are found on the Garden Park parcel.

Dwarf milkweed (*Asclepias unicalus*) habitat consists of shortgrass prairie, often on

sandstone-derived soils and gravelly or rocky slopes at an elevation of 4000-6500 ft. It occurs north of Cañon City in the Oil Well Flats and Dinosaur areas growing on the lower side slopes of canyon walls. Other associated species include juniper, mountain mahogany, blue grama, yucca and prickly pear cactus. Dwarf milkweed is very rare with small population sizes and is only known from isolated occurrences in Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Arizona. Surveys by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program in 1996 documented one population of this species with 24 individual plants in Oil Well Flats. Previous surveys documented a small population in the Dinosaur area.

Golden blazing star (*Menzelia chrysantha*) is a tall plant with yellow flowers. The habitat consists of barren slopes of limestone, shale or clay at elevations of 5120 -5700 ft. This species is known from less than 20 locations in the Arkansas Valley from Pueblo Reservoir to Cañon City and is not found anywhere else in the world. BLM lands support an excellent population of blazing star within the Garden Park area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: Alternative A would make most of the existing routes in both Shaw Park and Garden Park available for motorized uses. This alternative could lead to unauthorized use in adjacent habitats and could potentially threaten sensitive plants and animals. The increased use by motorized vehicles could impact habitat for sensitive species. This alternative will not have any effect on bald eagles as the area does not provide good foraging habitat for the species. Impacts to the buckwheat plant are most likely to occur under this alternative. Providing access to Felch Creek could very likely lead to unauthorized use in the old bentonite pit in the area that contains suitable soils that support the buckwheat plant. The pit area in the past has proven to be a popular location for motorcycles and ATV's that ride the open, barren slopes. Presently it is closed but it is possible that users will try to pioneer a connection between Felch Creek and the main access road. This alternative will have no effect on dwarf milkweed or golden blazing star.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Mitigation measures would need to be implemented under Alternative A and would include numerous physical barriers to prevent off road travel. Signs would need to be installed and an increased law enforcement presence would be needed.

Alternative B: Alternative B restricts motorized uses in the Garden Park area and actually closes some roads that are presently open to motorized uses. No motorized routes are authorized in suitable habitat for the buckwheat plant. Impacts to T&E and sensitive species in the Shaw Park area would be least likely to occur under Alternative B in which no motorized roads or trails are authorized in the area. There are no records of sensitive plants in this area but the bald eagle could be expected to forage during the nesting season in the vicinity.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Mitigation measures would need to be implemented and would include numerous physical barriers to prevent off road travel. Signs would need to be installed and an increased law enforcement presence would be needed.

Alternative C: Alternative C provides a good balance between motorized use and the need to protect sensitive resources. No motorized use is allowed along Felch Creek and in the

area where the main population of buckwheat is located. This alternative would be the least likely to result in unauthorized motorized uses in sensitive habitats. Alternative C in the Shaw Park area limits motorized use to one short section of trail in the northwest portion of the parcel. Non-motorized use is allowed in the interior. This alternative will least likely impact foraging bald eagles.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Mitigation measures would need to be implemented and would include numerous physical barriers to prevent off road travel. Signs would need to be installed and an increased law enforcement presence would be needed.

No Action: From the standpoint of protecting wildlife habitat and preventing disturbances to wildlife, this alternative would be the preferred alternative in that the entire acquisition area is open only for administrative purposes. However this alternative is unreasonable as there is a need to provide reasonable access to public lands.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Mitigation measures would need to be implemented and would include numerous physical barriers to prevent off road travel. Signs would need to be installed and an increased law enforcement presence would be needed.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: The scope of cumulative impacts include the Garden Park, Shaw Park parcels and the surrounding public lands in the immediate vicinity. Cumulative impacts will be minimal if motorized uses are restricted and managed to prevent damage to wildlife habitat and disturbance to animals. Other areas of public land nearby are designated for more intensive motorized use and managing these new parcels of public land with minimal impacts will be a benefit.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The project will not result in impacts or changes to public land health standards for Threatened & Endangered species.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: Dumping of solid waste is a problem on public lands in the area close to Cañon City. Dumping of materials including yard waste, derelict furniture, household trash and building materials occasionally occurs in the area. Hazardous materials dumping (meth lab related waste) also occurred at one time on nearby public land parcels. That specific activity was tied to a single individual who was caught and convicted. It has not re-occurred to my knowledge, since that individual “went away”.

Dumping will likely continue in the area and may include the Shaw’s Park parcel if it is open to vehicle traffic. The occurrence will likely be low because dumpers typically are looking for a location where they won’t be observed and that is close to home. They’ll continue to use their current favorite locations rather than search out a new one. The Garden Park parcel is too far removed and contains adverse terrain that will deter dumping.

Dumping is monitored by the BLM, investigated if necessary, and cleaned up regularly.

None of the presented alternatives will result in the use, storage or disposal of hazardous materials on public lands during normal management activities.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: Refer to discussion under Affected Environment. Dumping will occur with any of the parcels open to some level of motorized use. It is not likely that it will be frequent as dumpers frequent areas close to town and currently have their favorite locations.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Dumps will continue to be identified, investigated and cleaned up by BLM as they occur and as funding permits in an effort to protect public health and safety. This policy will be followed regardless of which alternative will be selected. No additional mitigation is necessary.

Alternative B: Refer to discussion under Affected Environment. Dumping will occur with any of the parcels open to some level of motorized use. It is not likely that it will be frequent as dumpers frequent areas close to town and currently have their favorite locations. A slightly lower frequency of dumping will occur because motorized access would be more restricted as compared to Alternative A and C.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

Alternative C: Refer to discussion under Affected Environment. Dumping will occur with any of the parcels open to some level of motorized use. It is not likely that it will be frequent as dumpers frequent areas close to town and currently have their favorite locations.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

No Action: Same as Alternative B.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: None.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The lands involved in this analysis are all tributary to Fourmile Creek and eventually the Arkansas River. On the Shaws Park parcel, Seep Springs Draw runs through the middle of the parcel and is the main bisecting drainage the parcel. Felch Creek is the main drainage on the Garden Park parcel and is located in the northern portion of the parcel. Both drainages are considered intermittent/ephemeral and are dry a majority of the time. Seeps Springs itself is located just north of the Shaws Park parcel and is a perennial water source flowing for a couple of hundred yards before going subsurface. Water quality in the area is good with no waters on the Colorado 303(d) or M&E lists. The main water quality concern for the area is sediment. Roads have the ability to increase runoff and contribute large amounts of

sediment to nearby drainages and travel planning can play a large role in controlling the amount of sediment in an area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

The effects of roads on water quality can be roughly correlated by the amount of soil exposed. Other factors such as road design, location, and topography also plays a large role in sediment delivery to drainages. As soil is exposed and vegetation removed, runoff from precipitation events increases. This results in more erosion of the soils and can result in downstream channel instability adding even more sediment to the waterways.

Due to the relatively flat terrain and mostly upland locations of the parcels, this analysis will just look at the amount of disturbance for comparative purposes. The following table breaks down the amount of surface exposed under each alternative assuming that existing roads would adjust in width over time to the use designated. It was assumed that general roads would be 10’ wide, ATV trails-6’ wide, motorcycle, bike, equestrian, foot would be 2’ wide, and non-system roads would completely revegetate.

Acres of Soil Disturbance by Route Designation					
Garden Park Parcel		No Action	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C
General		0.2	8.0	0.9	2.9
ATV		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Motorcycle		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bike		1.3	0.5	1.4	1.0
Equestrian		0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
Foot		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Non System		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Shaws Park Parcel		No Action	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C
General		0.1	8.8	0.1	0.0
ATV		0.6	0.9	0.6	1.7
Motorcycle		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bike		0.0	0.0	1.8	0.9
Equestrian		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Foot		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Non System		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Alternative A: Alternative A would have the highest impact by increasing the amount of use on the existing road network that is currently receiving very little use. This would remove vegetation from the portions of the roads that have had vegetation return and increase sediment delivery to nearby drainages.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Ensure that all routes meet BLM trail standards and proper hydrologic controls are installed.

Alternative B: Alternative B would have the lowest potential impact to water quality by letting most of the existing road network narrow in width as use is restricted to non-motorized travel. This would allow for the most stabilization of soils and minimize the amount of sediment produced.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Ensure that all routes meet BLM trail standards and proper hydrologic controls are installed.

Alternative C: Alternative C could be considered a middle ground between Alternatives A and B. From a water quality stand point, the two roads that are of the biggest concern are the ones that parallel Felch Creek and Seep Springs Draw. Under the Alternative C, the road along Felch Creek would remain closed while the road along Seep Springs Draw would be open for ATV use. Having motorized use along this portion of Seep Springs Draw is not ideal; however its impacts to water quality would be small due to the rocky nature of the terrain in this area.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Ensure that all routes meet BLM trail standards and proper hydrologic controls are installed.

No Action: In general, the No-Action alternative would have the least amount of impact in the future due to the non use of the roads allowing vegetation to return to the entire road surface.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: The Fourmile Creek watershed currently has many activities occurring in it, including an increasing density of roads. Alternative A would result in the greatest impact to the water quality due to loss of vegetation and sedimentation from motorized uses. Alternative B would have the least impact to the water quality because it minimized motorized and mechanized uses. The Alternative C would allow motorized and mechanized uses on some existing while allowing for many existing routes to re-vegetate. Each of the alternatives with recommended mitigation would have a negligible impact to water quality in the short term. Over time, Alternatives B, C and the No Action Alternative have a positive impact as existing routes recover.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Water Quality: Currently, water quality in the area is meeting standards and would continue to do so if any alternative is implemented.

WILDERNESS, AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN, WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: The Garden Park Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) encompasses 2,724 acres of public land that lie between the two parcels. The ACEC was designated in the Royal Gorge RMP (1996) to protect and enhance its special values. These special values include: outstanding paleontological resources; special status plants; historical values; naturalness; and undeveloped recreation and water-related recreation opportunities. The

area contains dinosaur fossil quarries of international significance. Fossil specimens from the Garden Park area are exhibited in several prestigious science museums in the United States and Europe. A portion of the ACEC is also a Research Natural Area (designated in 1991) and 40 acres of the ACEC are a National Natural Landmark (designated in 1992). Two interpretive sites, Cleveland Quarry and Marsh Quarry, have been developed within the ACEC adjacent to the county road (FCR 509B, Shelf Road). The ACEC is also located along the Gold Belt Tour National Scenic and Historic Byway.

The ACEC is close to Cañon City and has been used by local residents for a variety of recreation activities over the years. These activities include off-road vehicle driving, target shooting, hunting, hiking, mountain biking, camping, and picnicking. Over the past ten years, increasing and often conflicting use within the ACEC has led to concerns about visitor safety and damage to sensitive plant, soil, and fossil resources. Many of these concerns related to the increase in recreational target shooting, off-road vehicle use, and illegal trash dumping. Restricting target shooting, establishing a designated system of roads and trails, increasing law enforcement and education, and closing sensitive areas to damaging activities have improved the resource conditions in the ACEC.

The ACEC also receives a substantial amount of use by visitors (not local residents). Most of this use occurs on and immediately adjacent to Shelf Road and includes activities such as viewing scenery, picnicking, hiking, and visiting the fossil quarries.

Another important use of the ACEC is for scientific research and education related to both the fossil and plant resources. Several museums, universities, high schools, and grade schools visit the ACEC to conduct research and educational programs.

It is likely that the portions of the acquired lands that contain the same special values as the Garden Park ACEC would be incorporated into the ACEC at a later date (through RMP amendment/revision). Until that time, travel management decisions and implementation actions need to facilitate the protection of these special values.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: Under this alternative, motorized use would be permitted on a relatively extensive network of routes. This would increase the potential for damage to sensitive resources within the ACEC by motorized vehicle use and associated activities such as dispersed camping, trash dumping, and target shooting. In addition, access provided by this network of motorized routes would increase the potential for fossil theft and vandalism of fossil sites. This would not meet the goals and management direction for the ACEC set forth by the RMP. Short term, long term, and cumulative impacts related to the use of travel routes would occur and impact the ACEC values.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Monitor sensitive plant and fossil resources to detect threats/impacts from recreational uses. If impacts are occurring, take actions to protect these resources and ACEC values.

Alternative B: Under this alternative, motorized use would be highly restricted. This would greatly reduce the potential for damage to sensitive resources by motorized vehicle use and associated activities. This would meet the goals and management direction for the ACEC set forth by the RMP.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Alternative C: On the Garden Park parcel, this alternative would allow motorized use on a segment of road where this use is well established. It would designate approximately five miles of routes for non-motorized uses. In addition, non-system routes that are closed to all motorized and mechanized uses would be available to equestrian and hiking uses. On the Shaws Park parcel, motorized uses would be directed away from sensitive plant and fossil resources. Because the greatest threat to sensitive plant and fossil resources is damage from motorized vehicles (and to a lesser extent mountain bike) use, this alternative would reduce the potential for damage to sensitive resources by motorized vehicle use while providing access for a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation activities. This would meet the goals and management direction for the ACEC set forth by the RMP.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Monitor sensitive plant and fossil resources to detect threats from recreational uses. If impacts are occurring, take actions to protect these resources and ACEC values.

No Action: Under this alternative, recreational access would be limited to primarily equestrian and hiking uses on non-system routes. This would greatly reduce the potential for damage to sensitive resources by motorized and mechanized vehicle use and associated activities. This would meet the goals and management direction for the ACEC set forth by the RMP.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Cumulative Impacts: Alternative A: Cumulative impacts related to extensive use of the area for motorized recreation would likely occur and impact the ACEC values including damage to sensitive fossil and plant resources. Alternative B: Few cumulative impacts to the ACEC values resulting from the use of travel routes are anticipated. Some increase in non-motorized recreational use of the area may result in some damage to sensitive resources. Alternative C: Some cumulative impacts to ACEC values including damage to sensitive fossil and plant resources may occur because of increased recreational use of the area; motorized use would be restricted to routes and areas where these resources do not occur. No Action Alternative: Same as Alternative B.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS

Affected Environment: The two parcels contain twelve different soils. These soils can generally be considered to have rapid runoff and high erosion potentials. In the Garden Park parcel all roads are on one of three soils:

- > The Fort Collins loam that accounts for 7% of the soils in the parcel. This soil has slow to rapid runoff and a slight to high water erosion potential.
- > The Louviers-Travesilla Complex, 20-50% slopes accounts for 39% of the soils in the parcel and most of the roads are on this soil. This soil has very rapid runoff and very high potential of water erosion.
- > The Ustic Torriorthents-Sedillo Complex, 15-40% slopes accounts for 26% of the parcel. This soil has rapid to very rapid runoff and a high to very high water erosion potential.

In the Shaws Park parcel, most roads lie on one of three soils:

- > The Ustic Torriorthents-Sedillo Complex, 15-40% slopes accounts for 53% of the parcel. This soil has rapid to very rapid runoff and a high to very high water erosion potential.
- > The Rizozo-Neville Complex, 3-30% slopes accounts for 17% of the parcel. This soil has a medium to very high runoff and moderate to very high erosion potential.
- > The Rizozo-Rock Outcrop Complex 15-45% slopes accounts for 12% of the parcel. This soil has a rapid to very rapid runoff and high to very high erosion potential.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: Alternative A would leave most of the existing roads open to all vehicles leaving the amount of soils disturbed much as it is currently, however there would be an increase in traffic levels. The increase in traffic levels would result in a greater impact to soils, especially during wet periods, and disturb more soil as many of the existing roads are currently beginning to re-vegetate.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: If Alternative A is chosen, recommended mitigation would be to implement a wet weather closure of Shaws Park similar to Seep Springs Draw.

Alternative B: Alternative B would have a greater emphasis on non-motorized travel resulting in narrower trails. This alternative would allow for a managed recreation area while allowing for some of the soils to recover.

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

Alternative C: Alternative C Strikes a balance between recreation use and resource protection.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: If Alternative C is chosen, recommended mitigation would be to implement a wet weather closure of Shaws Park similar to Seep Springs Draw. Also,

using hydrologic BMP on the existing roads and trails will help ensure that the soils stay in place.

No Action: The No Action alternative in this case would result in the greatest amount of roads being allowed to vegetate and return closest to a pre-road condition.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: This geographic area has been a popular recreation site for many years and has seen increased motorized use in recent years. This use has negatively impacted the soil resources by increasing erosion. Additional use on the newly acquired parcel will add impacts to the soil resource in the area as a whole.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Upland Soils: Currently, soils in these areas are meeting standards, except on the roads themselves. If the Alternative C, No Action Alternative or Alternative B is chosen there would be a greater amount of soil meeting standards as the soils revegetate. Alternative A would lead to a greater amount of soil not meeting standards as traffic levels increase.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Elevation on the parcels varies from approximately 6,000 ft. to 6,600 ft. Significant plant growth usually begins to occur in mid – late May. Generally, the night-time temperatures in mid September begin to fall low enough to significantly reduce and eventually halt plant growth. July and August are usually the wettest months of the year as well and the warmest. The combination of available moisture and warm temperatures tend to provide July and August with the most favorable conditions for plant growth during the year.

Vegetation is primarily comprised of piñon/juniper woodlands interspersed with small meadows or large parks of open grasslands. The areas dominated piñon/juniper woodlands generally are characterized by shallow soils and substantially less herbaceous ground cover than the parks or grasslands. Erosion potentials for these vegetation communities tend to be somewhat higher due to these two influences. These communities also often occupy the steeper, rockier terrain on the parcels. Areas with steeper slopes have even higher erosion potentials. Also, due to the reduced amount of herbaceous vegetation and shallow soils, natural re-vegetation of disturbed areas, such as roads or trails, is much slower in areas dominated by piñon/juniper vegetation than in other plant communities.

The portions of the parcels occupied by small meadows or larger, open parks tend to have much deeper soils with a greater water-holding capacity than the piñon/juniper woodlands. The parks are dominated by blue gramma and sand dropseed. Other grass species such as western wheatgrass, three-awn, sideoats gramma, bottlebrush squirreltail, needle-and-thread grass and Indian ricegrass are also present. Shrubs and half-shrubs such as cholla, soapweed, snakeweed, rabbitbrush, currant, Gamble oak, fringed sage and mountain mahogany also exist in the area on both sites. In the parks and meadows, the deep soils and relatively shallow root systems of grass and forb species tend to make these sites somewhat more susceptible to damage from vehicle use

than other sites within the planning area. When soils are wet, these areas are highly susceptible to rutting from vehicle tires. Furthermore, under wet conditions, vehicle operators often tend to drive to the sides of existing ruts causing additional damage and “braiding” of trails that result in further loss of vegetation. Grassland communities, however, also tend to re-vegetate more rapidly when undisturbed than the piñon/juniper sites.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Shaws Park Parcel: The Shaws Parks Park Parcel contains a substantially higher amount of the deeper soiled, open parks and meadows than the Garden Park Parcel, making it somewhat more susceptible to damage from vehicle use. Many of the proposed routes on all three of the alternatives are located along or cross these open parks and meadows, including segments B-G, H-I, G-I, and to a lesser extent, B-C and I-L. Under Alternative B, travel along all of these segments would be restricted to bicycle, horse, and foot uses. This would provide the maximum amount of protection to the vegetation in the areas most susceptible to damage from vehicle use. Under Alternative C, travel along four of these main routes (B-G, H-I, G-I and I-L) would be restricted to bicycle, horse, and foot uses. This would also provide an acceptable level of protection to the vegetation in the areas most susceptible to damage from vehicle use.

Even when motorized use is restricted to designated and signed trails, some degree of unauthorized off road use or braiding of trails typically continues to occur. Typically the most effective way to eliminate these problems is to remove motorized traffic completely from areas where travel is not physically confined to the designated route. Alternative C and Alternative B do this for the areas that are most susceptible to damage from vehicle use.

Under Alternative A, travel along all of the segments most susceptible to damage, plus additional segments such as M-G, would be open to motorized uses. This alternative provides the least protection for vegetation in these areas. It is likely that some amount of rutting from vehicle tires and “braiding” of trails will occur in these areas under Alternative A.

Garden Park Parcel: The Garden Park Parcel is comprised of a higher amount of Piñon/juniper woodland vegetation than the Shaws Park Parcel. Piñon/juniper sites tend to have high erosion potentials. However, existing travel routes through these woodlands often tend to be somewhat confined by topography or by the presence of woodland vegetation. This frequently offsets the potential for additional damage to vegetative resources in these areas. Therefore, the potential for damage to vegetation from vehicle travel off of designated routes or from “braiding” of trails is somewhat less on the Garden Park Parcel than on many routes in the Shaws Park Parcel. Additionally, revegetation of routes in piñon/juniper communities tends to occur extremely slowly and often would not occur completely in the foreseeable future. Therefore, there is often less benefit in closing existing routes or restricting methods of travel across piñon/juniper woodlands than on other, more productive or deeper soiled sites.

Under Alternative C, the existing route between points A and I would be designated as open to include all motorized uses. Under Alternative A, this segment, plus additional segments H-K and H-J, would be open to all motorized uses. Because of the rocky nature of the existing

roads and the fact that travel along these routes tend to be somewhat physically confined, the potential for damage to vegetative resources under either of these alternatives is relatively low.

Obviously, Alternative B, which eliminates motorized travel on all areas beyond point D, provides the most amount of protection for vegetative resources in the area. However, any disturbance to vegetation from the establishment of the existing primitive roads has already long since occurred. Since it is unlikely that these routes will revegetate completely, even under the other alternatives, the benefits to vegetative resources of closing segments D-J, H-I or H-K to motorized vehicle use is relatively low.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: The scope impacts include the Garden Park, Shaw Park parcels and the surrounding public lands in the immediate vicinity. Cumulative impacts will be minimal if motorized uses are restricted and managed to prevent new damage to vegetation and allow recovery. Other areas of public land nearby are designated for more intensive motorized use and managing these new parcels of public land with minimal impacts will be a benefit.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Since the two acquisition parcels are currently nonfederal lands, they have not specifically been inventoried or assessed against current vegetative standards for public land. Assessments of adjacent public lands in the Fourmile Watershed were conducted in 2000 and 2001. These assessments indicate that most of the adjacent public land in the area exhibit vegetative production and species composition appropriate to the area.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Two areas of aquatic habitat are directly involved by the acquisition discussed here; Seep Springs-which flows off of existing BLM onto the Shaws Park parcel, and Felch Gulch which flows off existing BLM on Cooper Mountain onto the Garden Park Parcel. Wilson Creek receives Seep Springs flow and Felch Gulch flows to Four Mile Creek. Both waters rapidly begin to sub and their lower terminus is variable depending on the current water year as they transition to ephemeral systems on the new BLM parcels. There are some seasonally wet stock ponds in the watershed as well, but they are not inventoried and likely dry most of the year. Neither known wet area within their respective gulches is directly affected under any alternative as no route travels within either water source, but travel in the Seep Springs watershed, above the named spring, yields some indirect affects. (see also Water Quality and Soils sections). Seep springs draw above the spring has a historic, lightly used, two track ranch style road adjacent to the draw that was used by previous ranching operations coming off then deeded property. The potential continued use of that route by varying modes of travel is really the only indirect decision other than watershed level affects (see Water Quality section) that potentially alters this spring. The spring has not been inventoried for aquatic organisms, but locally is likely important because of the distance to other water and likely supports some common amphibians Otherwise, the route segments discussed are upland and the decision about each remaining open pertains to watershed health. Seep Springs Gulch is degraded by land use actions, primarily grazing,

upstream on existing BLM and on the acquisition parcel around the spring. At present the roads above the spring are lightly used because Blackhawk has blocked access other than some trespass. Further description is within the Acquisition EA; CO-200-2005-0086, which analyzes acquiring the tracts discussed here. Both waterways flow during heavy precipitation events, but are otherwise generally considered intermittent/ephemeral most years on the acquisition parcels.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: Alternative A is really a no change Alternative to the existing condition in that the road up Seep Springs draw is retained, however use can be expected to greatly increase. In addition more miles of full size vehicle-open-route remain open in the entire watershed. This will keep route width wider and not promote vegetation expansion. Although this Alternative does not change routes on the site of the spring, use will increase and restoration of a high route density is not a part of this Alternative. Felch Gulch is largely unaffected as the route which crosses it remains administrative under any Alternative.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Hydrologic controls need to be implemented upon the road network if these routes remain motorized.

Alternative B: Turning the named routes to the low impact trail network shown does the most to reduce the erosion in the watershed and best protects the actual Seep Spring from siltation. Felch Gulch is largely unaffected as a route that crosses it remains administrative under any Alternative.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Hydrologic controls need to be implemented upon some of the route network if these routes remain open trails and cannot re-vegetate naturally.

Alternative C: This Alternative reduces the size of the route up Seep Springs draw above the named springs and can be viewed as less of an impact than Alternative A, but does not allow for the re-vegetation that would occur under Alternative C. Felch Gulch is largely unaffected as the route which crosses it remains administrative under any Alternative.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Hydrologic controls need to be implemented upon the road network if these routes remain motorized even if only open to ATV, and the remaining non-motorized trails if erosion persists after vehicle traffic is removed.

No Action: No Actions keeps all routes administrative use only. As such they would largely re-vegetate and stabilize. Felch Gulch is largely unaffected as the route which crosses it remains administrative under any Alternative.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Hydrologic controls need to be implemented upon the road network if these routes remain administrative if after a lower use period, some specific locations continue to be erosive.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: There are many routes in the Four Mile watershed. There are continually more roads built annually as private lands have greatly

subdivided. The cumulative total affects upon floodplains of any Alternative selected here is minor relative to surrounding lands in the watershed, but Alternative B is the best to offset watershed impacts affecting the small amount of aquatic habitat at the spring from siltation.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Currently Seep Springs is not meeting the Land Health Standards for riparian on existing BLM, but mainly relative to exotic vegetation and grazing. As such, the aquatic habitat is modified. Improvements are underway. Proposed routes may alter planned recovery slightly through added erosion depending upon the mode of travel, and Alternative B would best buffer the spring area, but grazing changes should recover the spring regardless of upstream travel plans.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: This assessment area is occupied by a habitat type that consists primarily of piñon pine and juniper. Open areas of mountain grassland are interspersed throughout the area and mountain shrubs such as currant and mountain mahogany are abundant, especially on south slopes. Foothills riparian forests are found in a few isolated portions of the planning area. The most significant riparian resources are found in Felch Creek. A limited amount of riparian habitat is found near water sources in the Shaw Park area. In this area the riparian forest is dominated by a deciduous component, especially narrowleaf cottonwood and willow. The understory of these systems is typically rich, with a wide variety of shrubs and herbaceous plants.

Wildlife species occupying the assessment area are typical of the piñon-juniper forest and include mule deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, coyote, badger, cottontail rabbit and rock squirrel. Common bird species are listed in the Migratory Bird section of this EA. Habitat in the area could also support a small number of raptors because suitable habitat exists in the rocky cliffs that are found in nearby drainages. Raptors that would be common include red-tailed hawk, kestrel and golden eagle.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: Alternative A would make most of the existing routes in both Shaw Park and Garden Park available for motorized uses. This alternative could lead to unauthorized use in adjacent habitats and could potentially threaten terrestrial wildlife species. Providing access to Felch Creek could very likely lead to unauthorized use in the riparian area, a critical habitat type in the area. During severe winters pronghorn will occasionally migrate to Shaw Park from South Park. This occurs about 2 years of every ten years. Unlimited motorized access under this alternative threatens to impact critical pronghorn winter range. In addition, public use during this time of stress could impact individual animals.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Mitigation measures would need to be implemented and would include numerous physical barriers to prevent off road travel. Signs would need to be installed and an increased law enforcement presence would be needed.

Alternative B: In the Garden Park parcel Alternative B provides the least amount of motorized use in the area and would be the preferred alternative for wildlife resources. However this alternative restricts motorized use and eliminates it from areas where this use has been allowed in the past. More importantly, this alternative protects the riparian resource along Felch Creek by not allowing motorized uses in this area. In the Shaw Park area Alternative B does not allow any motorized use in the newly acquired parcel and would provide for maximum benefits for the wildlife resource.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Mitigation measures would need to be implemented and would include numerous physical barriers to prevent off road travel. Signs would need to be installed and an increased law enforcement presence would be needed.

Alternative C: This alternative prohibits motorized use along Felch Creek but does allow some additional uses to the south along a traditional road system. This alternative allows the use of one short section of road by ATV's on the northwestern part of the parcel and provides a loop trail that includes the Seep Springs area. The majority of the area will be limited to non-motorized use which is a benefit to wildlife resources.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Mitigation measures would need to be implemented and would include numerous physical barriers to prevent off road travel. Signs would need to be installed and an increased law enforcement presence would be needed.

No Action: From the standpoint of protecting wildlife habitat and preventing disturbances to wildlife, this alternative would be the preferred alternative in that the entire acquisition area is open only for administrative purposes. However this alternative is unreasonable as there is a need to provide reasonable access to public lands.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Mitigation measures would need to be implemented and would include numerous physical barriers to prevent off road travel. Signs would need to be installed and an increased law enforcement presence would be needed.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: The scope of cumulative impacts include the Garden Park, Shaw Park parcels and the surrounding public lands in the immediate vicinity. Cumulative impacts will be minimal if motorized uses are restricted and managed to prevent damage to wildlife habitat and disturbance to animals. Other areas of public land nearby are designated for more intensive motorized use and managing these new parcels of public land with minimal impacts will be a benefit.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): Alternative A would result in high OHV use on both parcels and would have substantial impacts to plant and animal communities. The Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities would not be met under this alternative. Implementation of any of the other alternatives would not affect the public land health standard for plant and animal communities.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, those brought forward for analysis will be formatted as shown above.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire		X	
Forest Management			
Geology and Minerals		X	
Hydrology/Water Rights			X
Law Enforcement	X		
Paleontology			X
Noise		X	
Range Management			X
Realty Authorizations			X
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics		X	
Transportation & Access			X
Visual Resources			X

HYDROLOGY/WATER RIGHTS

Affected Environment: The planning area receives approximately 13-16 inches of precipitation annually resulting in less than one inch of runoff. Most of the area is dry uplands with the exception of roads paralleling Felch Creek and Seep Springs Draw. Felch Creek and Seep Springs Draw are both ephemeral/intermittent drainages that are dry most of the time.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Runoff from roads is greater than from surrounding lands due to soil compaction and the removal of vegetative material. In addition to extra runoff, erosion and sediment loads increase. Overtime, channels and drainages reach equilibrium between the amount of water they carry and the sediment load. The increase in runoff and sediment can cause a disruption in the channel equilibrium of surrounding drainages. Channels can respond by either down cutting or depositing excess sediment, which one happens, depends on several factors including topography and channel type. The Water Quality and Soil sections of this analysis discuss the potential impacts each alternative has on sediment production. The amount of runoff that is possible with each alternative is also analogous to the amount of soil disturbance that is associated with each alternative; soil disturbance is discussed scrupulously in the water quality and soil sections.

Alternative A: Alternative A would have the highest impact by increasing the amount of use on the existing road network that is currently receiving very little use. This would remove vegetation from the portions of the roads that have had vegetation return and increase runoff to nearby drainages. There would be no impact to water rights.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Ensure that all routes meet BLM trail standards and proper hydrologic controls are installed.

Alternative B: Alternative B would have the lowest potential impact to hydrology by allowing most of the existing road network narrow in width as use is restricted to non-motorized travel. This would allow for the most recovery of vegetation and minimize the amount of runoff produced. There would be no impact to water rights.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Ensure that all routes meet BLM trail standards and proper hydrologic controls are installed.

Alternative C: Alternative C could be considered a middle ground between Alternatives A and B. From a hydrology stand point, the two roads that are of the biggest concern are the ones that parallel Felch Creek and Seep Springs Draw. Under this alternative, the road along Felch Creek would remain closed while the road along Seep Springs Draw would be open for ATV use. Having motorized use along this portion of Seep Springs Draw is not ideal; however its impacts to hydrology would be small due to the rocky nature of the terrain in this area. There would be no impact to water rights.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Ensure that all routes meet BLM trail standards and proper hydrologic controls are installed.

No Action: The No Action Alternative would have the least impact in the long run. There would be no impact to water rights.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: None.

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The Garden Park and Shaws Park parcels are located adjacent to the Garden Park ACEC on Morrison and Dakota Formation bedrock. Within the Garden Park ACEC, the Morrison and Dakota formations are designated as Class 5 and higher geologic formations due to the prevalence of scientifically important vertebrate fossils. The Morrison Formation in the Garden Park and Shaws Park parcels also contains Class 5 paleo resources but those areas were not been included in the Garden Park ACEC because it is not public land. Class 5 geologic formations are highly fossiliferous units that regularly and predictably produce vertebrate fossils that are at risk of natural degradation and/or human-caused adverse impacts. Within the Garden Park ACEC, Class 5 Morrison Formation exposures are further divided into 3 subclasses; 5a, 5b, and 5c for intense management of paleontologic resources with Class 5a vertebrate fossils having the highest scientific research potential. 13% of the Shaw Park parcel consists of Class 5, 5b, and 5c geologic formations and 31% of the Garden Park parcel are Class 5 and 5c geologic formations.

Class 5 paleontological resources are the land manager's highest concern. Mitigation of ground disturbing activities is required and may be intense especially in the area encompassed by and surrounding the Garden Park ACEC such as the Garden Park and Shaw's Park parcels.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative C: (see Fig. 1)

Garden Park Parcel: A total of 25,810 sq. ft. of Class 5 paleontological resources would potentially be impacted.

Shaws Park Parcel: A total of 33,380 sq. ft. of Class 5 paleontological resources would potentially be impacted.

Alternative A: (see Fig. 2)

Garden Park Parcel: A total of 183,740 sq. ft. of class 5 including 3696 sq. ft. class 3 paleontological resources would potentially be impacted.

Shaws Park Parcel: A total of 87,230 sq. ft. of class 5 paleontological resources would potentially be impacted.

Alternative B: (see Fig. 3)

Garden Park Parcel: A total of 17,320 sq. ft. of class 5 paleontological resources would potentially be impacted.

Shaws Park Parcel: A total of 18,580 sq. ft. of class 5 paleontological resources would potentially be impacted.

No Action: (see Fig. 4)

If no action is taken and all existing roads become available for horse and foot use, 47,520 sq. ft. of paleontological resources may potentially be affected within the Shaw Park parcel and 15,416 sq. ft. of paleontological resources may potentially be affected within the Garden Park parcel.

Each of the alternatives were analyzed for Class 3, 4, or 5 paleontological resources and potential impact to these resources (see [Appendix A](#)). Comparisons among these alternatives were made based on the maximum width of a path potentially created by each mode of transportation, along the distance of the proposed path segment. Only disturbance to Class 3 and Class 5 paleontologic resources was considered, Class 4 paleontologic resources are not present. ((A) All motorized and mechanized traffic includes cars and trucks with maximum ground disturbance of 10 ft. (B) ATV traffic has a maximum ground disturbance of 6 ft. (C) Horses have a maximum ground disturbance of 4 ft. (D) Bicycles have a maximum ground disturbance of 2 ft. (E) Foot traffic has a maximum ground disturbance of 1 ft.)

Alternative B has potential for less impact than Alternative A, Alternative C, or the No Action Alternative because it is a plan for less motorized travel than either of the other alternatives, and although the No Action Alternative does not allow motorized vehicle use of the existing roads, unmanaged foot and horse access to these roads will cause a greater impact to paleontological resources than Alternative B. Overall, motorized travel has a greater impact than non-motorized travel on the paleontological resources because the vehicles are wider and utilize

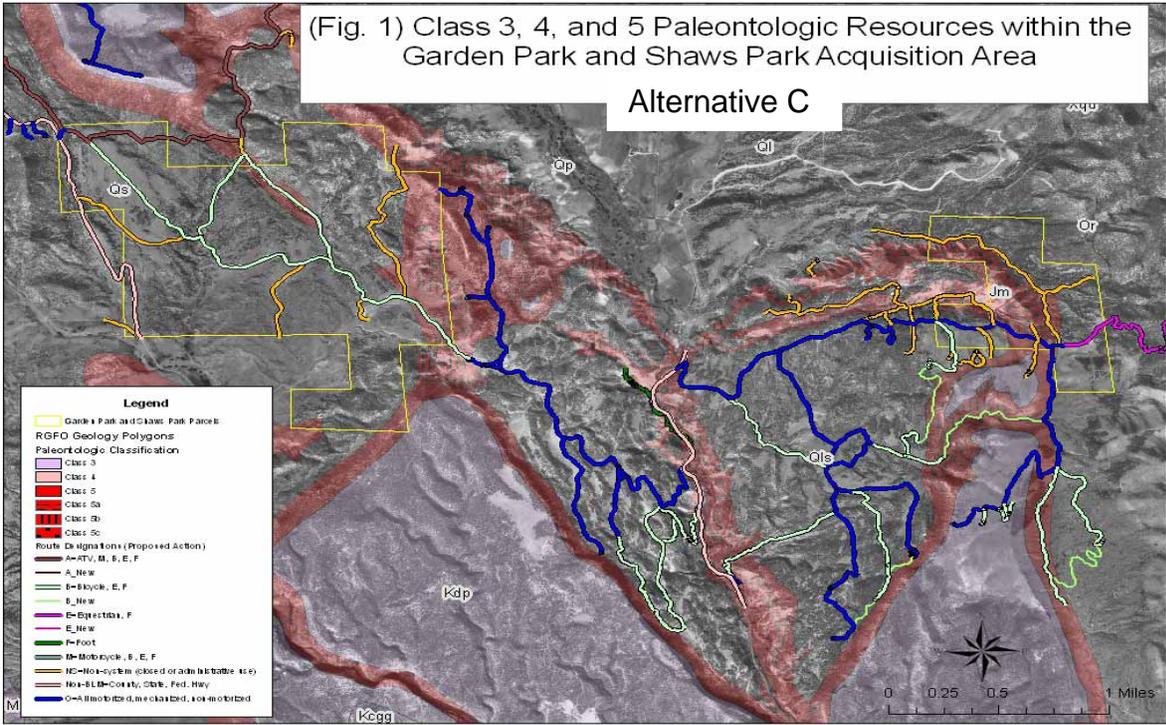
more area than other modes of transportation such as walking, bicycle riding, or horse riding. In addition, due to the large size of most vertebrate fossil material that is found in the Morrison formation in this area, motorized travel also makes it easier to potentially take fossil material from the area, which is illegal without a permit from the BLM. In the past, motorized traffic has driven off the trail through the middle of historic dinosaur quarries. This occurs even when motor vehicles are restricted to existing trails. Because of this, Alternative A has potential for major impact to irreplaceable paleontological resources. While Alternative B and Alternative C also have potential for impacts, these impacts can be effectively managed with the recommended mitigation.

Recommended amendment to Alternative B: Due to ongoing quarry activity within the Shaws Park parcel, it is recommended that the road approaching this parcel from the southeast continue to be maintained for use by full-size vehicles approximately ¼ mile past the turnaround at point I (Fig. 5) and available for administrative purposes only. This segment of road has been successfully used in this manner for several years.

In order to protect the quality of scientific value of fossil material as designated in FLPMA, mitigation should include a paleontological inventory along the road segments that pass through class 5 paleontological resources before the decision is enacted and a cyclic inventory should occur every five years thereafter as part of the cyclic inventory program that is currently being developed in the Royal Gorge Field Office.

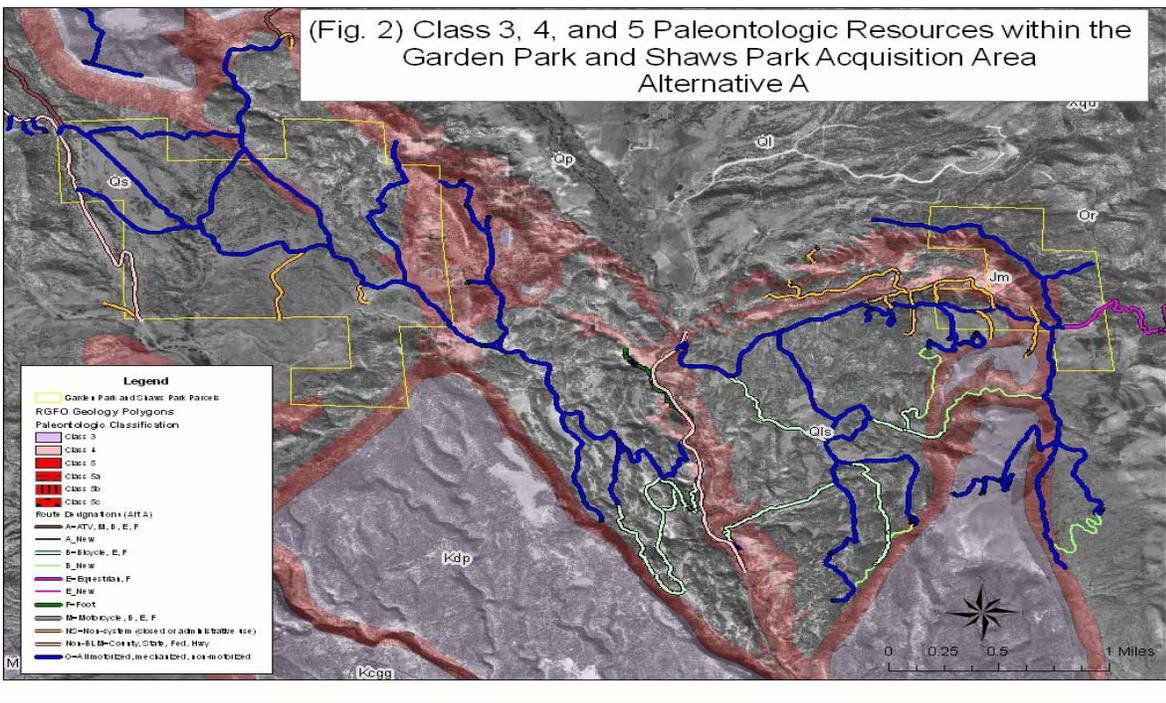
(Fig. 1) Class 3, 4, and 5 Paleontologic Resources within the Garden Park and Shaws Park Acquisition Area

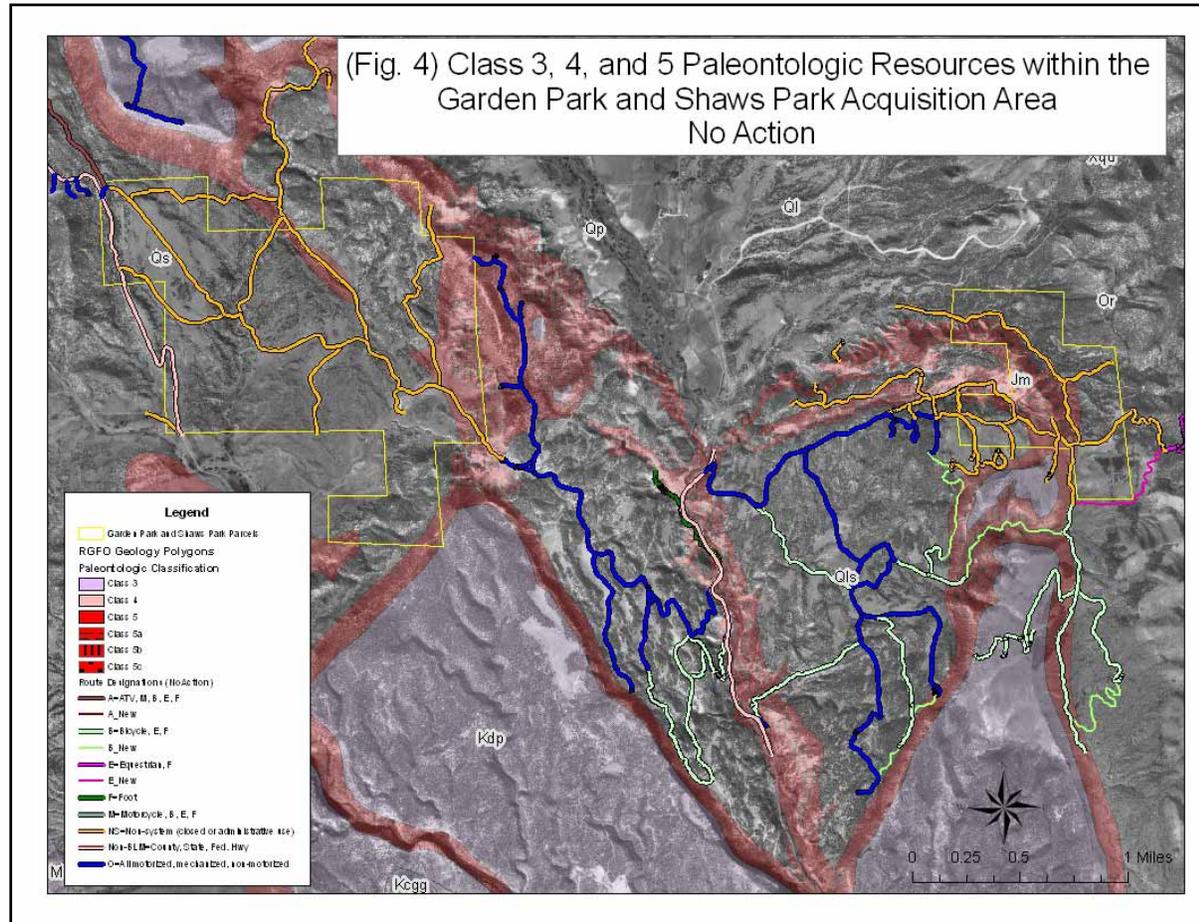
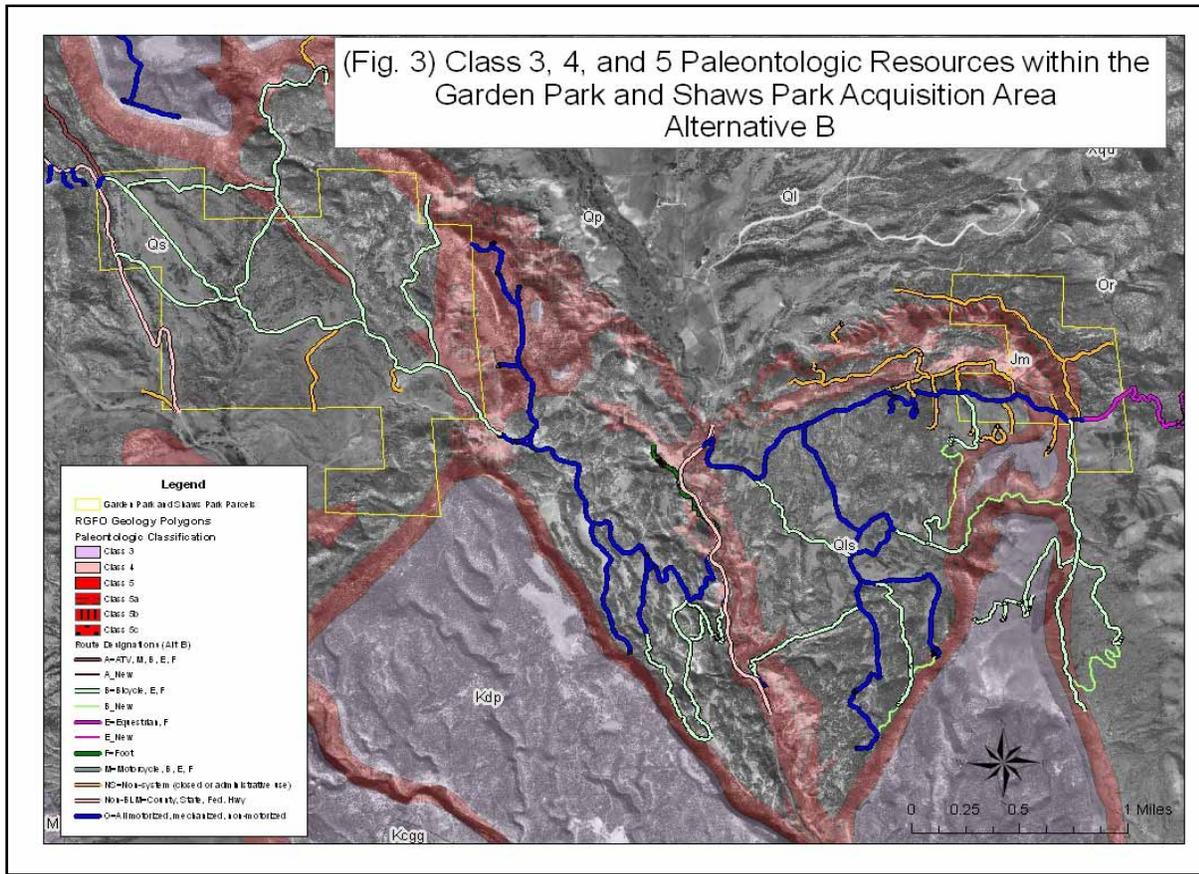
Alternative C



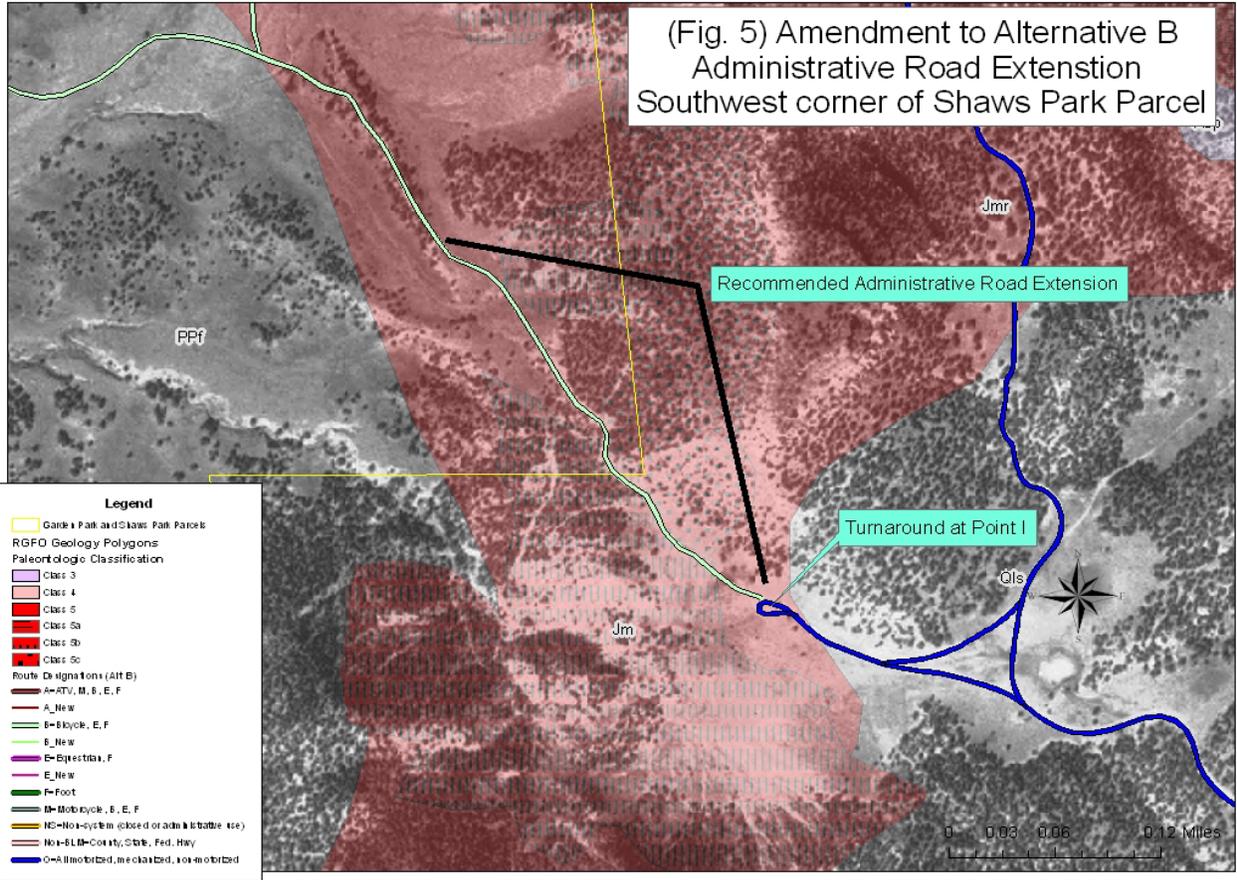
(Fig. 2) Class 3, 4, and 5 Paleontologic Resources within the Garden Park and Shaws Park Acquisition Area

Alternative A





(Fig. 5) Amendment to Alternative B
 Administrative Road Extension
 Southwest corner of Shaws Park Parcel



RANGE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The Garden Park parcel is bordered on three sides by public land included in the Oil Well Flats Grazing Allotment, No. 5083. The parcel is not fenced separately from the surrounding public land and has historically been utilized in conjunction with the allotment. The Shaws Park Parcels is bordered on the north by public land included in the Worley Country Grazing Allotment, No. 5082. The Shaws Park parcel is not currently fenced separately from the public land in the Worley Country Allotment and has frequently been utilized in conjunction with the allotment. Both the Worley Country and Oil Wells Flats allotments are attached to base property owned by the Dilley Family Trust. Currently Robert Shoemaker of Cañon City leases the base property for the Worley Country and Oil Well Flats allotments from the Dilley Family Trust, allowing him to hold the grazing permit for these allotments. The likely outcome of the acquisition of the Garden Park parcel will be to include it with public land in the Oil Well Flats Allotment. The likely outcome of the acquisition of the Shaws Park parcel will be to include it with public land in the Worley Country Allotment. Currently the Oil Well Flats Allotment is grazed from approximately November 1st through May 20th annually. The Worley Country Allotment is currently utilized from approximately September 1st through mid December annually.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Consequences Common to All Alternatives: None of the alternatives would affect access or uses of existing roads and trails for administering grazing operations. Authorized holders of grazing permits would still be allowed to drive on existing roads for the purpose of managing their grazing operations under all of the alternatives. A number of the routes utilized in range management activities are included in the “Non-system” category under each of the alternatives. The Non-system category includes routes that are closed to motorized use by the public but that may be used by authorized persons for administrative purposes. BLM grazing permittees will continue to be allowed vehicular use on Non-system roads needed for managing their operations. Occasional off road vehicle use will also be permitted for administrative purposes only and where such use does not result in undo resource damage. Vehicle use by permittees of BLM non-system roads for purposes other than official administrative duties will not be authorized. Permittees will only be allowed vehicle use on non-system roads on allotments where they hold a valid BLM grazing authorization.

Garden Park Parcel: This parcel has historically been used in conjunction with the surrounding public land. As previously stated, the property in the Garden Park parcel is not fenced where it borders adjoining BLM lands and the land owner has historically allowed public entry into it. Consequently, the public has used the roads and lands in the Garden Park parcel for hunting and other recreational uses. In general, there has been little conflict between motorized vehicle use of the roads and the existing livestock grazing use in the area. It is unlikely that any of the three alternatives would impact the current livestock management of the area. The grazing permittee will continue to require vehicle access to various parts of the allotment for range administration purposes. The permittee will also need access across the parcel and across BLM in the NE¼ of section 35 (T17S, R70W) with heavy equipment (backhoe, etc...) for maintaining an authorized spring development in the area.

Shaws Park Parcel: Few conflicts between the livestock use and any of the alternatives are expected in the vicinity of points G, H, I, J or K under any of the alternatives. However, specific conflicts are likely as follows under various alternatives:

Alternative A: All types of motorized vehicle use would be authorized on most segments under this alternative. Several conflicts are anticipated with this use:

1. There is a high potential for gates being left open at locations B and M. This could lead to the permittee's cattle drifting off of the parcel and onto the nearby county road. There is also high potential for gates being left open at location L, with the potential for the permittee's cattle drifting off of the parcel and onto adjacent BLM allotments outside the authorized season of grazing use.
2. Conflicts with motorized vehicle use of the area near the spring and livestock trail in Seep Spring Draw similar to Alternative C would occur but likely to a greater extent (due to the likely increased amount of vehicle use.).

Mitigation for Alternative A:

1. Full-sized cattle guards would need to be installed at locations B, M and L. Costs of installation of three cattle guards are estimated at approximately \$10,500.00.
2. Walk through gates for foot and horse users should be also installed at locations B and L.

Alternative B: There would be no motorized vehicle use would be authorized on trail segments under this alternative. This alternative obviously produces few conflicts with livestock management of the area.

Mitigation for Alternative B:

1. Walk through gates for foot and horse users should be also installed at locations B, L and M.
2. On the Shaws Park parcel, occasional motorized access across routes B-G, G-H, G-I, G-M, I-H, I-J, J-L will be necessary to maintain range improvements and manage livestock.

Alternative C: ATV use would be authorized on the segments B-C and C-D under this alternative. Several conflicts are anticipated with this use:

1. There is an existing fence near location B on segment B-C. With the increased amount of public use on this parcel, there is the potential for gates being left open at this location. This could allow the permittee's cattle to drift off of the parcel and onto the nearby county road.
2. One of the few livestock water sources in the area is the spring near location C. ATV use in the immediate vicinity of the spring will likely reduce livestock use of the area and cause livestock distribution problems on other areas of the allotment.
3. Due to location of Seep Springs, the existing livestock trail along Seep Springs Draw (between C-D) is the main livestock trail between the northern and southern portions of the allotment. Use of this area by ATVs will likely impede livestock trailing through this area and reduce livestock distribution on the allotment.

Mitigation for Alternative C:

1. An ATV cattle guard, similar to the design already used in the RGFO, should be installed near location B to avoid potential problems with gates being left open in the area. The cost of the ATV cattle guard is approximately \$600.00.
2. The trail near location C should be re-routed to avoid the immediate vicinity of the spring. This will also likely reduce impacts to livestock movement through Seep Springs Draw.
3. “Walk-thru” gates for foot and horse users should be installed at locations B and L to minimize problems with gates being left open and unwanted livestock drift at these locations.
4. On the Shaws Park parcel, occasional motorized access across routes B-G, G-H, G-I, G-M, I-H, I-J, J-L will be necessary to maintain range improvements and manage livestock.

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: The Garden Park and Shaws Park parcels were acquired as part of a land exchange in September of 2008. A final title policy was issued on the parcels insuring title to the United States of America. A perpetual easement for electric and communications lines had been granted to Aquila, Inc. by previous owners. This easement affects the N1/2 of section 29 and the SE1/4 of section 20, T. 17 S., R. 70 W, within the Shaws Park parcel. The easement document describes the easement corridor for the lines as 60 feet in width. This easement, however, also allows for the use of existing roads in the lands listed above and for vehicle use cross-county when needed. The document also states that when exercising its rights of ingress or egress, the grantee will use existing roads or lanes whenever practicable and shall repair any damage caused by its use. The easement is vague in places and the rights conveyed are not always clear. Access opportunities must be provided to satisfy the terms of this easement.

There are no encumbrances on the Garden Park parcel that will have an effect on this proposal.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: This alternative provides for motorized access from a county or state road to most of the currently existing roads in the area addressed by the Aquila easement. The remaining roads in the easement area are designated as administrative use or closed.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: BLM will need to provide Aquila with access across those roads identified as administrative or closed if they are needed for access by the company. If possible a letter of agreement or other document between Black Hills Energy and BLM is desired to document access requirements.

Alternative B: This alternative does not provide identified motorized access from a county or state road to the area addressed by the Aquila easement. Several of the roads in the easement area are designated as open to bicycles or as administrative or closed.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: BLM will need to provide Aquila with access across those roads identified as administrative or closed or as bicycle routes if they are needed for access by the company. If possible a letter of agreement or other document between Black Hills Energy and BLM is desired to document access requirements.

Alternative C: This alternative does not provide identified motorized access from a county or state road to the area addressed by the Aquila easement. Several of the roads in the easement area are designated as open to bicycles or as administrative or closed.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: BLM will need to provide Aquila with access across those roads identified as administrative or closed or as bicycle routes if they are needed for access by the company. If possible a letter of agreement or other document between Black Hills Energy and BLM is desired to document access requirements.

No Action: This alternative does not provide identified motorized access from a county or state road to the area addressed by the Aquila easement. The road system is identified as closed or administrative routes.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: BLM will need to provide Aquila with access across those roads identified as administrative or closed if they are needed for access by the company. If possible a letter of agreement or other document between Black Hills Energy and BLM is desired to document access requirements.

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: None

RECREATION

Affected Environment: Both parcels are within the Gold Belt Special Recreation Management Area and are close to the Gold Belt Tour National Scenic and Historic Byway.

Garden Park Parcel: The Garden Park parcel is adjacent to the “Oil Well Flats” area of Garden Park and the Cooper Mountain area. The parcel is a transition zone from a Semi-Primitive, Motorized setting in Garden Park to a Semi-Primitive, Non-Motorized setting on Cooper Mountain. Until a locked gate was installed recently, this parcel had been used by the public as if it was public land, and it provided access to a network of primitive roads on public land. Most visitors did not realize the parcel was private land because it was not posted as such.

This parcel and the Garden Park area are close to Cañon City and have been used primarily by local residents for a variety of recreation activities. These activities include off-road vehicle driving, target shooting, hunting, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, dispersed camping, and picnicking. Private ranches adjacent to the public land in the Garden Park area are being subdivided and developed into 35-acre home sites. Recreation use of public lands will continue to increase as a result of increasing the number of residents in the immediate area of Garden Park and because of overall population growth in the Cañon City area. The area provides an easily accessible area for local residents to realize benefits from enjoying nature,

escaping pressures of daily life, spending time with family and friends, practicing skills, and getting physical exercise.

Over the past fifteen years, increasing, and often conflicting use within Garden Park has led to concerns about visitor safety and resource damage. Many of these concerns related to the increase in recreational target shooting, off-road vehicle use, and illegal trash dumping. This increase and change in use also was changing the social component of the recreation setting from the Roded Natural and Semi-Primitive, Motorized classes prescribed in the RMP toward the Rural and Urban classes. Restricting target shooting, establishing a designated system of roads and trails, increasing law enforcement and education, and closing sensitive areas to damaging activities have improved the resource conditions and visitor safety and helped to maintain the recreation settings prescribed in the RMP.

Several thousand visitors pass through the Garden Park area while traveling the Gold Belt Byway. Most of this use occurs on and immediately adjacent to the Shelf Road and includes activities such as viewing scenery, picnicking, hiking, and visiting the fossil quarries. As these visitors become more aware of recreation opportunities available on public lands adjacent to the Byway, the use of the Garden Park area by non-resident visitors will increase.

Shaws Park Parcel: The parcel lies between public lands in Garden Park and Seep Springs. In contrast to the Garden Park parcel, the private landowner discouraged public use of this parcel so public use for recreation is not established there. The network of existing roads and the physical characteristics of this parcel could provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities – motorized and non-motorized. This parcel also could enhance the recreation opportunities and settings available in the larger area by linking Garden Park and Seep Springs.

The recreation setting for Shaws Park is Roded Natural within one-half mile of County Road 69 and Semi-Primitive, Motorized for the rest of the parcel. This area provides an easily accessible area for local residents to realize benefits from enjoying nature, escaping pressures of daily life, spending time with family and friends, practicing skills, and getting physical exercise. As the local and regional population has grown over the past fifteen years, recreational use of this area has increased and is expected to continue to increase.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A:

Garden Park Parcel: Under this alternative, 6.56 miles of routes would be available for both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. Approximately two miles of routes would be available for non-motorized recreation, less than one mile of designated routes would be designated for equestrian and hiking use and less than one mile of administrative routes would be available for equestrian and hiking use. This alternative would provide opportunities for off-road vehicle driving and mountain biking on designated routes, hunting, hiking, horseback riding, dispersed camping, and picnicking. Most of the routes that would be designated for motorized use are routes that were used for many years by the public until the access to the area

was closed by the private landowner. The re-opening of these routes would enhance recreation opportunities for motorized recreation, in particular.

Although this alternative provides non-motorized recreation opportunities, motorized recreation activities would likely dominate the area and decrease the number of people in this area seeking non-motorized recreation opportunities such as hiking. Over time, impacts such as noise, litter, soil and vegetation damage, campsite proliferation, and the number of users and encounters between users would increase. This would lead to a change in the recreation setting from Semi-Primitive, Motorized (as prescribed in the RMP) to Roaded Natural.

This alternative would provide an easily accessible area for local residents and out of area visitors who are primarily interested in motorized recreation opportunities to realize benefits from enjoying nature, escaping pressures of daily life, spending time with family and friends, practicing skills, and getting physical exercise.

Shaws Park Parcel: Under this alternative, the majority of the existing primitive road network would be designated for motorized and non-motorized recreation uses. No routes would be designated for non-motorized recreation only. About one mile of administrative routes would be available for equestrian and hiking uses. This would significantly enhance motorized recreation opportunities in Seep Springs, Shaws Park and the west side of Garden Park by linking these areas with a relatively extensive road network. This alternative would provide opportunities for off-road vehicle driving and mountain biking on designated routes, hunting, hiking, horseback riding, dispersed camping, and picnicking.

Although this alternative does not exclude non-motorized recreation activities, motorized recreation activities would likely dominate in Shaws Park and the surrounding lands in Seep Springs and Garden Park. This would decrease the participation of the public in this area who are seeking non-motorized recreation opportunities in a relatively quiet, semi-primitive setting. Shaws Park would require relatively intensive management of motorized recreation by BLM through the use of signs, barriers, fencing, staging areas, education and law enforcement in order to keep vehicles on designated routes through the open, gentle terrain. Over time, impacts such as noise, litter, soil and vegetation damage, campsite proliferation, and the number of users and encounters between users would be expected to increase. This would lead to a change in the recreation setting from Semi-Primitive, Motorized (as prescribed in the RMP) to Roaded Natural.

This alternative would provide an easily accessible and relatively large area for local residents and out of area visitors who are primarily interested in motorized recreation opportunities to realize benefits from enjoying nature, escaping pressures of daily life, spending time with family and friends, practicing skills, and getting physical exercise.

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

1. Monitor and evaluate the levels and types of uses on designated routes in order to achieve the DFCs for the subunits. Monitoring would include: traffic counter data, surveys, observation, etc.
2. Develop educational materials for users including site specific maps, brochures, and kiosks. Incorporate information about responsible use and regulations into all educational materials.
3. Develop staging and parking areas/trailheads at major access points.
4. Develop and maintain partnerships with key stakeholders.
5. Implement closures (wet weather, seasonal) to protect resources and infrastructure.

Alternative B:

Garden Park Parcel: Under this alternative, motorized use would be significantly restricted. It would not allow motorized recreation use on a segment of road where this use is well established. This alternative would enhance opportunities for mountain biking on designated routes, hunting (non-motorized), hiking, horseback riding, and dispersed camping (non-motorized). Legal access would be provided to the public for these recreation opportunities that were previously attained by trespassing on private land.

These recreation opportunities would be consistent with the Semi-Primitive, Non-Motorized setting for Cooper Mountain – this setting allows only non-motorized use; however, these recreation opportunities would not be consistent with the Semi-Primitive, Motorized setting that is prescribed in the RMP for most of Garden Park.

Under this alternative, the area would provide an easily accessible area for local residents with interests in non-motorized recreation opportunities to realize benefits from enjoying nature, escaping pressures of daily life, spending time with family and friends, practicing skills, and getting physical exercise.

Shaws Park Parcel: Under this alternative, motorized use would not be permitted in Shaws Park. This alternative would enhance recreation opportunities for mountain biking on designated routes, hunting (non-motorized), hiking, horseback riding, and dispersed camping (non-motorized). Due to the nature of the terrain, the historical lack of access, and the motorized use on adjoining public lands in Seep Springs and Garden Park, the recreation use of this area would be relatively low. These recreation opportunities would not be consistent with the Semi-Primitive, Motorized setting that is prescribed in the RMP.

Under this alternative, the area would provide an easily accessible area for local residents and out of area visitors with interests in non-motorized recreation opportunities to realize benefits from enjoying nature, escaping pressures of daily life, spending time with family and friends, practicing skills, and getting physical exercise.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

Alternative C:

Garden Park Parcel: This alternative would allow all types of motorized recreation use on a segment of road (B-I) where this use is well established. It would designate approximately five miles of routes for non-motorized uses only. In addition, non-system routes that are closed to all motorized and mechanized uses would be available for horseback riding and hiking. They would not be available for mountain biking. It would provide opportunities for off-road vehicle driving and mountain biking on designated routes, hunting, hiking, horseback riding, dispersed camping, and picnicking. These recreation opportunities would be consistent with the Semi-Primitive, Motorized setting for Garden Park – this setting allows for a mixture of motorized, mechanized and non-motorized uses – and the Semi-Primitive, Non-Motorized setting for Cooper Mountain – this setting allows only non-motorized use. Legal access would be provided to public for these recreation opportunities that were previously attained by trespassing on private land.

Under this alternative, the area would continue to provide an easily accessible area for local residents with interests in a variety of recreation opportunities to realize benefits from enjoying nature, escaping pressures of daily life, spending time with family and friends, practicing skills, and getting physical exercise.

Shaws Park Parcel: This alternative would enhance recreation opportunities by designating approximately two miles of existing primitive road for ATV, motorcycle, mountain bike, horse, and hiking use. This primitive road would be connected with the extensive road and trail network in Seep Springs by constructing a short segment of trail. In particular, this would enhance opportunities for ATV and motorcycle riders by providing an opportunity for a six mile loop ride with several smaller loops and spurs. These routes would also be used to a lesser extent by equestrians and mountain bikers. Use by hikers would be very limited due to the well-established motorized use in the Seep Springs area.

It would enhance recreation opportunities for mountain bikers, equestrians, and hikers by designating 3.74 miles of routes for non-motorized uses through the central portion of Shaws Park. In addition, 2.70 miles of non-system routes that are closed to all motorized and mechanized uses would be available for horseback riding and hiking. These recreation opportunities would be consistent with the Semi-Primitive, Motorized and Roaded Natural settings – these settings allow for a mixture of motorized, mechanized and non-motorized uses.

Under this alternative, Shaws Park would not provide a link between Garden Park and Seep Springs for motorized recreation. The designation of the routes as non-motorized through the gently rolling, open terrain in Shaws Park would assist in minimizing user created motorized routes as well as impacts from dispersed camping, target shooting, and trash dumping. It would also protect the Semi-Primitive setting of the majority of Shaws Park and the west side of Garden Park by deterring these activities.

It would provide opportunities for off-road vehicle driving and mountain biking on designated routes, hunting, hiking, horseback riding, dispersed camping, and picnicking. Shaws Park and the adjacent public lands would provide an easily accessible area for local residents and out of area visitors with interests in a variety of recreation opportunities to realize benefits from enjoying nature, escaping pressures of daily life, spending time with family and friends, practicing skills, and getting physical exercise.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

No Action Alternative:

Under the No Action Alternative, recreation opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and dispersed camping (non-motorized) would be enhanced because the existing road network on the two parcels would be administrative routes making them available for these activities. Opportunities for motorized recreation and mountain biking would not be enhanced because routes would not be designated for these uses.

On the Shaws Park parcel, horseback riding would be the dominant the recreation activity and use would be relatively low. On the Garden Park parcel, hiking and horseback riding would be the dominant activities; moderate increases in these uses would occur but would not reach high levels. These recreation opportunities would not be consistent with the Semi-Primitive, Motorized setting that is prescribed in the RMP for Garden Park and Shaws Park but would be consistent with the Semi-Primitive, Non-Motorized setting for Cooper Mountain.

Under this alternative, the area would provide an easily accessible area for local residents and out of area visitors with interests in non-motorized recreation opportunities to realize benefits from enjoying nature, escaping pressures of daily life, spending time with family and friends, practicing skills, and getting physical exercise.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Same as Alternative A.

Cumulative Impacts: Alternative A: Over time, the Semi-Primitive, Motorized recreation setting in this area would change to a Roaded Natural setting. Alternative B: Over time, the Semi-Primitive, Motorized recreation setting in this area would change to a Semi-Primitive, Non-Motorized setting. Alternative C: No cumulative impacts to the existing recreation opportunities and settings are anticipated. An increase in user conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation users may occur in the Oil Well Flats area. No Action Alternative: Same as Alternative B.

TRANSPORTATION & ACCESS

Affected Environment: The existing transportation routes and access status is thoroughly described in the ISSUES AND CONCERNS and Background/Introduction sections near the beginning of this document.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: Alternative A emphasizes motorized access and uses for both of the acquired parcels and surrounding BLM lands. Compared to other alternatives, Alternative A would provide the greatest increase in public access for motorized uses and the greatest costs for maintaining the designated routes and enforcing off-road restrictions. Under Alternative A, the existing roads that were closed in the Garden Park parcel under the Gold Belt TMP would be reopened to full-size vehicles to reestablish the motorized access that had been available to the public prior to the closure of the roads. In addition, most of the existing roads in the Shaws Park parcel and southern end of Seep Springs Draw would be designated as open to full-size motor vehicles.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: See mitigation measures under Recreation section.

Alternative B: Alternative B emphasizes mechanized and non-motorized access for most of the affected area while increasing motorized access into a portion of the Garden Park parcel. Compared to the No Action Alternative, Alternative B would substantially increase public access to the acquired properties and to the surrounding BLM lands but not as much as either the Alternative A or Alternative C. Under Alternative B, the access road into the southwest portion of the Garden Park parcel (between points A and E, as shown on the maps) that was closed after the Gold Belt TMP was approved would be reopened to full-size motor vehicles, and a parking lot would be constructed in the vicinity of point E. The existing roads leading south from point D and east from point E would remain closed to motorized uses, however, in accordance with the route designations that were made in the Gold Belt TMP. Under this alternative, the most of the

existing roads in the Shaws Park parcel and in the southern portion of Seep Springs Draw would be limited to mechanized (mountain bikes) and non-motorized uses (foot and horse). The initial and long-term costs required for implementing, maintaining, and enforcing travel management under Alternative B would be greater than the No Action Alternative but less than would be needed for Alternative A or Alternative C.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: See mitigation measures under Recreation section.

Alternative C: This alternative is aimed at increasing access and travel opportunities for motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses while meeting the desired future conditions that guided the travel management decisions that were made in the Gold Belt TMP. Compared to the No Action Alternative, the alternative would substantially increase public access to the acquired properties and surrounding BLM lands. The access road into the southwest portion of the Garden Park acquired parcel that was closed after the Gold Belt TMP was approved would be reopened to full-size motor vehicles. This road would also be reopened from the point where it emerges from the acquired parcel (near point “D” on the maps of the Garden Park alternatives) to allow motor vehicles to continue to the rim of the escarpment overlooking Oil Well Flats (point “I” on the maps). This action would reopen 2.4 miles of the existing roads that were closed under the Gold Belt TMP and it would partially reestablish the motorized access that had been available to the public prior to the closure of the road. This alternative would also provide 4.2 miles of routes that would be available for mechanized (mountain bike) and non-motorized (horse and foot) uses, and 0.7 miles limited to foot and horse use, only. Public access would also be substantially increased for the Shaws Park property and to the adjoining BLM lands by the establishment of 2.2 miles of designated routes that would be available for ATV, motorcycle, mechanized, and non-motorized uses. This alternative would also designate 3.7 miles of routes that would be open to mechanized and non-motorized uses. Both initial and long-term expenditures would be needed for implementing Alternative C; involving costs associated with constructing new trails and parking facilities, installing signs, installing cattle guards and “cow-proof” walk-thru fence stiles, maintaining designated roads and trails, and enforcing off-road travel restrictions. Such costs would be much greater than the costs for implementing either the No Action Alternative or Alternative B but much lower than the costs for implementing Alternative A.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: See mitigation measures under Recreation section.

No Action: The No Action Alternative emphasizes minimal public access and would not affect the travel management decisions that were made in the Gold Belt TMP. Of the four alternatives, the No Action Alternative would increase public access the least. Those BLM lands that currently adjoin private lands and that are difficult to access would be easier to reach due to the change in the land status of the acquired parcels from private to public ownership, however, uses on the acquired and affected BLM lands would be limited to non-motorized modes of travel (foot and horse) only. Under the No Action Alternative, no motorized or mechanized travel routes would be designated for public use. Consequently, the No Action Alternative would require the least costs for maintaining the transportation system and enforcing off-road travel restrictions in the affected areas. Initially, however, expenditures would be needed to install road

barriers and travel management signs and to construct new fencing to prevent motorized uses in the affected areas.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: See mitigation measures under Recreation section.

Cumulative Impacts: Alternative A: Because motorized use is emphasized, motorized recreation would be expected to increase on both parcels and the adjacent public lands. This alternative would require the greatest expenditures over time for road and trail maintenance and on-site management controls. Alternative B: Because non-motorized use is emphasized and access is enhanced, non-motorized recreation such as mountain biking, horseback riding, and hiking would increase over time on these parcels and adjacent public lands. Long-term implementation costs would be greater than the No Action Alternative but less than would be needed for Alternative A or Alternative C. Alternative C: Motorized use would be expected to increase over time in the north part of Shaws Park and Seep Springs and on open routes on the east side of Garden Park. Non-motorized use will increase in most of Shaws Park, Oil Well Flats, and Cooper Mountain. Implementation costs would be much greater than the No Action Alternative and Alternative B but much lower than the costs for implementing Alternative A.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Visual Resource Management (VRM) is a classification system for identifying and characterizing visual resource values. VRM classes were assigned in the RMP for all BLM-administered lands in the Royal Gorge Field Office. Any projects of on-going management on public lands should meet the applicable VRM class objectives. The greatest potential for adverse impacts to visual resources from travel management planning is the designation of routes for motorized use and the construction of new travel routes. In general, travel management helps reduce impacts to visual resources by restricting motorized and mechanized vehicles to designated routes, closing user-created routes, and enhancing on-the-ground management.

The entire Shaws Park parcel and the majority of the Garden Park parcel are Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class III. A small portion (40 acres) of the Garden Park parcel is VRM Class II and adjoins public lands that are VRM Class II along the Gold Belt Tour National Scenic and Historic Byway.

VRM Class III areas are moderately valued for visual resources. Management activities under VRM Class III may attract the attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. VRM Class II areas are highly valued for visual resources. Management activities under VRM Class II may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: This alternative would meet the management objectives for VRM Class III; however, impacts to visual resources would be greater than the other alternatives because of the designation of most of the existing road network for motorized vehicles. Some areas such as Shaws Park would require relatively intensive on site management controls that would increase

visual impacts such as signs, barriers, fencing, and staging areas. Over time, visual impacts from litter, soil and vegetation damage, user created routes, and campsite proliferation would be expected to increase. The small segment of new motorized trail that would be constructed to provide a loop route between Seep Springs and Shaws Park would minimize new visual impacts by following terrain features and using construction materials that blend with the surrounding features. Motorized use within the small portion of VRM Class II area in Garden Park would be restricted to a well-established existing route.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Any new routes constructed should incorporate measures to reduce visual impacts and meet VRM class objectives.

Alternative B: This alternative would meet the management objectives for VRM Class III and would improve visual resources by reducing the amount of motorized use. The closure of routes to motorized use would decrease visual impacts over time as these routes would tend to become narrower and re-vegetated to some extent. Visual impacts from on-site management controls would be less than Alternative A and would include signs to mark designated routes and barriers and fencing where necessary to implement route closures. Visual impacts from litter, soil and vegetation damage, user created routes, and campsite proliferation would be expected to decrease. Motorized use within the small portion of VRM Class II area in Garden Park would be restricted to a well-established existing route.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Alternative C: This alternative would meet the management objectives for VRM Class III. Impacts to visual resources would be minimal because recreation activities would occur primarily on and along existing routes. Motorized and mechanized vehicles would be restricted to designated routes. The small segment of new motorized trail that would be constructed to provide a loop route between Seep Springs and Shaws Park would minimize new visual impacts by following terrain features and using construction materials that blend with the surrounding features. Motorized use within the small portion of VRM Class II area in Garden Park would be restricted to a well-established existing route. Visual impacts from on-site management controls would include signs to mark designated routes and barriers and fencing where necessary to implement route closures. The closure of some routes to motorized use would decrease visual impacts over time as these routes would tend to become narrower and re-vegetated to some extent.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Any new routes constructed should incorporate measures to reduce visual impacts and meet VRM class objectives.

No Action: The impacts under this alternative would be similar to Alternative B except that visual impacts within the small portion of VRM Class II area in Garden Park would decrease because there would be no designated travel routes there.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None.

Cumulative Impacts: Alternative A: The cumulative impacts to visual resources would include an increase in litter, soil and vegetation damage, and impacts related to campsite proliferation (increases in bare ground, soil compaction, vegetation damage, and fire scars). In some area such as Shaws Park, user created trails would increase. In some areas, highly visible on-site management would be present (signs, fences, barriers, staging areas). Alternative B: There would be some long term visual impacts from on-site management controls such as barriers and fencing. Visual impacts from litter, soil and vegetation damage, user created routes, and campsite proliferation would be expected to decrease. The closure of routes to motorized use would decrease visual impacts over time as these routes would tend to become narrower and re-vegetated to some extent. Alternative C: An increase in on-site management controls in some areas (the east side of the Garden Park area and the south side of Seep Springs, in particular) would slightly impact visual resources. The closure of some routes to motorized use would decrease visual impacts over time as these routes would tend to become narrower and re-vegetated to some extent. No Action Alternative: Same as Alternative B.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: Both newly acquired parcels are dominated by the piñon-juniper forest type. Dramatic changes have taken place in the piñon-juniper forests over the past 130 years. Piñon-juniper woodlands have been expanding into sites once occupied by grasslands and stands have thickened in tree densities. These factors are setting up conditions for large uncontrollable stand-replacing crown fires. This fact is evident by the large catastrophic stand-replacing wildfire that occurred in the southern portion of the Garden Park parcel in the late 1980's. As tree densities increase the understory grasses, forbs and shrubs decrease resulting in increase of soil erosion from the sites

The common forest products utilized from these piñon-juniper woodlands are firewood, fence posts, craft-wood, and piñon nuts. The adjacent public lands have a history of wood cutting due to their close distance to Cañon City. These newly acquired parcels have probably also seen some wood cutting due to the previous owners need for fence posts and firewood. Until 1999 the adjacent public lands were open to firewood cutting, then a resource area wide dead and down fuel wood EA was completed eliminating firewood cutting in these areas due to the ACEC designation. These new parcels are outside of the ACEC boundaries therefore may be considered open to firewood collecting if some of the roads are left open to motor vehicles or until the ACEC boundaries are re-mapped.

Bark beetles are native forest insects. They prefer stressed trees, which is typically brought on by drought or dense overstocked stands. The bark beetles feed on the tree cambium typically killing or damaging the tree. The piñon IPS bark beetle killed many of the large piñon pine in this general area in the early 2000's. The piñon twig bark beetle is presently killing many of the smaller piñon pine on adjacent public lands. Most of the larger junipers in the area show past evidence of strip attack by the cedar bark beetle.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Alternative A: This alternative provides the most opportunity for personal use firewood gathering of dead trees along open roads outside of the currently mapped ACEC boundaries.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Post the ACEC boundaries to avoid dead wood harvesting within the ACEC or modify the boundary.

Alternative B: This alternative limits the fuel wood cutting and other wood product harvesting opportunities for this area, with very few roads open to vehicles.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Post the ACEC boundary to avoid dead wood harvesting within the ACEC or modify the boundary where roads are left open to vehicles.

Alternative C: This alternative limits the fuel wood cutting and other wood product harvesting opportunities for this area, with very few roads open to vehicles.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: Post the ACEC boundaries to avoid dead wood harvesting within the ACEC or modify the boundary where roads are left open to vehicles.

No Action: This alternative would reduce the potential of removing dead trees as fuel wood from these parcels.

Recommended Mitigation Measures: None

Cumulative Impacts: Geographic scope: If fuel wood cutting is allowed in these new parcels along open roads then dead trees (fuel) would be removed strengthening these roads as fuel breaks. If fuel wood cutting is deemed inappropriate for these areas then harvesting is likely to take place in another area, probably further from town, resulting in an increased use of fossil fuels.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Generally, increases in motorized and recreation use and greater public access on these parcels would increase the potential for impacts on floodplains, watersheds, water quality, wildlife habitat, migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, visual resources, soils, vegetation, sensitive plants and fossil resources.

Cumulative effects on historic properties and sites of Native American religious concern cannot be specifically identified until cultural resources inventories are completed and historic properties and sites have been identified. In general, however, erosion caused by vehicle travel, depending on its proximity to a historic property and/or sites of Native American religious concern, could have long-term negative impacts on both buried sites as well as those with standing structures. The introduction of roads into an area might also increase the potential for vandalism and looting.

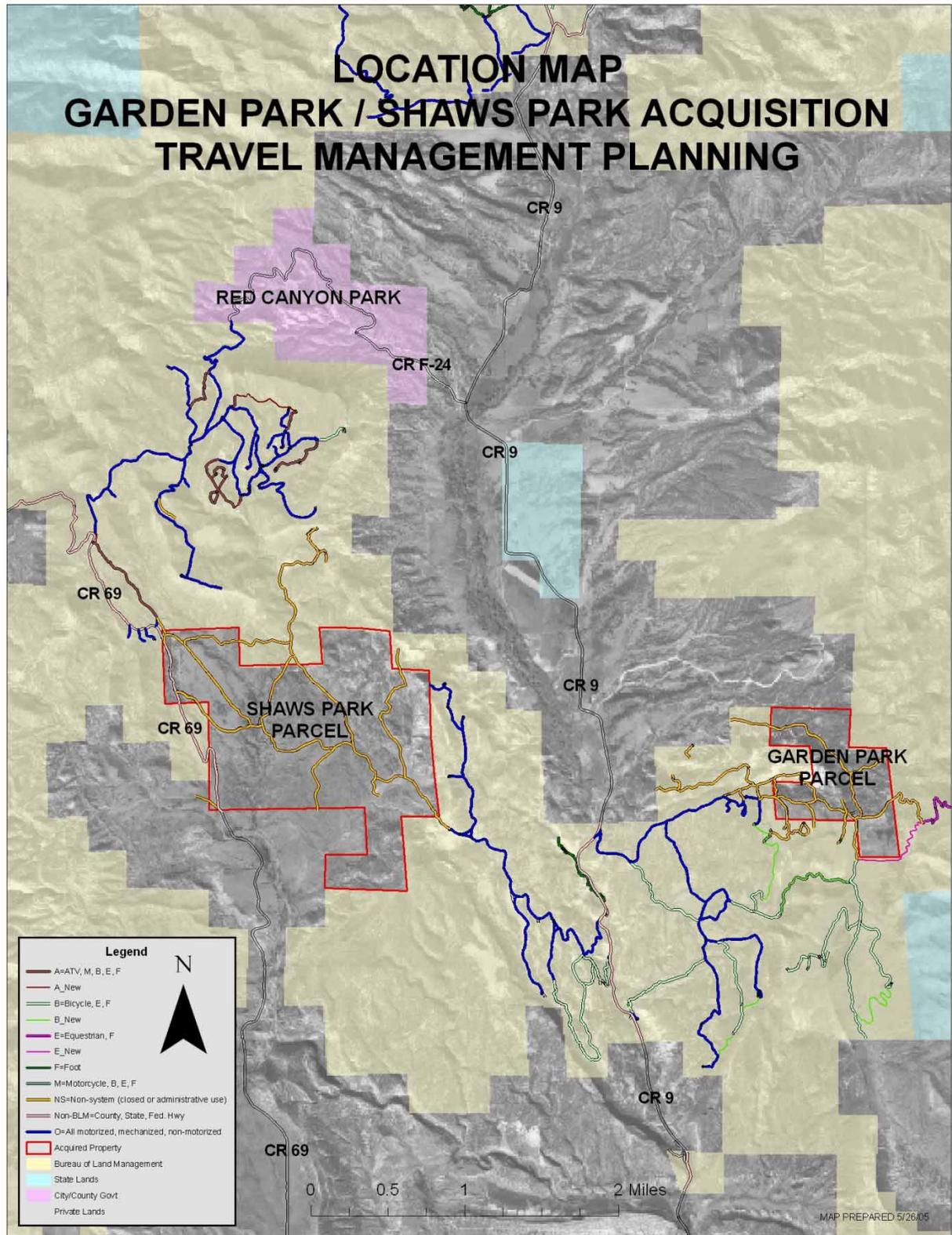
Enhanced public access and increased recreation use would result in increasing costs for on-site management of public uses, law enforcement and maintenance. Depending on the alternative selected the recreation setting may change over time. Where motorized and non-motorized recreation users share the same areas, user conflicts can be expected.

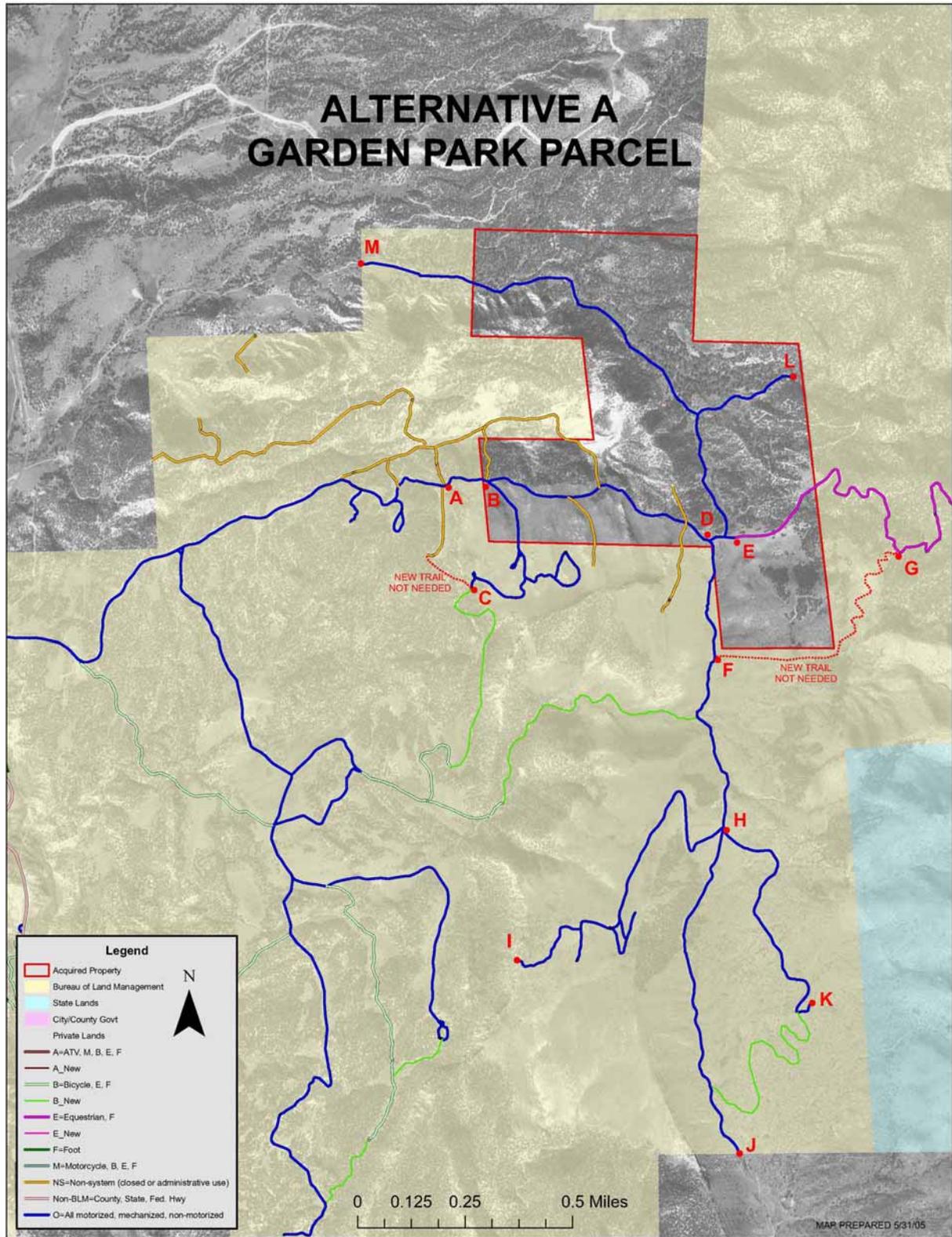
Increased motorized access to these parcels may have benefits to forest management over time by increasing fuel wood cutting in these areas and strengthening fuel breaks.

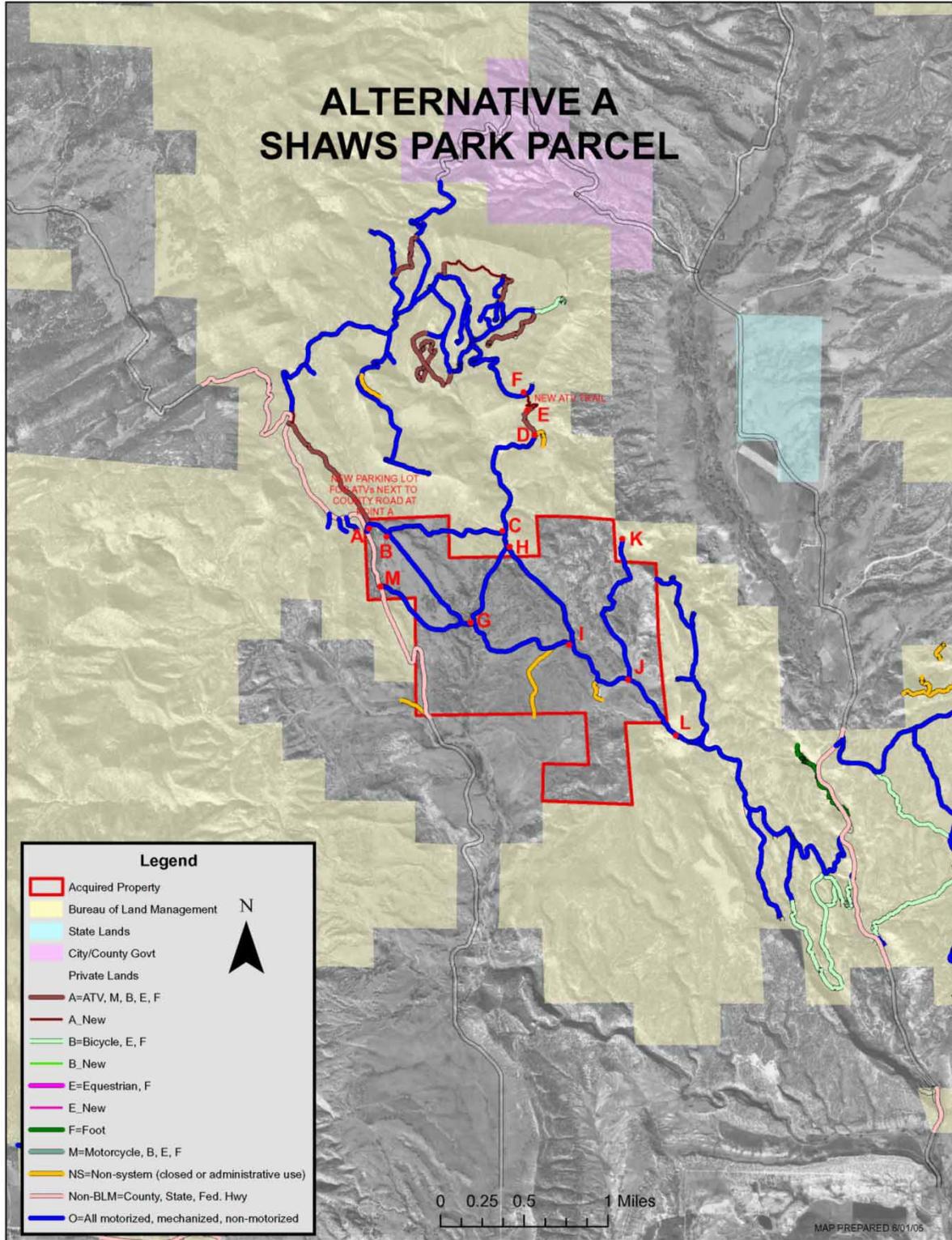
PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:

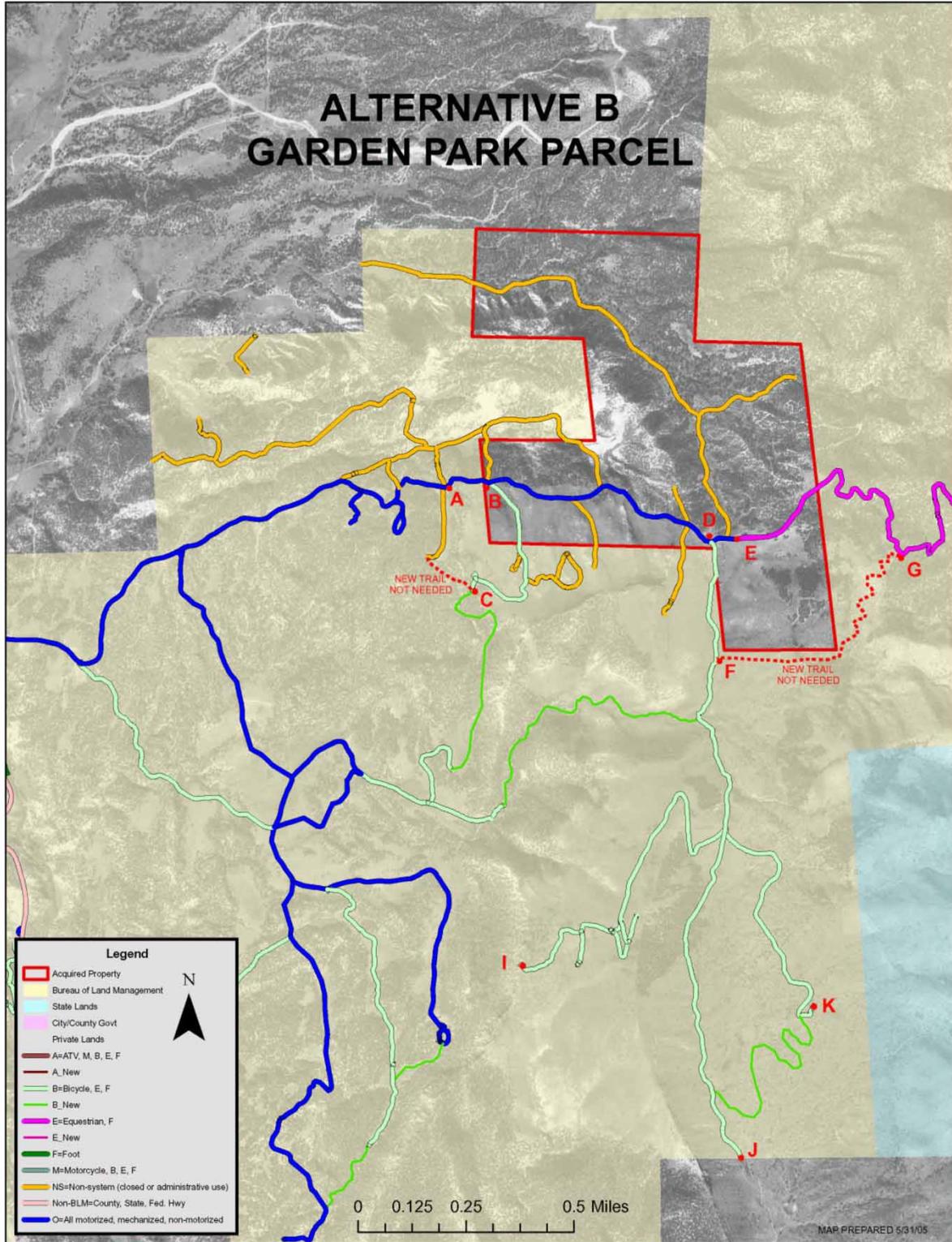
INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

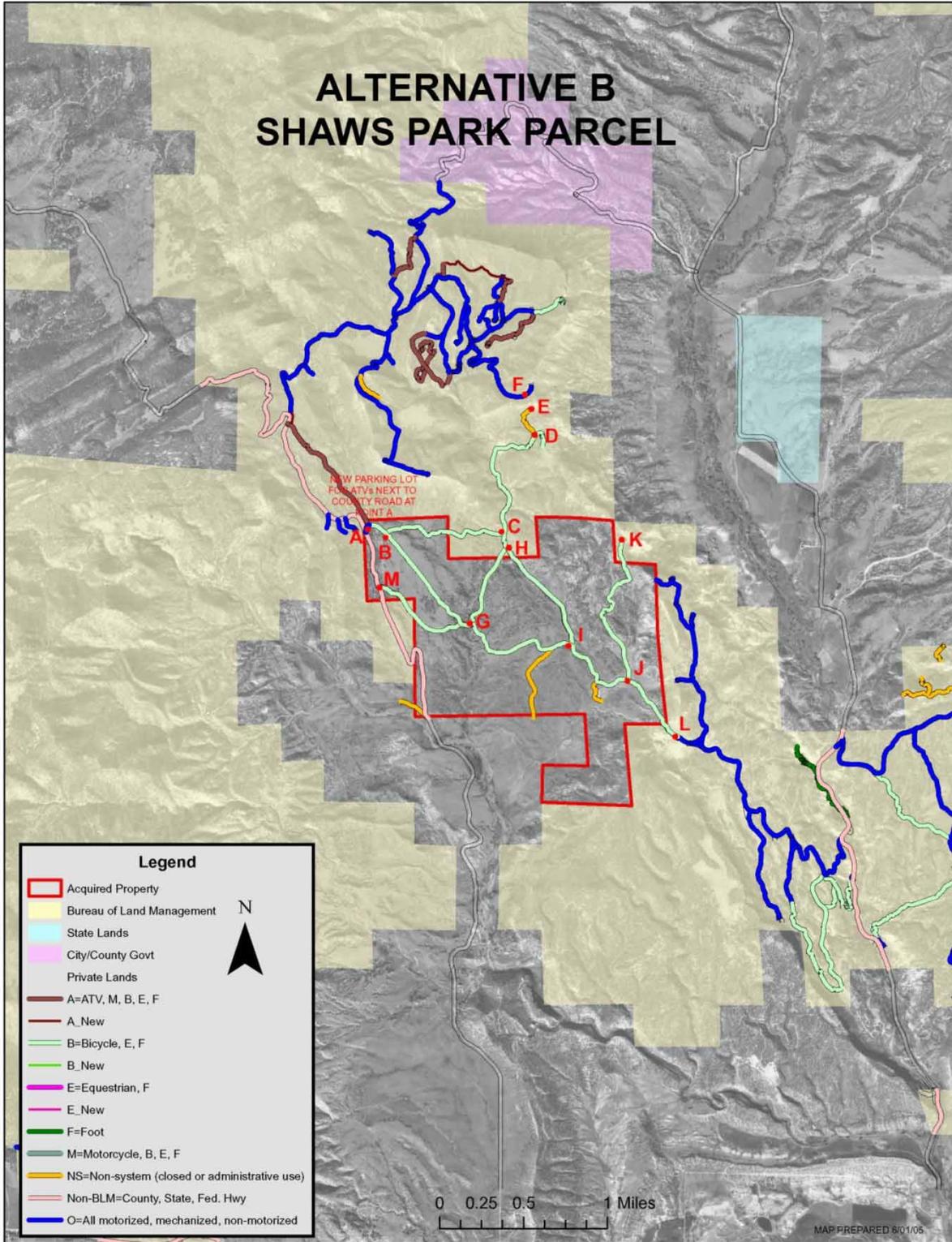
<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Area of Responsibility</u>
Keith Berger	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation
Erik Brekke	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife, T&E, Migratory Birds
Mike Gaylord	Fire Mit./Educ. Spec.	Air, Hazardous Materials
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife, Riparian/Wetlands
Ernie Gillingham	Surface Reclamation Spec.	Soils
Dan Grenard	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology
Tom Grette	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland, Weeds
Jack Hagan	Law Enforcement Ranger	Law Enforcement
Jan Lownes	Nonrenewable Res. Supv.	Realty
Tony Mule'	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey
Leah Quesenberry	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, Visual, ACEC
Ken Reed	Forester	Forestry
Ed Skerjanec	Fire Management Officer	Fire
John Smeins	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights
Melissa Smeins	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology
Dave Toelle	Fire Ecologist	Air, Vegetation
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American
Cora Whisenhunt	Park Ranger	Transportation/Access
Jeff Williams	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation
Martin Weimer	NEPA Coordinator	Environmental Justice

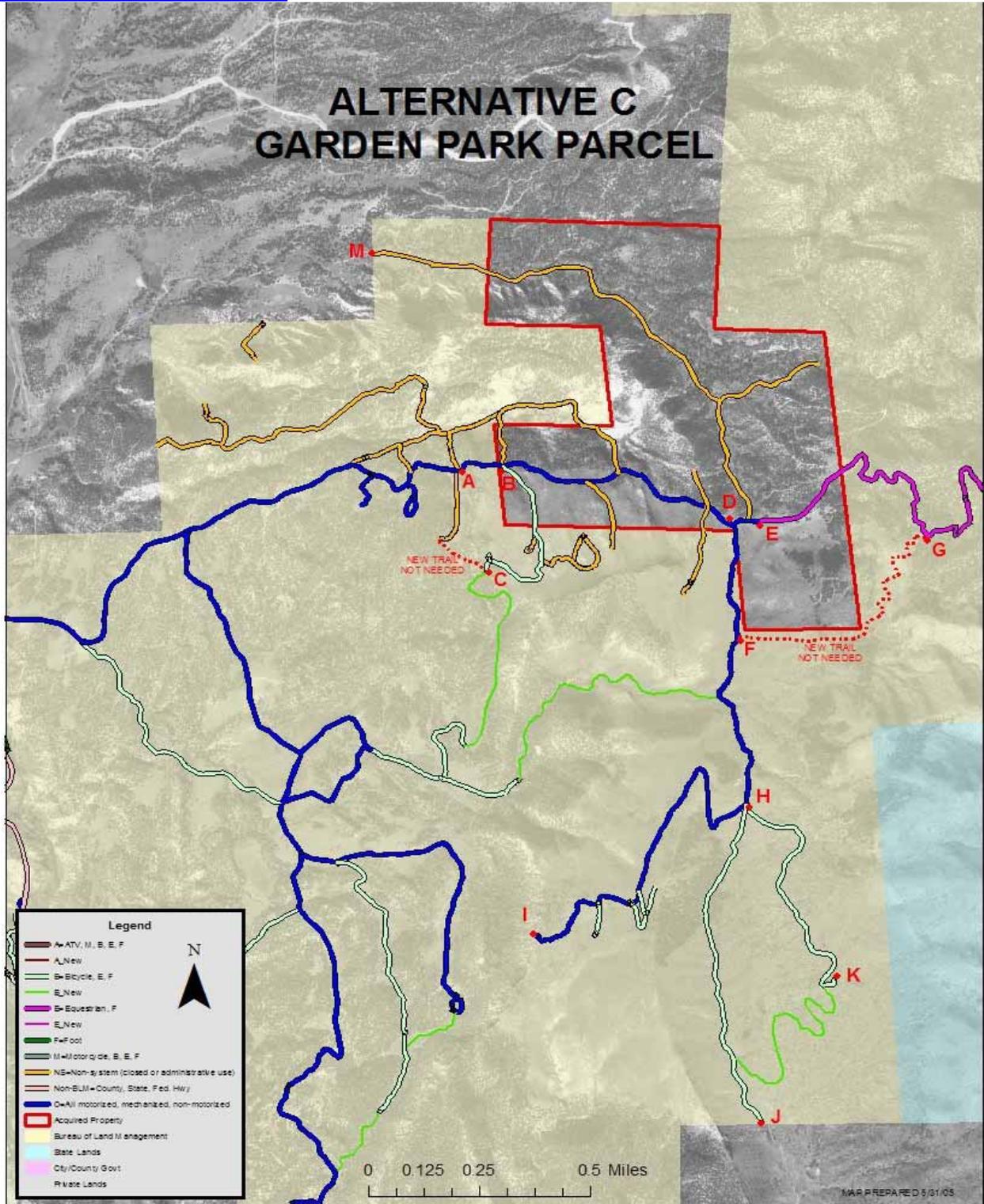


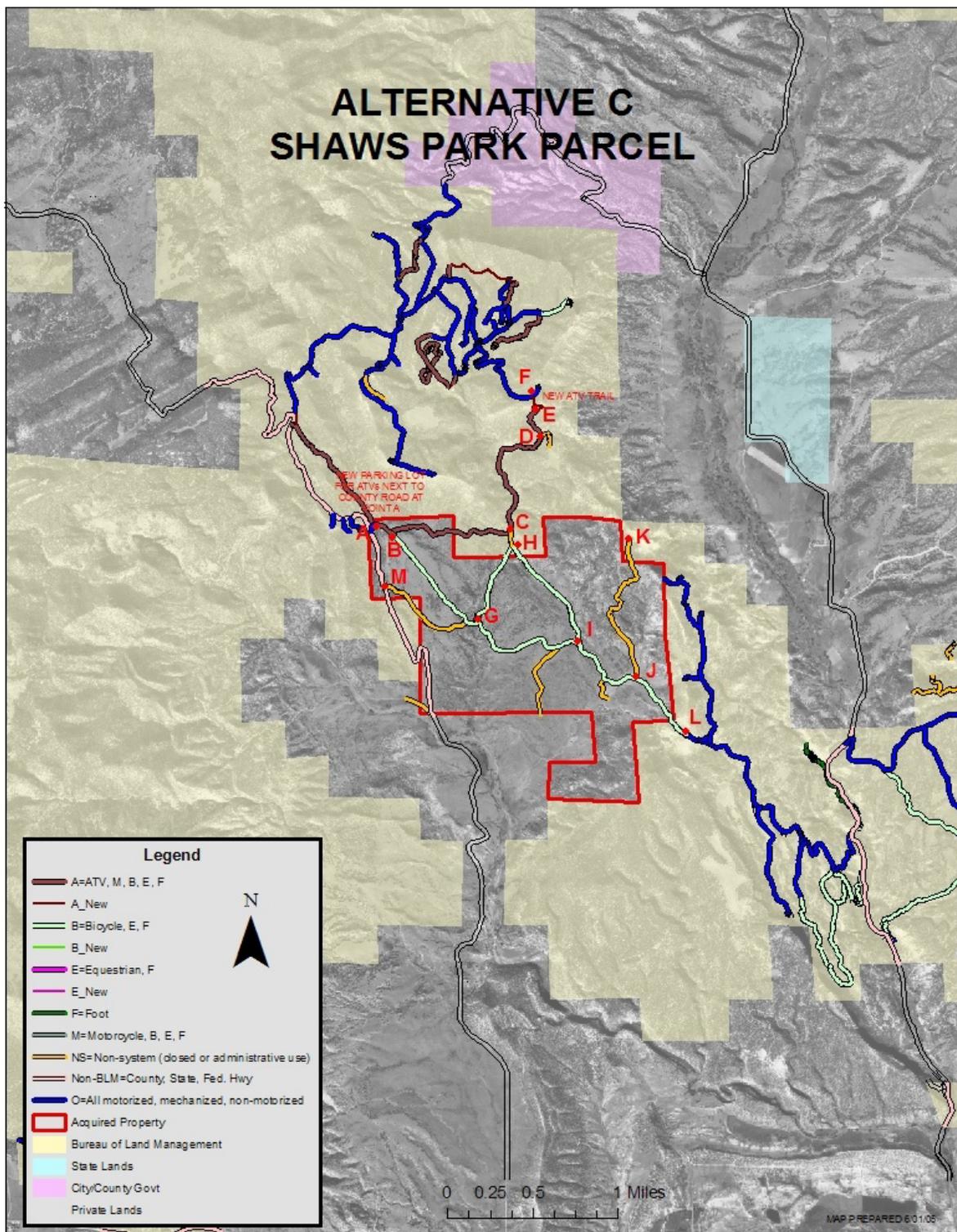












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Table A – Miles of Travel Routes on Acquired Property and Affected BLM Lands:

Garden Park Parcel

Travel Use Category	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	No Action Alternative
General – open to all motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses	6.56	0.76	2.39	None
ATV – open to ATV, motorcycle, bicycle, horse, and foot travel	None	None	None	None
Motorcycle – open to motorcycle, bicycle, horse, and foot travel	None	None	None	None
Bicycle – open to bicycle, horse, and foot travel	1.95	5.83	4.21	5.19
Equestrian – open to horse and foot travel	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.69
Foot – open to foot travel, only	None	None	None	None
Non-system – administrative roads, not available to public for motorized or mechanized travel	0.76	2.86	2.57	4.76

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Table B – Miles of Travel Routes on Acquired Property and Affected BLM Lands:

Shaws Park Parcel

Travel Use Category	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	No Action Alternative
General – open to all motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses	7.28	0.05	0.05	0.05
ATV – open to ATV, motorcycle, bicycle, horse, and foot travel	0.52	0.12	2.16	0.12
Motorcycle – open to motorcycle, bicycle, horse, and foot travel	None	None	None	None
Bicycle – open to bicycle, horse, and foot travel	None	7.22	3.72	None
Equestrian – open to horse and foot travel	None	None	None	None
Foot – open to foot travel, only	None	None	None	None
Non-system – administrative roads, not available to public for motorized or mechanized travel	0.95	1.04	2.70	8.39

**Garden Park Subunit
Desired Future Conditions and Management Objectives**

The desired future condition (DFC) for the Garden Park subunit is to enhance and protect the area's special plant, fossil resources, and scenic geological features, while allowing compatible recreation uses. Management objectives (MOs) for this sub-unit include:

- *Protect fossil resources*
- *Protect sensitive plant species*
- *Protect the unusual and highly scenic geologic features*
- *Resolve target shooting conflicts with other uses*
- *Eliminate parallel and duplicate routes*
- *Reduce conflicts between motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized users*
- *Provide recreational opportunities that are compatible with the special resources*
- *Resolve the road maintenance issue with Fremont County*
- *Protect erosive soils*

**Cooper Mountain Subunit
Desired Future Conditions and Management Objectives**

The desired future condition (DFC) for the Cooper Mountain subunit is to preserve the area's scenic mountainous qualities for open space, wildlife habitat, and appropriate recreation uses. Management objectives (MOs) for this subunit include:

- Preserve the visual qualities of the subunit*
- Enhance wildlife habitat*
- Enhance recreational opportunities that would maintain the remote backcountry setting*

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**Seep Springs Subunit
Desired Future Conditions and Management Objectives**

The desired future condition (DFC) for the Seep Springs subunit is to preserve the unusual and scenic geological uplift and the diversity of wildlife, while providing for a variety of recreation uses. Management objectives (MOs) for this sub-unit include:

- *Control motorized uses from private lands*
- *Resolve road maintenance issue with Fremont County*
- *Maintain the quiet character of Red Canyon Park*
- *Protect springs and wet areas*
- *Maintain the visual quality of the area*
- *Protect the natural arch and other geologic features*
- *Minimize impacts to soils and vegetation*
- *Allow appropriate recreation uses*

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Appendix A. Table shows Class 3 and Class 5 paleontological resources that may potentially be affected by the alternatives according to road segments and their respective designations.

Alternatives	Parcel Name	Road Segment and Designation	Class 5 Paleo. Resources Potentially Impacted	Class 3 Paleo. Resources Potentially Impacted	Total Paleo. Resources Potentially Impacted
Alt C	Garde n Park	A-I All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	23230 ft.	Not Present	23230 ft.
		B-C Bicycle, Horse, Foot	630 ft.	Not Present	630 ft.
		D-E All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	1950	Not Present	1950 ft.
		E-G Horse, Foot	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft.
					25,810 ft.
Alt C	Shaws Park	A-C ATV, motorcycle, bicycle, horse, foot	6970 ft.	Not present	6970 ft.
		C-D ATV, motorcycle, bicycle, horse, foot	7920 ft.	Not Present	7920 ft.
		D-E New trail for ATV, motorcycle, bicycle, horse, foot	Not present	6340 ft.	6340 ft.
		B-I Bicycle	5280 ft.	Not present	5280 ft.
		F-G Horse	1270 ft.	Not present	1270 ft.
		F-H Foot	5600 ft.	Not present	5600 ft.
					33,380 ft.

Alternatives	Parcel Name	Road Segment and Designation	Class 5 Paleontologic Resources Potentially Impacted	Class 3 Paleontologic Resources Potentially Impacted	Total Paleo Resources Potentially Impacted
Alt. A	Garden Park	A-E All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	17420 ft.	Not Present	17420 ft.
		D-I All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	52800 ft.	52800 ft.	105600 ft.
		H-J All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft.
		H-K All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	42240 ft.	Not Present	42240 ft.
		D-L All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	18480 ft.	Not Present	18480 ft.
		D-M All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft
		E-G Horse and Foot	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft.
		B-C All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft.
					183,740 ft.

Alternatives	Parcel Name	Road Segment and Designation	Class 5 Paleontologic Resources Potentially Impacted	Class 3 Paleontologic Resources Potentially Impacted	Total Paleo Resources Potentially Impacted
Alt. A	Shaws Park	A-I All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	21120 ft.	Not Present	21120 ft.
		B-C All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft.
		H-D All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	26400 ft.	Not Present	26400 ft.
		H-G All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft.
		H-I All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	18480 ft.	Not Present	18480 ft.
		J-K All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	11090 ft.	Not Present	11090 ft.
		M-G All motorized, mechanized, non-motorized	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft.
		D-E ATV, motorcycle, bicycle, horse, and foot	Not Present	3800 ft.	3800 ft.
		E-F ATV, motorcycle, bicycle, horse, and foot	6340 ft.	Not Present	6340 ft.
					87,230 ft.

Alternatives	Parcel Name	Road Segment and Designation	Class 5 Paleontologic Resources Potentially Impacted	Class 3 Paleontologic Resources Potentially Impacted	Total Paleo Resources Potentially Impacted
Alt. B	Garden Park	A-E All motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses	15840 ft.	Not Present	15840 ft.
		E-G Horse and Foot	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft.
		B-C Bicycle, horse, and foot	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft.
		D-F Bicycle, horse, and foot	1480 ft.	Not Present	1480 ft.
					17,320ft.
Alt. B	Shaws Park	A-J Bicycle, Horse, and Foot	10560 ft.	Not Present	10560 ft.
		B-D Bicycle, Horse, and Foot	4640 ft.	Not Present	4640 ft.
		C-G Bicycle, Horse, and Foot	3380 ft.	Not Present	3380 ft.
		K-F Bicycle, Horse, and Foot	Not Present	Not Present	0 ft.
					18,580 ft.
No Action	Garden Park	Horse and Foot Trails	15,416 ft.		15,416 ft.
	Shaw's Park	Horse and Foot Trails	47,520 ft.		47,520 ft.

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