

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Uncompahgre Field Office  
2465 South Townsend Avenue  
Montrose, CO 81401**

## **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2009-0015 CX

PROJECT NAME: North Fork Gunnison River Stream Gage

PLANNING UNIT: Gunnison Gorge NCA

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T15S, R93W, NWNW Section 6 (UTM-NAD 83) 13S 0253879, 4296753

APPLICANT: United States Geological Survey

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:

### **Proposed Action**

To install a stream flow, and salinity and selenium water-quality monitoring station on the lower Gunnison River at a location that is suitable to collect data for the USGS and US Bureau of Reclamation (map, figure 1).

### Installation

The monitoring station installation will consist of a 3 ft x 2 ft x 2 ft steel box set on a 5 ft length of 21-inch CMP set on end and cemented in the ground. An 8-10 ft length of 2-inch galvanized pipe will extend above the shelter to attach the satellite antenna and solar panel. The shelter will be set back approximately 12 ft from the stream bank. Two trenches approximately 4-inches wide and 1-1.5 ft deep will be dug from the shelter to the stream bank to bury conduit housing the instrument cables. A 10 ft length of 2-inch galvanized pipe and a 10 ft length of 3-inch PVC pipe containing the measuring instruments will extend from the trenches at the bank into the stream. The shelter will be painted a color selected by BLM.

### **Purpose and Need**

The North Fork Gunnison River monitoring site is part of a larger network that will assess salinity and selenium trends in the lower Gunnison River basin. Water-quality monitoring will include periodic, discrete sampling for major ions and selenium, and a continuous water-quality monitor that measures water temperature and specific conductance. These data, along with stream flow, are needed to determine salinity and selenium loads and trends for the North Fork Gunnison River. In addition, stream-flow data are needed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to manage reservoir releases during spring runoff and assist with flood forecasting for the City of Delta. The Colorado Division of Water Resources will also use stream-flow data for water

administration. Other sites in the lower Gunnison River basin salinity and selenium trend monitoring network include the Gunnison River below Gunnison Tunnel, Gunnison River at Delta, Uncompahgre River at Colona, Uncompahgre River at Delta, and the Gunnison River near Grand Junction.

### **Cooperation**

The monitoring station will be installed and operated by the USGS. Funding for the installation and long term operation and maintenance of the station is provided by USGS, Colorado River Water Conservation District and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The USGS is solely responsible for servicing and maintenance of the station. BLM will have no liability for damages to the monitoring station caused by vandalism or acts of nature.

The following photo represents the type of installation that is planned for this station.



Example of installation showing shelter housing recording and telemetry instrumentation. The shelter is a 3 ft x 2 ft x 2 ft steel box set on a 5 ft length of 21-inch CMP set on end and cemented in the ground. The station will transmit data “real time” via satellite telemetry.

Three-inch PVC pipe enclosing water-quality monitoring instruments.

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:** The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3) the following plan:

**Name of Plan:** Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area

**Date Approved:** Nov. 2004

**Decision Number/Page and Decision Language:**

GEO-C-3 (pg 2-12): Soil and water resources will, in association with land health analyses, continue to be monitored to define problem areas, develop management strategies, and determine effectiveness of solutions.

WFA-C-9 (pg 2-19): Riparian zones and aquatic habitats will be inventoried and monitored.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: The proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, number: 1.6 (nondestructive data collection, inventory, study, research, and monitoring activities), and under 516 DM 11.9, number: J.8 (installation of minor devices to protect human life.) None of the following exceptions in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Exclusion	YES	NO
1. Have significant adverse effects on public health and safety.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
2. Have adverse effects on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands, floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
6. Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
7. Have adverse effects on properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
8. Have adverse effects on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
9. Have the potential to violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
10. Have the potential for a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
11. Restrict access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>
12. Significantly, contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.	_____	_____ <u>X</u>

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Area of Responsibility</u>
Melissa S. Siders	Biological Staff Supervisor	TES Species, Wildlife (Aquatic and Terrestrial), Migratory Birds
Glade Hadden	Archeologist	Cultural, Native American Religious Concerns
Dennis Murphy	Hydrologist	Floodplains, Hydrology, Water Rights
Amanda Clements	Ecologist	Wetlands, Invasive Species, Vegetation

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: There are no known National Register or otherwise eligible properties in the vicinity of this project. The proposed stream gage will be constructed entirely within the disturbed ground of an active river channel. A cultural resource survey is not required for this project under the provisions of 8110.23B1. No further work is required.

Native American Religious Concerns: There are no known Native American Religious Concerns for the project area.

Threatened and Endangered Species: No effect on Federally listed species or critical habitat (Bonytail [endangered {E}], Humpback chub [E], Razorback sucker [E], Colorado pikeminnow [E]); No effect on any Candidate species (Yellow-billed cuckoo or Gunnison prairie dog). Project may affect individuals of Sensitive species and Migratory Birds, but not likely to result in a trend toward federal listing.

To protect wintering bald eagles: No construction activities will occur from November 1 through March 15.

To protect TE & S fish: Construction will be limited to hand tools. Extreme care will be taken to minimize the amount of soil that will move into the stream.

Invasive Species: In order to minimize spread of weeds, the following mitigations are needed: Russian knapweed, horehound and whitetop are all present near the project location. Either a weed-free path to the project site will be flagged ahead of time and activity will be restricted to this path, or if such a passage is not possible, seedheads from these weed species will be removed, bagged and disposed of in an appropriate manner. This will apply to all areas where there will be equipment or people working associated with this project.

Other:

Air Quality: There would be no impacts to air quality by implementing the proposed action.

There would be a 5-10 square feet of soil surface disturbance resulting from the standing culvert and PVC pipe installation. The disturbance would be short lived as grasses and forbs reestablish on the site. The BLM will seed the disturbance with our standard riparian seed mix which will hasten the soil surface recovery.

The gage would be installed during the flow season. A minor amount of sediment would be generated while installing the data recording instruments on the channel bottom, but would cease as soon as the installation is complete. There would be no impacts to the hydrology or water rights associated with the North Fork of the Gunnison.

Floodplains: The stream gage would be located in the floodplain of the North Fork Gunnison River, but is a minor development with no options to locate out of the floodplain. The gage housing is located in the lower velocity floodway and would have some protection from the forces of water velocity from the dense shrubby vegetation on the site. If flood flow were to dislodge the gage housing, it is small enough to not present a major blockage at downstream bridge sites. The closest bridge is at Austin, Colorado approximately 12 miles downstream of the gage site.

NAME OF PREPARER: Dennis M. Murphy

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Bruce Krickbaum

DATE: 2/27/2009

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed this CER and have decided to implement the proposed action.

This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 10 criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an exception and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ Dave Kauffman, for  
Barbara Sharrow,  
Uncompahgre Field Office, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 3/2/2009

# Proposed Stream Gage

