



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Field Manager Report

Southwest Resource Advisory Council – Colorado

Tres Rios Field Office (TRFO)

Planning

Transportation and Access Plans (TAP) - In 2015, the BLM initiated a two-year effort to ground-verify (inventory) the linear features across TRFO. The TRFO shared this preliminary inventory with the public via a *web-based interactive map* illustrating each of the inventoried routes. During 2017 and 2018, the BLM offered three opportunities for the public to provide comments regarding the inventory. The comments received were shared at three open house meetings in 2018. (<https://www.blm.gov/maps/frequently-requested/colorado>). The BLM has been working closely with Montezuma, La Plata and Archuleta counties (roads, trails, and GIS staff) to develop a Proposed Action for BLM-managed lands (TAP Area #1). Additionally, the BLM has convened an inter-governmental working group (DATA) to look more closely at the Durango Area. A 30-day Public Scoping Period targeted for Spring 2019 will offer the public an opportunity to provide comments and information related to the TAP #1 Proposed Action. The TAP#2 process will be initiated sometime before September 2019.

ACEC Amendment - Comment period closes April 22, 2019. The BLM published a Notice of Availability for the Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Preliminary Environmental Assessment, which analyzed 17 proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in San Miguel, San Juan, Dolores, Montezuma, and Montrose counties. The preferred alternative would designate one proposed ACEC (Mesa Verde Escarpment) and reaffirm the designation of two existing ACECs (Ancestral Puebloan and Gypsum Valley) totaling 14,335 acres. The size of the existing ACECs would be reduced to provide for more focused management of the resources requiring special protection. The Dry Creek Basin and Northdale ACEC proposals, both of which contain habitat for Gunnison Sage-Grouse, were deferred to the Gunnison Sage-Grouse Range-wide RMP Amendment. The GUSG Amendment will provide a range of management measures and outcomes for the areas, including possible ACEC designation.

Gunnison Sage Grouse Plan Amendment - On July 18, 2014, the BLM issued a notice in the Federal Register announcing the agency's intention to incorporate clear and consistent conservation measures into BLM land use plans and prepare an associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in order to protect Gunnison Sage-Grouse habitat across the range of the species. Approximately 40 percent of currently occupied Gunnison Sage-Grouse habitat is on public lands administered by the BLM. The range-wide decision area consists of more than 600,000 acres of BLM surface estate in Chaffee, Delta, Dolores, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, Saguache, and San Miguel counties in Colorado and Grand and San Juan counties in Utah. The Tres Rios RMP (2015) and Canyons of the Ancients RMP (2010) may be amended by this planning effort. A BLM interdisciplinary team is working with 21 federal, state, and county cooperating agencies to develop the EIS and RMP Amendment. The Draft RMPA/EIS was released on August 12, 2016. Public

meetings were held in several towns, including Dove Creek, in late 2016. The BLM is currently waiting for the Fish and Wildlife Service to complete a Species Status Assessment (formerly known as a Recovery Plan), and for a joint CPW, County, FWS, and BLM effort to complete a Collaborative Action Plan.

Renewable Resources

Wild Horse and Burro Management

Spring Creek Herd Management Area - On September 17, 2018, the TRFO issued a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact (DR/FONSI) to implement bait trapping within the Spring Creek Basin Herd Management Area (HMA). This decision will allow the BLM to proactively manage and gather horses within the 22,000-acre HMA over the next ten years. The BLM will continue to administer the fertility-control vaccine PZP to manage the herd population and work with volunteers to dart selected mares in the HMA to strategically manage foal rates. The Spring Creek Basin population is currently within the Appropriate Management Level (AML).

Recreation

Phil's World Trails - In 2018, the TRFO issued a decision (DR/FONSI) to authorize the construction of 22 miles of non-motorized sustainable single-track trails and add two parking areas/trailheads. On February 20, 2018, an adjoining land owner filed an appeal with a Petition for Stay. The Stay was denied and the appeal is in process with IBLA. The first phase of the project has been completed. Funding for parking lot trailheads has been secured and construction is scheduled to begin in mid-February 2019. The public and Montezuma County Commissioners continue to support implementation of the project.

Durango Area Trails Alliance - The TRFO initiated an inter-governmental working group with the City of Durango, La Plata County, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the San Juan National Forest. The purpose of this group is to enhance balanced recreational opportunities around Durango, primarily through coordinated interagency trail management.

Wildlife

Dry Creek Basin Pinyon-Juniper Mastication - The TRFO masticated 211 acres of pinyon and juniper in Dry Creek Basin, improving the habitat effectiveness of Gunnison Sage-grouse critical habitat. The TRFO will continue to monitor the effectiveness of previous treatments and treat tamarisk in the Basin.



Pre-treatment



Post-treatment

Minerals and Realty

Abandoned Mine Lands

Slick Rock and Egnar Mine Safety Closures - Freeport Corporation has been surveying old claims with which they have become affiliated. Following environmental analysis, Freeport completed 18 physical safety closures in 2018 and has 37 closures east of Egnar, Colorado planned for 2019.

Little Gypsum Valley, the Hat & Lookout Mine Safety Closures - The BLM, in partnership with the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety, completed approximately 61 physical safety closures in western San Miguel and Montrose counties (Big & Little Gypsum valleys) in 2018. The BLM will be analyzing approximately 60 closures (Bald Eagle & Klondike) at the southeast end of Big Gypsum Valley in San Miguel County. These projects are scheduled to begin in Fall 2019.

Lands & Realty

Tri-State Montrose-Nucla-Cahone Transmission Improvement Project - Tri-State is currently improving the Montrose-Nucla-Cahone Transmission Line. The 115kV power line passes through both the BLM UFO and TRFO. Originally built in 1958, this upgrade will boost the existing 115kV power transmission line to 230kV to better serve Tri-State customers. Phase I (vegetation clearing) and Phase II (access road upgrades) were completed in 2018. Tri-State has also implemented an interim stabilization program that began in Fall 2018. Construction work will continue in Spring 2019.

Minerals (Fluid)

Lease Sale EAs - Currently there are no pending Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the field office. The last scheduled deadline for EOIs was January 4, 2019. Any TRFO parcels identified would trigger a six-month lease sale process.

Oil and Gas Projects - Kinder Morgan has submitted upgrade project proposals, which include three Loop Lines and a Booster Compressor Station in the McElmo Dome Unit of CANM. These projects would enable Kinder Morgan to maintain CO₂ production flow rates in the unit. Kinder Morgan has also indicated that they will be submitting up to six Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) in 2019.

Minerals (saleable)

Gravel Pit Renewals - The TRFO is working with Montezuma County to renew and issue a free use permit (FUP) for the Tozer Gravel Pit, located near County Road G in McElmo Canyon. Dolores County's Black Snag Gravel Pit FUP was recently renewed, and San Miguel County's Klondike Gravel Pit FUP renewal is near completion. These FUPs provide an invaluable resource for local governments in maintaining roads, bridges, and other public works.

Minerals (solid)

King II Coal Mine - A 30-day Public Scoping Period for GCC Energy LLC's proposed Dunn Ranch Area King II Coal Mine Lease by Application (LBA) and associated Mine Plan Modification (DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2019-0003-EA) was initiated on Feb 8, 2019 by the BLM and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE). The proposal includes approximately 3,200 acres of private surface (federal coal) north of the existing King II Coal Mine. The LBA would use existing surface facilities and transportation routes and could extend mine life for 5-7 years (depending on the successful bidder). A Final EA and DR is expected to be signed July 2019.

This would be followed by a competitive lease process. Once the lease is issued, OSMRE would then process the mine permit application, which would likely be completed by late 2019.

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum

Exhibit Gallery - The “*Krakow to Castle Rock*” exhibit focuses on years of research completed in the Sand Canyon area by Jagiellian University (Krakow, Poland). The exhibit opened in July 2018 and will continue into 2019. Photos featured in the exhibit are mainly from the field school and illustrate multiple traditional and modern archaeological techniques as practiced today. The photos, accompanied by artifacts from the Museum’s repository, provide a beautiful and informative overview of the important research being conducted within the Monument.

Fee Increase Proposal for Museum - Two informal public meetings were held in early December 2018 to discuss a proposed fee increase at the Monument’s museum. Fees have not been increased since 1993 and the proposed increase would raise fees from \$3 to \$5 year-round. The fee money would provide opportunities to support programs and projects that benefit the monument and its visitors. The proposal would offer a free visitation day on the last Saturday of the month and provide an option for locals in Montezuma and Dolores counties to purchase an annual pass for \$10.

Curation

High Density Storage - Since 2017, CANM has been working on increasing storage capacity in curation by replacing old shelving with high-density storage. The first phase of storage unit installation has been completed and a contractor is re-shelving artifacts, which should be completed by Fall 2019. This effort will extend storage capacity by more than 50%.