



**Minutes of the  
Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area  
Advisory Council  
January 22, 2014, 3:00--6:00 p.m.  
Mesa County Courthouse Annex  
Grand Junction, CO**

**Council members attending:** Katie Steele, Oscar Massey, Tamera Minnick, Steve Boyle, Doug Atchley, Kate Graham, Bob Janowski, Ralph Files, and Kaye Simonson.

**Council members absent:** Bill Harris

**BLM staff attending:** Collin Ewing, Marie Lawrence, Samantha Staley, and Andy Windsor.

**Members of the public attending:** Jan Potterveld, Emily Hornback, Janice Shepherd, Jennifer O'Donnell, Dick Miller, Sherri Schenk, Eric Rechel, Jan Burch, Joyce W. Olson, and others.

**Call to order and introductory remarks**

3:00 p.m.: Chair Katie Steele called the meeting to order, called for introductions, mentioned that Joe has to be out early, and welcomed new members.

Ewing: [Handed out notebooks to new Council members]. The first tab has the charter for the Advisory Council. It describes the Council's duties and is signed by Secretary Salazar. It may be updated soon; if so, I will bring new one to next meeting. Feel free to call me about that. [Went over contents of binder]. Good reference information for you. Thanks for being willing to come out and help with development of the plan and to represent members of the public.

Thanks to members who decided to continue with the Council. It's good to have dedicated folks on Council [applause]. Two folks who retired from the Council are here with us. [Former Council member Joe Neuhof came up to Council table and Ewing recognized him for his service]. I appreciate your [Neuhof's] willingness to dig in and try to understand the regulations and policies and understand why we are doing things the way we do [more applause].

[Former Council member Mike Wilson came up to Council table and Ewing recognized him for his service]. Mike has been a really great representative on Council. He was one of the original members. It is clear to me how much he loves the public lands and the NCA [national

conservation area], and I am impressed by the Thunder Mountain Wheelers, how they work to build bridges with other groups and agencies, get things done on the ground, and foster good relationships.

Wilson: I had a lot of fun, learned an awful lot, but don't think I'd try it again [laughter].

Ewing: Former Council members Steve Acquafresca and Terry Kimber aren't here. Steve thought going to the dentist was more fun [laughter]. [Ewing related why Acquafresca and Kimber were valuable to the Council, and he read a written thank you note to former Council members from Katie Stevens, absent due to illness].

[There was a round of applause for retired members].

### **Election of officers**

Steele: [Went over agenda]. I think we will go back to a quarterly meeting schedule, which will be a nice change. We should elect a chair and vice chair.

[Doug Atchley nominated Steele. Tamera Minnick seconded. Steele called for nomination of vice chair. Steve Boyle nominated himself. Atchley seconded. The motions to elect these officials were passed unanimously].

### **BLM slide show presentations and Council discussion**

Ewing: I appreciate you [Steele and Boyle] stepping up and filling those roles. [Went through slide show to recap progress of the D-E NCA RMP to date (see attachment)]. This is 32<sup>nd</sup> meeting of Council. BLM got about 1,400 comments for the draft RMP. We are analyzing comments. Based on comments and Advisory Council recommendations, we are preparing the proposed RMP (RMP). A protest period follows publication of proposed RMP. Protests go to Washington Office for review. Sometimes we have to go back to the document and make a change, sometimes not.

Staley: [Described RMP development process in more detail]. A protestable issue is if we didn't follow our own regulations and laws.

Steele: Then protests are about procedure, but decisions about NCA are still made locally?

Ewing: We will brief the State Office and Washington Office. They'll weigh in on a few topics, but they usually don't overrule local decisions. The governor's consistency review is to make sure this plan is consistent with other plans for this area.

Steele: One of the most important things to note is that there aren't too many topics that the Advisory Council has not gone through carefully. The Council has been very, very hands on and

has delved into a lot of issues. There's been a lot of hard work. Normally these type of meetings are held every quarter, but we met sometimes twice a month. That's my soapbox.

Ewing: Agreed. The Council has done a lot of heavy lifting and made many recommendations. I think we're going to have some questions along the way, maybe about things that the Council hasn't provided specific recommendations on. Today we want to revisit the recommendations the Council already made to see if anything has changed. When the proposed RMP is out for the protest period, that would be a good time to talk about any "fatal" flaws, etc. Quarterly meetings will be a good time to keep Council up to date.

Steele: Maybe we could meet at end of April, to bring up any questions you may have.

Staley: Do we want to bring up implementation decisions?

Ewing: There are RMP decisions that we have to make in the plan, and there are other decisions—implementation decisions--that we don't have to make in the plan. The overarching decisions in the RMP are protestable. Implementation or day-to-day decisions can be appealed, and appeals go straight to the Interior Board of Land Appeals. We'll try to work on digesting that so that we can explain it better to the public.

Steele: [Went over RMP timeline].

Ewing: Once the record of decision is signed, the Council stays together for a year after that. It's important to prioritize implementation actions, and that's how the Council can help.

Staley: It's going to be exciting to get to point of implementing things that were envisioned in the draft, to get beyond the planning stage. I think the Council will find that interesting.

Steele: Any other Council comments?

Steve: We don't have any more questions.

### **Public comments**

Jan Potterveld: [Thanked Council members]. I think that the BLM is implementing actions even while the plan is being drafted.

Ewing: We try not to do anything that would "foreclose" future actions or make it impossible to implement the alternatives.

Potterveld: There's a lot of work to be done there [in the NCA]. I hope those things will move forward in a timely way.

Ewing: A lot of staff time is wrapped up in the plan. Andy doesn't have much time for anything else.

Janice Shepherd: I hope you plan to have some time for an open house to educate the public about protest period, etc. I am concerned about certain inconsistencies in present plan. [Went over some specific concerns, and related her experience hiking and finding evidence of digging, presumably for cultural artifacts].

3:50–4:00 p.m.: Break

### **Council discussion**

Steele: I think we can get out a little bit early. Based on the comments that Jan and Janice gave, Collin will go through the process again.

Ewing: In an SRMA, BLM recreation policy may elevate recreation above other uses [gave an example from Grand Junction Field Office RMP]. We'll definitely be looking at your [Shepherd's] example of inconsistency in the [Dominguez-Escalante NCA—D-E NCA] plan. What's going on in the NCA right now are regular patrols. Andy...?

Andy: We have a trail-clearing project on Big Dominguez Trail. Last year we did a VOC [Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado] trip on the Gunnison River to map weed infestations. We have regular patrols. Shane Ditlinger did a bunch of counter work, placing counters out there so we have a better idea of usage. We are getting the perimeter of the NCA signed. We still don't have all of the perimeter signed. We're also processing commercial permits.

Ewing: Janice has been out picking up tires. Also, a crew from the Delta Correctional Center has been picking up trash. We have a partnership with CPW [Colorado Parks and Wildlife] to collar bighorn sheep to see where they go, where they overlap with domestic sheep. CCA [Colorado Canyons Association], Joe Neuhof's association, has a grant to train volunteers to do riparian monitoring. This summer, we'll be developing a protocol for this. Nikki Grant-Hoffman, our science coordinator, will be looking at Big Dominguez and Little Dominguez. Some of you might be interested in participating in that. We are working with Uncompahgre Plateau Partnership on developing a weed management plan. We've got a grad student working on sage-grouse habitat modeling. We have some volunteer paleontologists doing surveys for dinosaur tracks. Our hydrologist is identifying seeps and springs, for which Janice has provided some helpful information. We haven't started building trails and trailheads, because we're still working on these in the plan.

Potterveld: The improvements to the Bridgeport area have been on the burner. Any progress on that?

Ewing: We did a major report and testing of cultural resources there for SHPO [State Historic Preservation Office]. The County put in for a GOCO [Great Outdoors Colorado] grant to fund parts of project. It's going to be expensive. All of our environmental work is done; we just need the time and the money.

Staley: [Went over summary of Council recommendations—see attached slide show]. These are previous council recommendations. This recaps the specific recommendations on the draft product itself. I think we want this [presentation] to be more of a dialogue.

Steele: Yes, our first recommendations were included in Alternative E. These recommendations are things we didn't see in Alternative E, but would like to.

Staley: [Continued going through slide show, with the Council discussing, reviewing, and providing justifications for their decisions].

Steele: Could you briefly tell us something about the [Wilderness] zones?

[There was some discussion about acreage and location of zones].

Minnick: I think we actually voted to protect and restore supplemental values in all three zones, not just in Zone 1. What you have there [in the presentation] is just what is already in Alternative E.

Staley: Does that jive with the Council's collective memory?

Steele and Ewing: That's what I remember.

Kate Graham: Does group size mean heartbeats (people plus animals)?

Ewing: Yes.

Staley: [Went over recommendations Advisory Council made on areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs)]. Graham asked a question that revealed an error on one of the slides: It should be alternative D not E for Gibbler Mountain]. When we print the proposed RMP, it will have a separate column for the proposed "alternative." You will be able to see all alternatives, so you can track how the decision progressed.

Ewing: [Regarding Ninemile Hill] I perceive the Tabeguache Trail as being used more in the future. The Grand Junction Field Office is working on it. The proposed RMP for Dominguez-Escalante will reflect this work.

Staley: [Continued with slide show].

Bob Janowski: [Regarding additional access points into the Wilderness] The slide should really say access points along Hwy 50, not along Bean Ranch Road.

Kaye Simonson: Mesa County needs direction on this. The BLM should work with County.

Massey: Physically impossible to make more access points from Bridgeport, because of river.

Ewing: I think the intent is to find more access points besides Bridgeport.

Staley: [Continued slide show--cultural resources. Asked for clarification of virtual or non-virtual or highway versus on-site. Council said they meant highway].

Tamera: It would be interesting to have virtual too.

Steele: Any questions, comments, or additions?

### **Public comments**

Joyce Olson: I read a comment from Daily Sentinel, written by a hunter. I recommend that the Council read that comment.

Boyle: If we are to have hunting in Zone 1, we have to let hunters step off trail.

Shepherd: Access to Dry Fork Canyon is a concern. A trail there would be nice. Also, the trail with access to waterfall is not an official trail. I'm concerned about restrictions on off-trail use as there is no access to toilet facilities in Wilderness. [Brought up other specific concerns re: Tabeguache trail; long-term easement across public lands.

Potterveld: I second what Janice said. There are lots of access points into Wilderness, and they are not particularly well used. One proposal I didn't hear was to improve McCarty Trail. There's a lot more to Wilderness than Big Dominguez.

### **Council discussion**

Atchley: The McCarty Trail has been in dispute for years. No one seems to know what the borders or rights are.

[More discussion of access points into Wilderness]

Ewing: We have surveyors surveying all of Escalante Canyon. We're not sure of status of McCarty trailhead, but we will have this survey to help us.

Atchley: Dick [Miller] says it's on his land. That has to be resolved.

Ewing: Are there any issues that the new Council members would like to bring up?

Ralph Files: The BLM says one of the roads (Route 2579) it proposes to keep open continues on Forest Service land, but there's no continuation of the road on the Forest Service side.

[There was more discussion of this; Steele reiterated that Council members and public should contact BLM directly if they have recommendations on specific routes].

[There was additional discussion of the multi-use Whitewater to Delta route: private versus public property issues; railroad ROWs; wildlife issues; implementation-level versus RMP-level decisions. Also, there was discussion of suitable trails for mountain biking].

Atchley: I don't think the City of Delta would be opposed to this [Whitewater to Delta trail].

Ewing: A mountain biking trail system was not heavily discussed by Council; there was not a whole lot of input from biking community or County.

Files: [Expressed surprise and pulled out map to show Atchley].

[There was further discussion about mountain biking].

Ewing: Mountain biking is not a focus, because we don't have an SRMA specifically for that.

[Staley brought up map of alternative D for East Creek SRMA on TV display. Collin, Council, and public discussed details for where routes would go, and discussed how SRMAs and ERMAs are prioritized].

Atchley: There's a caveat to upper Sawmill Mesa: That's winter range for elk and deer.

Boyle: I want to circle back to that, to remind us that we're considering the management of a national conservation area, not a national recreation area. I'm concerned about potential impacts to wintering big game, federally threatened plants, and other biological resources.

Graham: Since ERMAs fall under SRMAs, would it be worth throwing in a word regarding mountain biking, just as a placeholder?

Shepherd: That's on Page 136.

Ewing: It does include mountain biking [read from draft RMP]. When we have an ERMA like this, we don't give ourselves a lot of direction up front---we handle on a case-by-case basis; whereas in an SRMA, when there is a conflict, we have direction on who we are managing for.

Potterveld: I encourage you to make use of the Grand Valley Trails roundtable. Let us do the dirty work. Once you've made determinations about other resource conflicts, we can help resolve user conflicts.

Shepherd: Our [Grand Junction area] mountain biking group has Fruita and McInnis. Dan expressed disappointment there was no SRMA for mountain biking. It would be good to hear from Delta group.

Steele: This is more of a implementation-level issue. If we're considering switching it [Sawmill Mesa] from an ERMA to an SRMA, we need more information and discussion before Council can make this kind of recommendation.

Graham: It need not be exactly as envisioned here.

Ewing: This is a big allocation decision. We still have time, but I need to know at the next meeting if the Council is recommending we designate an SRMA instead of ERMA. I think this is going to take some homework by Council members, to be ready to have this discussion at the April meeting.

Steele: If it is an issue, if somebody didn't get represented here, we should discuss this in April. [There was discussion about next meeting, which was set for the 16<sup>th</sup> of April (Minnick's birthday) at the Bill Heddles Center in Delta]. I welcome our new members and appreciate the Council's vote of confidence in putting me back as chairperson.

### **Meeting adjournment**

5:25 p.m.: Steele adjourned meeting.

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### **Attachment**

Ewing, Collin, and Samantha Staley. "Dominguez Escalante Advisory Council RMP Timeline and Recommendations Presentation." Presentation at the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area Advisory Council meeting, Grand Junction, CO, January 22, 2014. Grand Junction, CO : Bureau of Land Management, 2014.



# Dominguez Escalante Advisory Council



## RMP timeline and Recommendations Presentation

Collin Ewing and Samantha Staley

January 22, 2014

Grand Junction, Colorado

# RMP Timeline



## Looking Back....

- March 2009, D-E NCA designated in Omnibus Public Lands Act
- *August 2010 BLM issued Notice of Intent to publish DRMP/DEIS*
- November 2010, D-E Advisory Council Formed (has met 31 times to date)
- May-Sept 2013 Public comment on Draft RMP (6 AC meetings)

# RMP Timeline



## Looking Forward...

- October 2013-August 2014 Preparing Proposed RMP/Final EIS
- August-Sept. 2014 Protest Period (30 days)/Governor's consistency review (60 days)
- *February 2015, Record of Decision and Approved RMP*

# Recommendations: BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS



- Exercise **flexibility in the dates of seasonal route closures** to the extent of big-game needs and soil conditions. *(8; 1 abstention)*
- No new routes in sagebrush patches 60 acres or larger; acceptable to reroute interior routes to the edges of a patch. *(9-0)*
- Support alternative D for the management of mountain shrub land communities. *(9-0)*

# Recommendations: WILDERNESS



- **Limit travel to designated routes in Zone 1**, with considerations for need to water horses, cultural and heritage resources, hunting. (9-0)
- Support alternative E for **group size** limitations, so long as BLM retains the flexibility to meet NCA goals regarding education and other values. (7-2)
- **Protect and restore** supplemental values in Zone 1; only protect those values in Zones 2 and 3. (9-0)

# Recommendations: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern



- Support alternative E for **Gibbler Mountain** [ACEC] within the Cactus Park SRMA; support a horse route or quiet trail as opportunities arise. (9-0)

# Recommendations: RECREATION



- **In Ninemill Hill**, emphasize creating a long-distance corridor with associated facilities; **manage for quiet use** with exceptions for County roads and pullouts (*passed*)
- Close the mouth of Big Dominguez to camping. (*passed 5-3; 1 unsure*)

## Recommendations: RECREATION (continued)



- **Ban glass** containers in the NCA. (6-2)
- **Allow physical geocaches** in the NCA; virtual geocaches only in the Wilderness. Present geocaches should be grandfathered; future sites would require BLM's approval. (9-0)
- Support alternative E for management of target shooting (*passed*)



# Recommendations: TRAVEL MANAGEMENT



- **Seek additional access** points into the Wilderness, the NCA in general, and especially along Bean Ranch Road in the Hunting Grounds.

# Recommendations: LIVESTOCK GRAZING



- Keep **Rose Creek allotment open** but close the Bean Ranch allotment. (*passed*)

# Recommendations: CULTURAL RESOURCES



- Protect the **Old Spanish Trail** and use **off-site interpretation** versus on- the-ground. (9-0)