



**Minutes of the D-E NCA Advisory Council  
June 26, 2013, 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Bill Heddles Recreation Center, Delta, CO**

**Council members attending:** Katie Steele, Doug Atchley, Joe Neuhof, Bill Harris, and Oscar Massey.

**Council members absent:** Neil "Mike" Wilson, Tamara Minnick, Steven Boyle, Terry Kimber, and Steve Acquafresca.

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

**Members of the public attending:** Kaye Simonson, Janice Shepherd, Doris Janowski, Bob Janowski, Sherry Schink, Kate Graham, Emily Hornback, Ted Johnson, and Chris Miller.

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**Call to order and introductory remarks**

3:00 p.m.: Chair Katie Steele called the meeting to order and asked that Council members and members of the public introduce themselves.

Katie Stevens: By the close of 2012, the Advisory Council (AC) met 24 times and had four field trips.

**Role of the Council, agenda review and meeting objectives**

Stevens: Purpose of these five meetings is to continue public outreach. The AC did not see the draft plan prior to its release. The AC will take a look at the differences between what the AC recommended and what is actually in the draft plan. Regarding the public discussion periods, want to emphasize this is a draft plan, so it can change on the basis of input from the AC and members of the public. The AC will talk about the topic areas and there will be two opportunities for public comment.

3:10 p.m.: Oscar Massey arrived.

**Council discussion: Wilderness**

Joe Neuhof: We will talk about wilderness first (reordered the agenda). Met with other members of the AC as a subgroup to discuss these five topics Monday night in Grand Junction. They invited representatives of the public to attend. Participation was sparse. Subgroup included Council members Katie and Tamara and citizen Eric Rechel.

Wilderness: Original wilderness subgroup facilitated by Mike and myself. The subgroup came up with two main recommendations: 1) The BLM should consider multiple access points to the Wilderness by motorized vehicle, meaning not motorized travel in the Wilderness, but access to starting points for hiking or horseback riding. But that is a better discussion for the travel management meeting. 2) The BLM should consider management of the Wilderness for education. Understand that the maximum group size for Zone 1, the corridor between Big and Little

Dominguez, is 12 heartbeats, including pets; for Zone 2, it is eight; and for Zone 3, it is 12. Group sizes above 12 would require a special permit; correct, Andy?

Andy Windsor: Alternative C would not provide exceptions.

Neuhof: There could be some discussion around that; the Council could recommend that the BLM consider exceptions. The AC advised the BLM to manage the Wilderness by zones and consider restricting certain areas to day use only.

Stevens: A couple of alternatives do not use zones.

Neuhof: A couple of other points: The BLM should consider geocaching in Palmer Basin and should consider the use of monitoring devices for education and wildlife. Andy, would you talk about monitoring devices?

Windsor: The classic examples of monitoring devices are wildlife collars on sheep, trail counters for trails, and stream-flow gauges. All of these would be considered installations or trammeling, but on the other hand may help us meet the wilderness value of naturalness.

Neuhof: In other words, the BLM would take into account wilderness experiences when considering the use of monitoring devices. The BLM should consider Rambo homestead heritage areas that need cleanup of what is not naturally there. Assume there will be site-by-site analysis of cultural resources.

Bill Harris: Rambo is a day use area?

Windsor: Yes.

Neuhof: Permits are required; AC wants triggers established. For example, in Zone 2, more than four contacts consistently would be a trigger to change plan. To reiterate: Subgroup recommends allowing exceptions to group size limits and making Palmer Basin a day-use-only area. There are three broad points that Tamara cares about: 1) In the Preferred Alternative (Alternative E), there are 11 stock ponds, which are supported by the AC. Tamara asked how stock ponds are monitored; whose responsibility are they?

Oscar Massey: These are the farmers' responsibility to monitor, which is shared with the Grazing Advisory Board.

Neuhof: Do you see tamarisk in ponds? If so, would the BLM help to remove?

Massey: Don't see much tamarisk. Tamarisk shades the water. We treat ponds with bentonite. We use a chemical called PAM to spray ponds for soil stabilization. Works well; seals off ditches and canals. Is expensive, but one coffee can full will seal a half-acre pond.

Neuhof: Other issues: Alternative E protects supplemental values and Alternative C protects and restores supplemental values. Tamara wonders why all of the Wilderness isn't slated for protection and restoration.

Steele/Stevens: Expect some systems to restore themselves over time without active management.

Harris: In Zone 1, Little Dominguez has heavier use. Does the BLM expect there will be a need for restoration there because of impacts?

Neuhof: Can a cultural resource be restored? Not sure how, but some resources require some attention.

Harris: An archaeological site cannot be restored unless it has a wall or other such structure, but a cultural site can be restored. Don't know of any architectural structures in the cultural sites, except for game blinds.

Windsor: We have to think about tradeoffs; what do we need to do to protect? We need a toolbox of methods when we are trying to emphasize protection of cultural values, but the whole intent of the different alternatives is to address how we balance these impacts: what is more important.

Neuhof: Why not have restoration on a case-by-case basis?

Windsor/Neuhof: It helps to prioritize, e.g. , in Zone 1, cultural resources are very important.

Neuhof: Lastly, question some of the language that states in order to open one route, the BLM would have to close another to maintain the experience of solitude. Neuhof/Minnick want to bring this trail exchange language to Council's attention.

Steele: (Read from draft RMP). Some of the language says that there won't be any new trails constructed when some are closed.

Windsor: we monitor opportunities for solitude by the number of travel routes.

Neuhof: To revisit the big three: Regarding the group-size limitation exception for education, there should be a little more discretion around that.

Stevens: We should generally be managing for small groups. If we had exceptions, what would that look like, especially when thinking of Zone 1, which gets such heavy use?

Windsor: It is wilderness. How many people should we allow? There is no limitation on number of groups, just group size. We need some kind of quantitative measure of solitude. Group size is what we use.

Neuhof: From the Colorado Canyons Association perspective, we think it is great that group size is limited in the Wilderness. We can find other places for education groups. Palmer Gulch was recommended by the AC to be restricted to day use only. Why did we make that decision?

Harris: Palmer Gulch and Leonard Basin have significant cultural resources, especially rock art. You can get there from the river or from the top, after a long hike or ride. You can't get there easily without trespassing on private property. Most people come off the river.

(Neuhof brought out map to show Council members)

Steele: Why isn't Palmer Gulch included on map?

Windsor: Palmer Gulch is not included, because there is no access.

Stevens: Interdisciplinary team felt that including Palmer Gulch would draw more attention to it.

Neuhof: Is there anything to add regarding wilderness?

Massey: Does protecting cultural resources mean fencing or what? There is more trouble for cultural resources from people than from livestock.

Doug Atchley: Rock art in Escalante is easily accessed. People add their own initials, and we found that fencing the area off made the problem worse.

Stevens: These are heritage areas that are easily damaged.

Massey: We had trouble with petroglyphs in the Gulch and Cactus Park. The BLM told me we had to fence them, but a fence built in a fast-flooding area will not last. We did go in and use rocks to prevent cattle from affecting the petroglyphs.

Neuhof: Protecting wilderness and cultural resources is kind of a layer cake. There are laws, agency mandates, and on-the-ground decisions by specialists. There is no one type of protection that protects all types of resources.

#### **Council discussion: Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSAs)**

Neuhof: In Preferred Alternative, BLM states it would not necessarily manage for wildness, if WSAs were released by Congress. AC agreed with Commissioner Acquafresca regarding WSAs.

Harris: BLM should consider managing Gunnison Slopes. As they go through the book, AC members and public should pay special attention to objectives, as these will dictate how the NCA is managed for the next 20 years.

Neuhof: BLM states it will manage consistently with adjacent lands; not talking about adjacent wilderness, but adjacent non-wilderness. There is not a whole lot of opposition to the BLM WSA management plan. Should they be inventoried as Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWCs)? None of them meet that threshold.

#### **Council discussion: Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

Neuhof: LWCs are not legislated wilderness. LWC is an administrative designation. BLM has good instruction on how to inventory for LWCs, but no specific type of management structure, right, Katie?

Stevens: The BLM is required to maintain LWCs, but there isn't any special designation or one way to manage them. The BLM looks to see if wilderness characters are present on the landscape and attempts to manage for them.

Neuhof: The Dominguez Addition is not without roads. The AC thinks the Dominguez Addition shouldn't be managed as wilderness. The BLM should maintain the roads in Gunnison Slopes. LWCs in the Preferred Alternative include Dry Fork and Cottonwood Canyon, but not the Dominguez Addition and Gunnison Slopes. The BLM and the Council are in agreement except for Gunnison Slopes. From talking with Andy and other BLM staff, thinks the BLM feels it can meet the goals of the AC for Gunnison Slopes by managing for wilderness without making it a LWC, right?

Stevens/Windsor: yes.

Neuhof: If the LWC designation still allows for the movement of livestock, the existence of stock ponds, and flexibility with juggling trails, why not make [Gunnison Slopes] a LWC?

Windsor: it's a question of resource inventory: what is the condition of wildlife habitat or livestock forage outside of WSAs and Wilderness? The question is does our management have an impact? We want to protect that resource. If we define it as an LWC, we will need pretty strong management, such as restrictions on surface disturbance. We need to provide for recreation. Gunnison Slopes has vegetation that we need to protect, recreation along the river, and livestock.

Neuhof: So the difference between having an LWC and no LWC is the no-surface-disturbance restriction?

Windsor: We have to consider how much man-made stuff is already out there. If there is very little, then what impact will building something have?

Stevens: [The Dominguez Addition and Gunnison Slopes] are two areas where we need development; Dry Fork and Cottonwood Canyon are not, so it makes sense to leave them as they are and not add a bunch more roads.

Windsor: In the Federal Land Policy Act, roads are *constructed* and *maintained*: that's the classification in the inventory.

Stevens: Doug is concerned about the use of roads in the Dry Fork; that's a tribal management issue. In Cottonwood, roads are constructed by jeep.

Neuhof: We need to look at travel management in the Dry Fork.

Massey: The draft plan states that in the Gunnison Slopes, which is bighorn sheep range, bighorn sheep are concentrated in the winter. My observation is that bighorn sheep are concentrated there year-round.

Stevens: That's right, but even more so in winter.

Neuhof to Massey: Is your main interest water development?

Oscar: Yes. There isn't much conflict with tourism, because visitors mainly use it in summer, and we use it in winter. Most of our water supply is snow.

5:05 p.m.: Steele called for an early comment period.

#### **Public comments**

Ted Johnson: Want ATV trails to allow visitors to get within a couple of miles of hiking. Concerned about BLM closing areas around the Wilderness.

Steele: Will put agenda items on website. Can't go through route by route here, because to do so would take too long. Will put maps up at travel meeting so that individual routes can be discussed.

Janice Shepherd: Regarding protect and restore being only in Zone 1, what does that mean? If someone writes on rock art with charcoal, or goes in with spray paint, will cultural resource staff members be allowed to restore? How about the wood in structures? if someone takes it for firewood. Can that be restored. Perhaps the BLM can plant a lot of prickly pear in from of rock art. If there's wording in the plan that says wilderness can't do these things in wilderness, then the BLM can't protect rock art. It's a matter of degrees. There is a site in Utah where they worked at restoring, but it doesn't feel right; you can see the difference. In terms of not building any more trails without deleting some (Zone 2), it would be nice to work out a loop that would take people to overlooks. Regarding commenting on ePlanning, people should copy comment somewhere else before clicking the "add comment" button. Also, the word "include" will crash ePlanning. When inserting links in a comment, don't include "http;" it will cause ePlanning to crash.

Doris Janowski: Is the August 19<sup>th</sup> Council meeting at Two Rivers?

Steele: Meeting is at Mesa County Courthouse on the 19<sup>th</sup> in Grand Junction and at Bill Heddles on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

4:20 p.m.: Steele adjourned meeting for break until 4:30.

4:30 p.m.: Steele called meeting to order and signaled Neuhof to go ahead with discussing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs).

### **Council discussion: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

Neuhof: Have two more topics to cover: ACECs and WSRs. The Advisory Council recommended to the BLM that if alternatives were to remove protections, then ACEC designation should be considered to protect these areas. Cottonwood Canyon should be protected, and ACEC status may be appropriate there. The BLM should provide more information on relevant important values, under the Preferred Alternative, for smaller portions of the Escalante Creek ACEC (for Eastman's monkey flower) and River Rims ACEC (for BLM sensitive plants). Gunnison Gravels has a fence and an interpretive sign that's not really destroyable, so it makes sense to un-designate it. Two areas worth focusing on are Gibbler Mountain and Gunnison River. What would the Preferred Alternative do to protect? Can you talk about that, Andy?

Windsor: The geological and paleontological resources are protected by law, and there are BLM sensitive species, especially Grand Junction milkvetch. The protection we would use is site-specific relocation. We can modify projects to protect species. This is not an isolated resource; we have some recreation proposals.

Staley: The difference is site disturbance is prohibited within 100 meters when it's not an ACEC but within 200 meters when it is.

Windsor: A 200-meter restriction means a 400-meter diameter around each one of these disturbances.

Massey: Is the BLM planning on closing an area in that section?

Windsor: Not for Cactus Park, but say you want to build a water facility, under Alternative A, surface disturbance is not an option, but with a site-specific alternative, you can still do the project; you just have to change it.

Neuhof: Tamara was wondering specifically why the Escalante ACEC made it into the Preferred Alternative, but Gibbler did not.

Windsor: Escalante has many relevant and important values: Geological and paleontological, milkvetch, monkey flower and the hanging gardens, which are globally imperiled, versus one species in Gibbler. Escalante is also an outstanding source of Colorado hookless cactus, and it has wildlife and fish that are BLM sensitive. It has historically and culturally important resources. It has the unique geology of the canyon within the canyon, and it has dangers—hazards.

Neuhof: In other words, it's more important. As part of managing for ACECs, is the level of threats important? Would Gibbler Mountain rise in importance because it is an SRMA? What about the River Rims ACEC?

Steele: It's more biological?

Windsor: In Alternative B, a large ACEC runs along Gunnison River; in Alternative E, it is more scaled back and is focused on relevant and important values. The Gunnison River ACEC has cultural resources—the railroad, Native American resources, wildlife, fish, bald eagle, peregrine falcons, etc. River Rims ACEC is more focused on plants and geological.

Neuhof: Why are threatened and endangered species protected for both Gunnison River and River Rims?

Ewing: To protect fish and the 100-year floodplain. Cactus doesn't have that. The Fish and Wildlife Agency is looking at that. There is a chance to get Colorado hookless cactus delisted, because the protections provided by National Conservation Area Status are good enough.

Steele: What is a low-impact organized group?

Windsor: We ask what kind of impact a proposal might have; Class 1 or 2, such as hunting or guiding, is very low impact. A competitive event is not; for example, what to do with all the cars?

Harris: Food vendors and what not have much more impact than people just hiking.

#### **Council discussion: Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSRs)**

Neuhof: Last topic is WSRs. The AC recommended that the BLM protect the outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) of river segments legislatively other than by WSR designation. The AC recommended that the river segments be found not suitable. Other stakeholders recommended suitability for Cottonwood Creek and Rose Creek. In the Preferred Alternative, the BLM found one segment—Cottonwood Creek—to be suitable. We discussed this at the subgroup meeting. It seems that part of the rationale for suitability was to protect stream flow regime. The question was whether there are other tools that would protect stream flow without WSR designation.

Harris: Went into Cottonwood Creek last September and it was totally dry. It may be a good ACEC candidate. Similar to the situation with WSAs, some are suitable and some aren't. ACEC designation doesn't really protect flow.

Windsor: Designation is to protect cottonwood-sumac forest. These riparian vegetation types depend on certain flow regime. Cottonwood Canyon not like Escalante Canyon, where water is always shepherding through, protected by water rights. In Cottonwood Canyon, water rights are high; if more water development occurred upstream of this segment, flows would continue to go down. Cottonwood Canyon has a minimum in-stream flow that protects fish. A federal reserved water right that would focus on protecting that value would accomplish the same thing.

Harris: Has questions about existing and possible future water rights.

Steele: None of the senior water rights would be affected, but future water rights would be?

Windsor: Yes.

Atchley: Historically, if look at water flows through the canyon, it is dry more years than it is wet.

Neuhof: If all folks that currently have water right get it, junior water right can't force water down the creek.

Windsor: Storage is what we were concerned about. An ORV exists today. There's enough water to support that today. The question is if there is new development, what impact would that have? So that's the thinking.

Atchley: That's the concern, the adjudicated in-stream flow.

Harris: Pretty much all the flat land has been developed for hay.

Neuhof: Thanks for your time and for listening.

5:10 p.m.: Steele broke down topics for next time and opened the floor for more public comments.

Shepherd: Cottonwood Canyon has just enough water on the surface or underground to keep this forest going. If BLM doesn't know whether there are conservation easements, doesn't know whether someone can build a mega house with a big lawn.

#### **Meeting adjournment**

Steele: Objections to adjourn for this evening?

(All assented.)

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.