



**Minutes of the D-E NCA Advisory Council
August 19, 2013, 3:00--6:00 p.m.
Mesa County Courthouse Annex
Grand Junction, CO**

Council members attending: Katie Steele, Steve Acquafresca, Joe Neuhoof, Mike Wilson, Oscar Massey, Bill Harris, Steven Boyle, Doug Atchley, and Terry Kimber (by conference call).

Council members absent: Tamera Minnick

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

Members of the public attending: Cheryl Harsky, Tracey Rohde, Emily Hornback, Kaye Simonson, Sherry Schenk, Karen Green, Jim Cooper, Joyce Olson, Kate Graham, Jan Burch, Phil Hanceford, Del Martin, Linda Reeves, Kent Davis, Conrad Tucker, Jan P. Potterveld, James Solomon, Brandon Siegfried, and others.

Call to order and introductory remarks

3:00 p.m.: Chair Katie Steele called meeting to order and initiated introductions of Council and Public.

Role of the Council, agenda review, and meeting objectives

Collin Ewing: (Introduced himself and welcomed attendees). The Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area [NCA] was designated in the Omnibus Act of 2009. (Read out all 14 purposes of NCA). Act directed BLM to develop a long-term management plan and a travel plan that limits motorized travel to designated routes, to involve the public, and established an Advisory Council. Council organized in 2010. This is Council's 28th meeting. In 2010, BLM held scoping meetings and meetings to gain public input into accuracy of BLM's route inventory for travel management. Asked folks which routes were important to them.

The BLM also participated in Wild and Scenic River stakeholder process. The BLM is working with other agencies. The draft plan is now available for public comment. There are five alternative management strategies in the draft plan. Emphasize that the plan is a draft. The BLM wants to hear from the public, wants the public to think about these scenarios. The BLM

developed the Preferred Alternative after Advisory Council and public input and much analysis. The Preferred Alternative is BLM's preference but NOT the final plan. It will change before the proposed RMP is released. After that we will have record of decision and final plan in late 2014. Advisory Council has met four times so far to discuss specific topics.

Steele: Draft RMP came out in June. Advisory Council has been comparing Council's recommendations to the Preferred Alternative in the draft plan. Tonight we'll discuss recreational use and travel management. These topics are covered in two meetings because of public interest and geographical differences between the NCA in Mesa and Delta Counties. The purpose of these meetings is to review the Council's recommendations and compare them to the BLM's Preferred Alternative. At the close of the public comment period, the Council will meet again to discuss what transpired at these meetings, consider the public's and BLM's comments, etc., and then make formal recommendations to the BLM. Ask that attendees don't make route-by-route comments here, but make those comments directly to BLM, not by emailing the Council.

Council discussion: recreational use

Bill Harris: Dominguez-Escalante was designated a national conservation area by Congress. Recreation is one of values in designation. The Advisory Council discussed strategies and goals at length and made recommendations to the BLM. Want to make public aware of Appendices L and J, which provide guidance for management. Also, the matrix on Pages 108–148 deals with recreation. Figure 2-8e is also helpful, as it shows proposed recreation areas, ERMA [extensive recreation management areas], and SRMA [special recreation management areas]. Prior to this meeting, Council members reviewed their past recommendations and compared them to the Preferred Alternative in the draft RMP. Beginning on Page 108, there is NCA-wide guidance regarding geocaching, camping, and their impacts, and a variety of other things, and the draft RMP defines different areas recommended for SRMA and ERMA designation.

Andy Windsor: When we plan for recreation, we have three different options: unassigned, ERMA and SRMA. The big difference is what we are going to look at over time. With an ERMA, we keep an eye on whether we are providing opportunities for activities. With an SRMA, we expand what we keep our eye on to not only what activities but also which people and what kinds of experiences they are having.

Harris: Want to compare what this plan looks like under the Preferred Alternative to Advisory Council's recommendations. Target shooting: Advisory Council opinion split about 50-50. For those opposed, it was a safety issue. For those in favor, the issue was traditional use done in a safe manner. The Preferred Alternative states that target shooting is restricted in about 10,000 acres. The Advisory Council didn't come to consensus on target shooting. Map 2-7e is what we

looked at, but this map is not detailed, so it's hard to tell where target shooting is allowed or not. The Advisory Council recommended that the BLM installs good signs to direct people where they can or cannot shoot. Target shooting is not the same as hunting. The Council recommended cleanup days and banning inappropriate targets. The Council thinks glass bottles should be banned.

Ewing: There are two issues with target shooting: health and safety, and sensitive resources. Steep walled canyons, trailheads, and campgrounds are unsafe places to target shoot. There is also a perceived safety issue, where people, maybe from out of state, hear gunshots and are deterred from engaging in recreation. That consideration is included in the other alternatives. We want to know what the Council and the public think about these matters.

Terry Kimber: Lots of times, I will sight my guns in canyon. Some people may do it in Cactus Park area.

Ewing: I sight my rifle in that area also; the Preferred Alternative allows this, but other alternatives don't.

Joe Neuhofer: Certain areas are inappropriate for consistent target shooting. Can shooting be allowed seasonally?

Ewing: Maybe.

(Council members adjusted phone link with Terry)

Ewing: It's hard to enforce a ban on glass bottles.

Stevens: It's illegal to leave glass bottles there, whether broken or not. The Interdisciplinary Team felt that the regulations are already in place.

Steele: We're not talking about enforcement but educating the public on non-use of glass containers in the NCA.

Stevens: We try not to make rules we can't enforce.

Kimber: I'd hate to see it limited too much.

Harris: Education on ranching etiquette is needed. People should know how to behave around cows. [Regarding] geocaching, the Council is concerned about trails associated with cultural resources. We recognize that geocaching is very popular.

Ewing: Earth geocaching is more of an educational activity, so it may fit well with the NCA's purposes, but the planning team's lack of familiarity with geocaching meant that the team was

not sure where it needed to go on this. The big concern is social trailing and impacts to cultural resources.

Kimber: I would rather have people wandering all over than see one trail being used over and over.

Steele: For example, there are many geocaches in Cactus Park. I think people who engage in geocaching don't want to leave trails, as that would make it easier for other people to find the caches.

Wilson: (Talked about a situation in National Forest where a geocache is located in a park and people drive cross-country to go to it).

(More discussion on geocaches ensued)

Steele: It's a hobby using billion dollar satellites to find Tupperware.

(Much laughter)

Mike Wilson: My experience is folks want structure, want to be able to add to and subtract from cache.

3:45 p.m.: Steve Acquafresca arrived.

Harris: How does the BLM resolve conflicts differently in ERMAs [versus] SRMAs?

Ewing: It's about how to protect people's activities. In an ERMA, we might separate users to resolve conflicts. For example, designate a trail here for horseback riding and another there for ATVs; SRMAs are targeted toward a specific user or experience people using it; for example, families with children versus people interested in speed.

Stevens: SRMAs can help the BLM market toward a particular group to match what they are looking for with what's there. That's hard to do with ERMAs.

Wilson: [Regarding] the Hunting Ground (referenced Page 115), the Advisory Council notes that it is used by motorized and nonmotorized users, and these users are more local than national or international. The council recommends off-trail interpretation of Old Spanish Trail. Is the proposed [connector] trail [on NCA lands between Delta and Whitewater] feasible? It goes through wildlife breeding grounds. The cultural and social value of grazing should be recognized: It has been in this area for 150 years.

Oscar Massey: Each cow in her lifetime maybe brings in 10,000 dollars to County. It's the overall picture. What do other uses bring into that area by comparison?

Wilson: Recreational users seem to enjoy the dispersed nature of recreation in this area. What does the BLM think about increased access to the Hunting Ground, creating other access points besides Bean Ranch Road?

Ewing: The Lands and Realty section of the draft RMP describes actions to work with private landowners to increase access.

Steve Acquafresca: I know of private land that would be ideal to establish increased access either through right of way or by obtaining land.

Ewing: We prioritize the pursuit of obtaining additional land according to recreational objectives or other resource objectives. Since the Hunting Ground is proposed as an ERMA, it may be a lower priority than an SRMA [for gaining additional access or for completing other implementation actions]. Folks should look at those priorities for travel implementation in Appendix N and let us know if they think we got them right.

Wilson: I know of another possible access point for ATV's.

Neuhof: (Asked about Class III special recreation permits (SRPs)).

Collin: (Described what a special recreation permit is; referred to Appendix I)

Windsor: We issue permits for guiding, events, motorcycle racing, large group gatherings, etc. We couldn't analyze management alternatives according to every individual proposal that comes in, so we evaluated according to impacts. If there are a lot of impacts, that is a Class III situation; we won't issue permit.

Neuhof: The RMP goes into specifics for visual resource levels but not for audio levels. Why?

Windsor: We have to do environmental assessments for all SRPs, and this takes a lot of time and money; this guidance will help us assess impacts [upfront]. We would need to talk to the wildlife biologists to see if we could define a sound threshold.

Harris: [Regarding] the Gunnison River, the Advisory Council doesn't recommend camping at mouth of Dominguez, because there are existing heavy impacts: several different kinds of users congregate there.

Steele/Wilson: Why did the BLM leave this open for camping; also, why not make the seasonal end of motorized use in September instead of October?

Ewing: In the Preferred Alternative, we manage the Gunnison River as an SRMA targeting flat-water boating and associated camping and hiking experiences. We thought camping close to

hiking [opportunities] up Big Dominguez was necessary to meet those objectives for that kind of experience, but we acknowledge there are impacts. Designated sites might minimize that.

Steele/Wilson: (Reiterated concerns regarding increased traffic).

Kimber: October is the most beautiful month. It makes sense to open it to motorized boating as well as camping.

Ewing: According to the management action on Page 120, the motorized boat closure season would be May 1 to October 1 in the Preferred Alternative.

Steele: We're saying why not make it one month earlier.

Wilson: Gibbler Mountain is not motorized. Why?

Ewing: It may look non-motorized on the map because there are no existing routes, but it is still part of the Cactus Park SRMA.

(More discussion about status of Gibbler Mountain.)

Wilson: [Regarding] Ninemile Hill, I wonder why the Preferred Alternative proposes nonmotorized travel. The Advisory Council recommends mixed use.

Ewing: Ninemile Hill is an ERMA focused on horseback riding and hiking, and some biking. We heard that there was a demand for this use in this area in scoping and the advisory council meetings so we wanted to round out the range of alternatives. The other alternatives cover other kinds of uses (motorcycle use and ATVs, etc). This is another area where we don't quite know where to go with this and are hoping to get feedback from the council and the public.

Wilson: We need to improve the existing main road into that area.

Stevens/Wilson: If we build improvements like bathrooms and parking lots, that will increase impacts.

Wilson: [Regarding] Gunnison Slopes and East Creek, the Council's recommendations are not much different from the BLM's Preferred Alternative. It's the same with Escalante Canyon, although there we have questions about watchable wildlife, which are mostly on private land. For Sawmill Mesa along east rim and along the river in Negro Gulch and Club Gulch, the Preferred Alternative calls for an ERMA. Would this preclude the ability to develop a non-motorized trail system?

Ewing: This doesn't preclude those developments. We could build a trail, but I'm not sure how high a priority that would be since it is [proposed as] an ERMA, not an SRMA—that was included in Alternative D.

Atchley: Cottonwood should not be treated the same as Dry Mesa. Dry Mesa is a well-maintained road, but not Cottonwood.

Ewing/Windsor: The main road in Dry Mesa is not within the proposed SRMA.

Massey: To go back to Cactus Park, where is the room for new roads? Right now it is criss-crossed. There is a lot of controversy about where the main road is.

Public comments

James Solomon: I represent motorized users. Single track motorcycle users need major distances. Ninemile Hill is traditionally used by jeeps and ATVs. It's a nice area with excellent canyons. I drive my vehicle there and hike down into canyon. The road to there is not good to hike. Only two miles of single track trail are proposed in entire NCA, and there are only 15 miles in the inventory. What motorcycle users need depends on degree of difficulty. We need 35-50 miles of trail. The NCA can fill that need. In the Grand Junction Field Office, we are working on creating a route through the Tabeguache. Would provide huge economic benefit. [See also attached written comments].

Kate Graham: I represent quiet users. We gave a document to the Council [emailed to the Advisory Council's Gmail account—attached]. Quiet users like the setting and the opportunity to experience the old West. A reduction in routes is in accordance with that desire. We also want to see robust signage about private property to avoid trespass issues. Are administrative routes that are closed to motorized travel open to horse and foot travel? This is unclear and also needs good signage.

Linda Reeves: I'm a member of Great Old Broads For Wilderness and a retired teacher. I took some kids to Ninemile hill and saw no one. We like the opportunity for quiet users there. We thought it would be a good area to take kids for hiking that is close to home. It's a very workable area. A non-motorized network of trails there for average hikers would be great.

Conrad Tucker: I have attended 90% of scoping meetings, etc. I am repeating only two comments: Keep motorized trails open and connect existing trails. Cactus Park is very important to ATV community. Hikers and horseback riders have many other areas.

Jan Potterveld: [Regarding] target shooting. I was out on national forest taking horseback ride back to camp. As we rode into camp, heard lots of bangs. There was shooting in camp. Shooting spooks horses and Oscar's cows. Reminded me of trip I took with Katie to target shooting area,

which was a mess, but the mess was restricted to that area. I recommend the BLM have restrictions and designated areas for target shooting. [Regarding] trails and nonmotorized areas, I will make route-by-route comments directly to BLM. The Hunting Ground is dealt with very well in Preferred Alternative, but tweaks are needed. There is a big need for a new route. (Described where route could go). I was on hike in Ninemile Hill; absolutely no one was there. Need to improve the county road; can't get through there with a truck. Need lots of discussion on Ninemile Hill. Ninemile Hill is beautiful for hiking and horseback riding.

Kent Davis (from Escalante Ranch): Map 2-13e shows certain routes closed to mechanized travel in certain time frame, but grazing is going on there then, and we need access. (Also asked question about lion hunting).

Jim Cooper: Everybody likes Ninemile Hill. Let's all get together and enjoy it the way it is.

4:45–5:00 p.m.: Break.

Council discussion: transportation and travel management

Steele: The second part of meeting is transportation and travel management, which is different from other topics. The Advisory Council never made recommendations on this topic. This is the implementation of this process. This is how we pull all the other topics together. Transportation and travel management is how the BLM implements the objectives of each of other topics. In the Preferred Alternative, travel in wilderness Zone 1 is restricted to foot and horse travel only on designated routes. The rest of the NCA is limited to travel on designated routes only. This doesn't include county roads or seasonal closures. (Went over land use issues outlined in Preferred Alternative).

Harris: Seasonal closures have hard and fast dates, but it seems like they should be flexible since the need depends on how much snow we get year to year.

Steele: Could BLM explain rationale behind seasonal closures?

Stevens: To answer Kent's question, grazing use is allowed even during seasonal closures, but lion hunting outfitters would not be. That requires an SRP, as it's considered recreational use, and in the draft plan, Appendix N, we would not consider SRPs an administrative use.

Ewing: Seasonal closures are [primarily] because of big game wintering range, in accordance with CPW recommendations.

Windsor: The date an area is closed is an implementation decision; it can be changed.

Steele: Are areas much tougher to change than dates?

Windsor: Yes; those are RMP decisions that are not likely to change during the life of the plan; dates are implementation decisions that are intended to be flexible.

Steele: We need to focus on five areas in RMP with land use restriction for seasonal closures. The NCA's route system to reduce trespass issues seems reasonable. Implementation is described in Appendix N. (Read from appendix and went over history of process: inventory, public comment, release of draft RMP, and more public comment (referenced Page 888)).

Ewing: The BLM staff went on motorcycles and GPSed every route they could find, then submitted its findings for public comment. The Interdisciplinary Team used this information to draft the travel management plan and came up with area allocations and route-by-route decisions. (Handed out example map to Council members [attached]). Team started with redundant and dead-end routes (i.e., not ending in scenic overlook, etc.). Team looked at trespass routes (e.g., end at private property but not used for landowner's (administrative) access). Team also looked at uses of route: Is it a great ATV route; does it go to a good hunting area, etc? BLM is looking for feedback from public about this.

Steele: Emphasize that route-by-route comments should go to BLM before Sept 23rd.

Ewing: The next step was to look at resource concerns: Does route go through area with sensitive species (plants); wintering range?

Acquafresca: Notice that BLM has designated motorcycle route.

Ewing: Next step was to look at user. The user may want to have routes designated for a particular use.

Steele: The public wants to know whether the BLM can leave routes open until there is funding to complete the work to be done, unless there is an urgent need to close.

Ewing/Stevens: We can do this; we already try to do this.

Harris: It's a trust issue; folks think these routes will never reopen.

Ewing: It is important to look at the implementation priorities in Appendix N. Some areas would be a higher priority than others depending on whether they are an SRMA or ERMA, have significant resource concerns, etc.

Stevens: A lot of folks don't understand that the BLM has a legal responsibility to mitigate for route-causing impacts to sensitive or cultural resources.

Harris: Beginning on Page 890, there is a description of the laws and policies the BLM has to abide by.

Ewing: Some routes that need mitigation are not identified on the maps as closed until mitigated, because the team thought they could be left open until mitigated. The routes shown on the map as needing to be closed until mitigated are those that the team felt had more urgent issues that need to be addressed.

Steele: As we go through maps, we need to consider whether we are okay with these limitations. We need to give justifications for changes.

Massey: Talking about different uses, what if you wanted to take in some heavy equipment? Are there designated routes for that?

Ewing: That's an administrative use and is addressed under the stipulations of grazing or other permit.

Stevens: The BLM works with County and private land owners on this. This is different than public use.

Atchley: Grazing is specifically allowed in the Omnibus Act, including associated activities.

(Ewing, Stevens, Windsor, and Council discussed differences in routes under the different alternatives. Referenced page 892, Table N.1, and other parts of plan; discussed differences in seasonal closures due to elevation, mud, big game, and migratory bird nesting season)

Steele: Maps 2-13c,d,e should be looked at for public comment. (Referenced Page 895; went over additional areas; referenced Page 904, and asked Collin to discuss).

Public comments

Tucker: Katie/Mike hit nail on head. Don't close route until there is funding; it will never reopen. [Regarding] Dad's Flat in Dominguez, if it comes to closing, let ATV association take care of the trail; we'll do it. We would like to have that kind of relationship with BLM.

Potterveld: Have comments about the Wilderness: Zone 1 says stay on trail. This is difficult on horses, because they need water. Appeal to BLM to keep routes that are presently not in plan open to horses. The other comment is about Triangle Mesa: This is closed in Preferred Alternative; want to see it open to horseback riders. McCarty Trail access cuts across private land; BLM needs to work with private landowner to improve so there are no more trespass issues.

Sherry Schenk: Wondering about seasonal closures. Want to guarantee protection for wildlife. Appreciate discussion of seasonal closures. Hope other people understand process for closing routes. Also, [regarding] seeps and springs, which you haven't discussed here, want to bring attention to possible impacts.

Member of the public: There are bad apples in every bunch. It's distressing when one group is labeled as bad. Multiuse trails don't work. Request that BLM keeps trails for all uses that are already there and adds trailheads and trails for specific uses to eliminate congestion. I'm a motorcycle user; need single track trails. Most of the trails are multiuse, not specific to motorcycle use.

Jan Burch: (Thanked Council). This plan is not just for present users; it's for the children and grandchildren. It's about protecting habitat for wildlife and places for young people to learn about them.

(More discussion of travel management under the different alternatives, referring to draft RMP).

Steele: Under Preferred Alternative, there are 230 miles (Referenced Page 904) of routes being closed. This is 37% of total number of miles of NCA routes. Most of these are redundant or dead-end routes. Users should send a comment to the BLM if there is a value there. On comments, refer to the chart on page 904. (Read through objectives/rationale for closing routes. Asked Massey and Atchley to review items 1 through 4 on Pages 905 and 906 regarding dates for grazing).

Atchley: On table N.4, is this miles?

Ewing: Yes.

(Wilson, Ewing, and Stevens discussed routes not picked up during scoping, including new routes).

Atchley: New trails for new users: Where does that money come from?

Stevens: Can get grant money from partners and with the help of user groups, but not for cultural surveys, etc.

Wilson: Wording in record of decision has to be that there is room to do this, that it can be done later.

Stevens: Have to place priorities first before planning routes. BLM wants to get to a place where it is focusing on places that matter, instead of places being closed.

Wilson: (Related Forest Service story about routes left open until implementation, then closed, which made motorized users very angry).

Steele: It's important to set expectations from the start.

Massey: [Regarding grazing/administration section on Pages 904–905]: Want flexibility to use landowner's judgment regarding closures.

Stevens: That two-weeks-before-and-after administrative use definition is to make sure that use is when cows are out there, not (e.g.) during hunting season.

Massey: What about a flood during off season? Seems like there ought to be a different tool for that situation.

(More discussion about particular situations where flexibility in time constraints would be desirable).

Final remarks

Steele: (Gave time, date, place, and topics of next meeting).

Meeting adjournment

6: 05 p.m.: Steele adjourned meeting.

Attachments:

- James Solomon's written comments
- Quiet Trails Group letter to Council
- Example map of travel management route designations

D-E Advisory Council Presentation
Monday 8/19/2013
James B Solomon

_Advisory Council Preferred Alternatives from 2012? How do these comments apply?

_If the 2012 Comments are still valid, then it looks like the advisory council listened pretty close to all the comments from the attending public.

_One area of concern: Lack of mention in the DRMP for single track motorized trails. Primary areas: Cactus Park, Nine Mile Hill, Hunting Ground

_BLM Preferred Alternative for Nine Mile Hill: Foot and Hoof?? The Advisory Council's preferred recommendation was mixed use. This is a much better alternative for many reasons.

_Motorized Single Track Need 35-50 miles. The DRMP allows 2 miles. The inventory only showed 15 miles.

_The Motorized Single Track Trail Riders need a certain amount of diversity and challenge. Nine Mile Hill area provides these opportunities. Motorized Recreation of all forms is a growing sector of use on our public lands. We need to account for this and plan for the future growth. The NCA offers some of these provisions.

Throughout the entire GJFO, there is no area designated for motorcycle trail riding. There are really very few areas with the terrain that would be suitable. Nine Mile Hill has the terrain and challenges that are appropriate.

_I would like to thank all of the members of the D-E Advisory Council for all the time and effort that they have put into this very challenging volunteer project and the commitment that they have shown to making a well thought out recommendation to the BLM.

Dear Joe,

We can only imagine that the upcoming Advisory Council meetings on Recreation and Travel Management will likely be well attended and the public comment periods potentially packed. With this in mind, we quiet-users wanted to send you over a few advanced thoughts and a couple of questions in the hopes that doing so may help to ensure these items have a chance to be aired and considered by the full Advisory Council during your upcoming deliberations.

Recreating in a Natural Setting:

As a coalition of quiet-users – including hikers and backpackers, hunters and anglers, equestrians and mountain bike riders, river runners and rock climbers – we can all agree that it's the wild, undeveloped setting of the Dominguez-Escalante landscape which brings us to the area again and again. Sure, the pace and scope of our explorations differ but we are united by our desire to hear the sounds of song birds, to bask in the scent of sagebrush park, to take in the long high desert vistas and to wonder at those who came before us to explore this same landscape. These opportunities are critical to our quality of life and to the health of our ecosystem – and we feel confident that our passion for these experiences and natural settings is likely shared by the many motorized recreationists who also love to gather in, and explore, this wild country!

Regarding this topic we'd like to offer the following insights:

1. Holistic Management of Heritage Resources:

- In attending Advisory Council Meetings and reviewing the draft plan we've come to learn about the emphasis the Ute Community has placed on the 'holistic management' of cultural resources – i.e.: managing the setting for its historical context not just the site-specific resource – and this concept is ultimately something that makes a lot of sense from our perspective as well. For many of us there is nothing more exciting than the opportunity to experience another time and relate directly to our shared western heritage!
 - At the second AC meeting on the draft plan, many Council members also expressed support for this kind of management, however at this time it is not included in the preferred alternative. We strongly urge BLM to adopt this 'Holistic Management' approach to cultural and heritage resources – relating to both pre-historic (i.e.: Native American) and historic (i.e.: Ranching and Pioneer) - in its final plan.
- This is relevant to the Hunting Ground, Cactus Park and Escalante Canyon landscapes in particular, though we would like to see it adopted more broadly especially as relevant to the Heritage Area sites included in the plan.

2. Route Density Reductions:

- Maintaining a rural, western setting is critical to all recreational experiences within the NCA and to the legacy of this landscape. As such, we strongly support the elimination of redundant routes proposed in the preferred alternative.

3. Non-Motorized Trail Network:

- We would like to see a network of non-motorized trails located throughout the NCA and are pleased that for the most part this desire is accommodated in BLM's preferred alternative whether it is through language indicating the future development of non-motorized routes or the designation of some existing routes as non-motorized in the draft Travel Plan.
- We fully recognize that this NCA is multiple-use in nature and so acknowledge that in many instances recreationists will need to collectively share routes, however the quality of our experience is greatly enhanced by having some routes located in quiet-settings.
 - To elaborate, we envision that this system will include some routes which are shared with motorized users and which provide connectivity to segments located within entirely quiet settings or to segments in semi-quiet areas in which motorized routes may run in parallel. Further, we envision that this network will provide opportunities for non-motorized single-day excursions in addition to non-motorized multi-day excursions!
 - As a quick example, we are very pleased with the Ninemile Hill ERMA which is included in the preferred alternative. Targeted activities include horseback riding, hiking and dispersed camping. Future trail development will be non-motorized and we are very excited about the quiet, day-use opportunities to be found here (not to mention the 'intro-to backpacking/horsepacking' which the ERMA can provide!). However we also recognize and respect the need for, and management of, some continued motorized access in this region and we are happy to accommodate motorized use on those routes suggested in the preferred alternative.

Managing Travel and Recreation for Resource Concerns:

We understand that the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area was designated to protect a myriad of resources, including but certainly not limited to, its recreational opportunities. In fact – and as previously referenced - it's the dynamic nature of this designation and its undertone of conservation based management which excites us and inspires in us a desire to continue, and increase, our recreational use of this area.

Regarding this topic we'd like to offer the following insights:

1. Avoiding Seeps and Springs:

- We all know that in the desert, water is like gold and so we strongly support the language in the preferred alternative to undertake the following actions
 - Minimize travel routes in and crossing riparian and wetland areas. When routes are contributing to declined water quality or riparian vegetative health do one or more of the following:
 - Close and rehabilitate
 - Relocate the routes
 - Re-engineer these routes
 - Locate new routes outside of riparian and wetland areas. Minimize the number of crossings and build bridges at necessary crossing locations.

2. Private Land Concerns:

- To avoid inadvertent trespass issues we ask BLM to assist in the clear signage of private property boundaries where they abut the NCA, including off Highways 141, 50 and Escalante Rd and for private properties along the river.

3. Clear Signage for Administrative Routes:

- We absolutely respect the rights of Ranchers to be able to easily access their grazing allotments and range facilities. To mitigate confusion, potential conflicts and any form of trespass, we ask for clear signage about recreational restrictions related to "Administrative" routes and increased educational information (either on-site or at facility kiosks) outlining the proper etiquette for recreational users when encountering range facilities or active ranching (i.e.: 'Recreational travelers should always leave range gates as they were found'). This is especially important should there be a spike in visitors not familiar with public lands.

4. Seasonal Closures:

- We strongly support the seasonal travel closures as identified in the preferred alternative (12/1-4/31) and the logic behind BLM's decision making on this topic. In regards to big game habitat, these closures ensure the long-term health of big-game communities and the associated hunting opportunities – a recreational and economic endeavor. Further, these seasonal closures are also tied to soil saturation levels (i.e.: the potential for dire impacts to the condition of "open" travel routes from use during winter weather conditions) and so are directly related to the maintenance of road conditions and continued public access for all.
 - Should greater flexibility be needed by BLM to meet wildlife or recreational objectives, we would still encourage BLM to stick with the 4/30 date for the end of the seasonal closure however, we would suggest building in the flexibility for BLM to allow for either earlier access or an extension of the closure depending on resource conditions (both wildlife and soil saturation).

5. Cultural Resource Inventories Along Roads:

- We are glad to see that the Preferred Alternative and Alternative C propose to have BLM conducting surveys on a minimum of 100 acres per year. These activities will help to build our knowledge base of the resource and provide excellent opportunities for volunteer engagement. We would further propose that BLM also prioritize Class III surveys for areas that are most threatened by roads that it is proposing to designate in the Travel Plan.

6. Permitting Recreational River Use:

- Recreational visitation to western public landscapes is growing as is the need to be proactive in managing for this increased use. Given the high-desert setting of this NCA, the Gunnison River will undoubtedly be a significant draw for visitors. It is imperative that we plan accordingly to mitigate the potential impacts to this natural setting, associated riparian resources and grazing operations. We encourage BLM and the Advisory Council to be pro-active in considering some kind of permit system (perhaps it is seasonal in nature) for recreational river use.

Recreational Target Shooting:

While we favor the broad continuation of hunting as outlined in the plan, we recommend limiting recreational target shooting to those areas currently identified as being actively and consistently used for that recreational activity.

Recreational target shooting can have a significant impact on the experiences people are seeking in the NCA and should not have special status when weighing its impacts on other uses.

Regarding this topic we'd like to offer the following insights/requests:

1. Regarding the Range of Alternatives:

- The preferred alternative restricts target shooting in 9,995 acres of the 210,000 acres of the NCA, and all the restricted areas are for health and safety concerns. We believe there are many more areas of the NCA such as Cactus Park where safety is a real concern, we believe, alternative 'C' would be more appropriate for protecting the health and safety of other NCA users.
 - If target shooting is limited to specific areas of the NCA it will be easier to clean up these sites (broken glass, spent shells, used targets, inappropriate targets and clay pigeons) of debris left behind by target shooters.

2. Identifying the Proper Locations or a 'Criteria-Based Approach':

- Target shooting should be subject to the same standards and restrictions as those applied to recreational travel, hunting, camping, etc when weighing its impact on cultural and biological resources in addition to grazing practices and visitor safety.
 - It's our understanding that BLM has developed and implemented a 'criteria-based' approach in other areas including the Sonoran Desert and Ironwood Forest National Monuments. We would welcome the opportunity to learn a bit more about these examples at the upcoming Advisory Council meetings. Perhaps a knowledgeable BLM staffer or Advisory Council member could provide some details regarding these examples to the public and to the Council at next week's meetings?

We thank you in advance for considering our insights and requests for additional discussion regarding these topics.

Sincerely,
Members of the Quiet Trails Group

Full Advisory Council cc'd

Travel Management

N



Route Designation

ATV

Administrative

Horse and Foot

Motorcycle

Open

Open -Seasonally Closed

Closed

County

Private

Dashed lines indicate that the route will be closed until rerouted or rehabbed



Critical Deer winter range



Bureau of Land Management



Private



Rare Plant Habitat



Stock Pond



Campsite

