



County Commissioners:

Steve Chappell
Gerald Koppenhafer
Larrie Rule

County Administrator:

Ashton N. Harrison

Board of County Commissioners

October 24, 2012

109 West Main, Room 302

Cortez, CO 81321

(970) 565-8317

(970) 565-3420 Fax

BLM Tres Rios Field Office
Shannon Borders
27501 Hwy. 184
Dolores, CO. 81321

Re: BLM purchase of private property

Dear Mrs. Borders,

The Montezuma County Board of County Commissioners opposes the any additional purchases of private land by the Federal Government. With over 60% of Montezuma County already under federal management we believe the federal agencies already have plenty of land to achieve their management objectives and adding to the federal land base is not in the best interest of the BLM, the citizens of Montezuma County, nor for the citizens of our country at large.

To date, 11,307 acres of private land have been removed from the Montezuma County tax base. While this represents a negligible tax loss, it does represent a potential loss in the economic diversity within the county relating to a variety of potential agricultural, commercial and residential uses. While the BLM is offering to offset this impact by disposing of some of their lands through sales to private individuals, only 1,080 acres are being proposed for disposal in Montezuma County which is vastly disproportional to the 11,307 acres purchased. In contrast, La Plata County has 6,766 acres (of very valuable and developable land) ear-marked for disposal; while there have been 0 acres of land acquired by the BLM. The point being, that while the BLM appears to be trying to offset land purchases with land sales it does not really do anything to help Montezuma County since the vast majority of lands for disposal are located in adjacent Counties.

Federal acquisitions in Montezuma County and within CANM in particular, simply increase management burdens. CANM is chronically underfunded and Washington leadership has failed to provide the appropriations local BLM managers need. This puts the local BLM managers at a disadvantage and threatens the resources they are entrusted to protect. After being proclaimed a "Monument" CANM has experienced a drastic increase in recreational use that threatens resources and requires significant financial outlay to manage effectively. Despite the excellent leadership from local BLM managers, CANM cannot continue manage recreational impacts without adequate funding. The results of excessive recreational use are evident at the Sand Canyon trail head where inadequate parking and a narrow county access road pose a significant threat to public health, safety and welfare. After 12 years of Monument Status CANM still does not have the resources needed to address this situation, yet millions of dollars are being spent on property acquisitions that only compound the difficulties.

All of the 11,307 acres purchased to date are grazing lands. Most of those properties are now associated with vacant grazing allotments. The newly purchased land should be rolled into existing allotments, and should be made available to interested permittees for use within a reasonable amount of time. To-date none of the subject allotments have been made available because the BLM has not been able to appropriate the necessary funds to accomplish the Rangeland Health Assessment. Expanding the Federal Land Base with more grazing lands that require additional Rangeland Health Assessments just make it even harder to secure appropriations and get the subject allotments back into productive use.

We simply cannot support using Land and Water Conservation Trust Funds when the Department of the Interior cannot figure out how to appropriate the necessary funding to support our local BLM managers in accomplishing their management objectives. During these times of financial crisis we object to directing this revenue stream towards the very narrow objective of land acquisition. We hear over and over about deferred maintenance on our Federal Lands yet this available revenue stream is misdirected towards expanding ownership rather than taking care of what the Federal Government already has. We also adamantly oppose using conservation organizations to secure lands before transferring the ownership to the BLM at a mark-up. This just costs even more than purchasing the property directly from a private landowner.

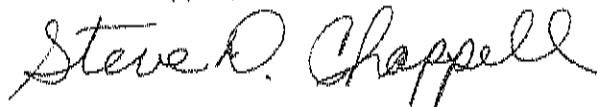
We also think that the acquisition of lands by the Federal Government should require the approval of the State Legislature. The Enclave Clause of the U.S. Constitution, Article I, section 8, Clause 17, authorizes Congress to purchase lands but only for very specific purposes. We question the whole concept of purchasing lands in this manner, and for these purposes without authorization by the State Legislature, and we are opposed to it.

The acquisition of additional lands within CANM is not in the best interest of anyone except the private landowner. While we support the right of private property owners to do as they wish with their private property we stand unified in our objection to converting more private land into the Federal land base.

Respectfully,

The Montezuma County Board of Commissioners,

Steve D. Chappell, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve D. Chappell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



October 25, 2012

BLM Southwest Regional Advisory Council
2465 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 81401

To Members of the Council:

The Lake Fork Valley Conservancy (LFVC) is a local non-profit organization located in the Lake Fork of the Gunnison Valley in Hinsdale and Gunnison Counties. Our mission is to sustain and enhance the environmental and rural character of the region. Our primary area of focus is the Hinsdale County portion of the Alpine Triangle, where we have been working to clean up abandoned mines for a number of years. We are also concerned with the preservation of the unique historical and conservation values of this area.

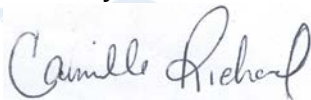
We request your support for prioritizing land trades in the Alpine Triangle region. The Alpine Loop and the surrounding wild lands are the major economic drivers for the Counties of Hinsdale, San Juan and Ouray. Thousands of people annually traverse its roads and trails, seeking solitude in the wilderness, or enjoying amazing vistas from the high passes. Their experiences are marred by the presence of For Sale signs and cabins dotting the landscape. Both the LFVC and the local Silver World newspaper have received numerous letters over the years complaining of these visual eyesores along the Loop, not to mention potential impacts to wildlife and habitat. In this past week's newspaper there was an advertisement showing a For Sale sign tacked onto the Engineer Pass placard, which is actually private land!

Trading inholdings along the visual corridor of the Alpine Loop not only protects the visitor's experience, it also provides an opportunity for urban development around the Triangle's small mountain communities. Hinsdale County is 96% federal land and there is limited land for development near the only incorporated town of Lake City. BLM lands selected for trade should be near town so that infrastructure can be more effectively provided. Given the small amount of private land in Hinsdale and the need for Lake City to grow, it is imperative that exchange of lands be contained within the County.

The LFVC wishes to partner with the BLM to seek funding to support the land trade process. We are currently working on mapping all patented mining claims in our watershed and documenting associated environmental data that exists. We are also working to prioritize these sites based on environmental, historical and conservation value criteria. We are committed to seeing this important region preserved for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Camille Richard
Director