



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

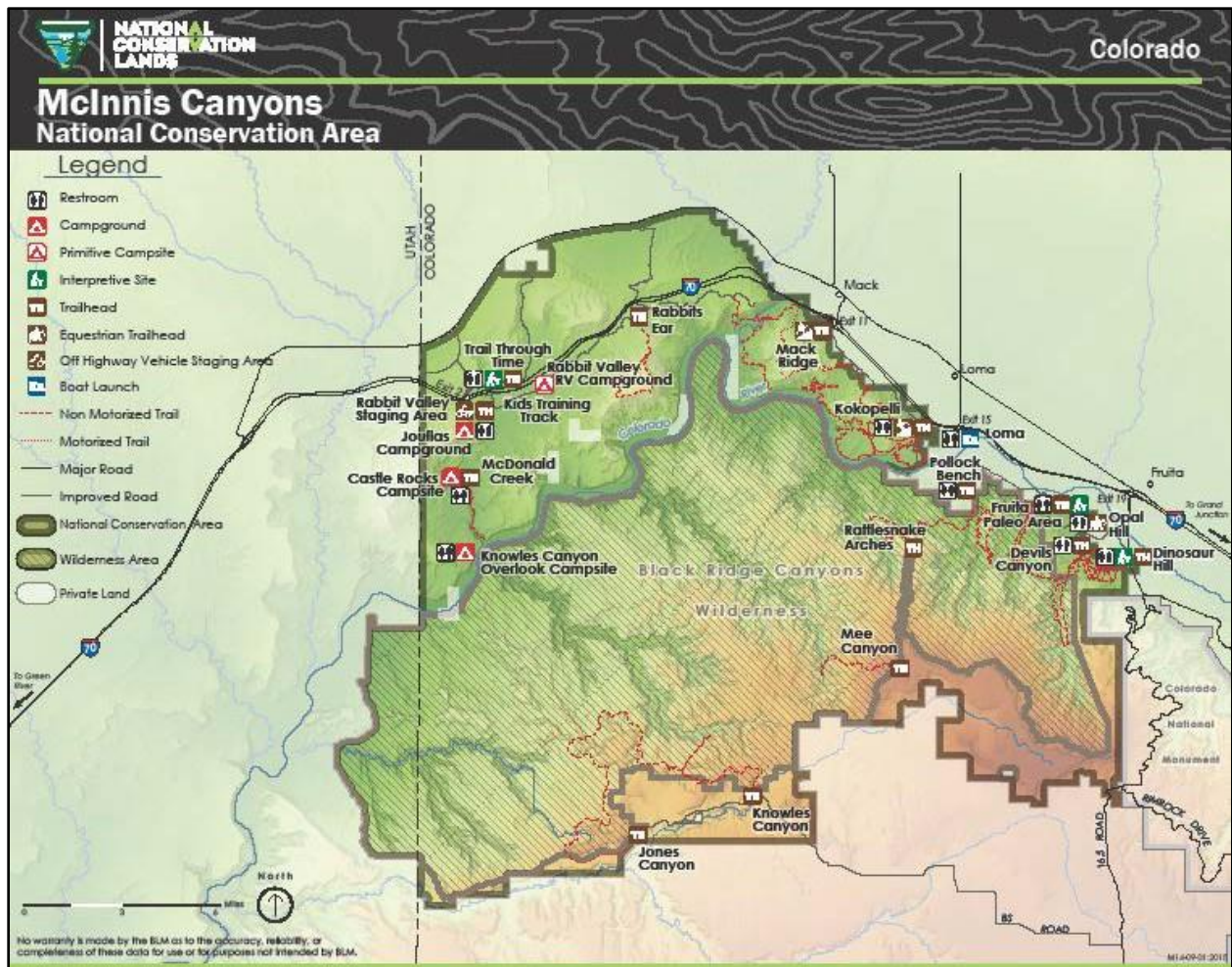
Colorado
2021: Annual Manager's Report

McInnis Canyons

National Conservation Area



Map



Accomplishments

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (MCNCA) had many accomplishments this year, despite challenges presented by COVID-19. On October 24, 2020, McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area turned 20. To celebrate the value the NCA has brought to the community, multiple events were held in the month leading up to the anniversary. This all culminated to a larger event featuring many speakers including the NCA namesake former U.S. Representative Scott McInnis and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Deputy Director for Policy and Programs Perry Pendley. In January of 2021 the Deputy Secretary of the Interior Kate MacGregor and BLM Deputy Director for Policy and Programs Perry Pendley visited Black Ridge Communications Site in McInnis Canyons NCA. In June of 2021, BLM closed on the Crow Bottom acquisition, adding 177 acres along the Colorado River to the NCA for conservation and recreation. In July of 2021 Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland visited McInnis Canyons NCA and went on a hike and a trail run with BLM staff. The BLM Deputy Director for Policy and Programs Nada Culver and BLM Colorado State Director Jamie Connell attended.



BLM acquires 177-acre Ruby-Horsethief parcel

By DENNIS WEBB
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Another jewel has been added to the public-land treasure that is the Ruby-Horsethief stretch of the Colorado River west of Grand Junction.

Using Land and Water Conservation Fund money, the Bureau of Land Management has paid \$665,000 to acquire the cottonwood-studded, 177-acre Crow Bottom parcel, one of the last private-land in-holdings in the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area.

With its 1.5 miles of shoreline, the land will provide hiking, hunting, fishing, picnicking and other recreational uses,

including perhaps someday camping by boaters floating the Ruby-Horsethief river stretch.

The land is on the east side of the river where the river heads north to take a horse-shoe-shaped turn. Collin Ewing, manager of McInnis Canyons for the BLM, said the parcel is on the right side of the river from a boater's perspective, perhaps seven miles downstream from the put-in at Loma.

The land was purchased from a willing buyer with the Conservation Fund playing a key role by working with the parties to facilitate the deal.

"The Colorado River as it flows through McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area

is a national treasure of Colorado and the West," Christine Quinlan of the Conservation Fund's Colorado office said in a BLM news release. "We appreciate the leadership of the BLM, Colorado's Congressional delegation, and local supporters to safeguard these public lands and the significant benefits they provide. Conserving the Crow Bottom parcel will boost the local outdoor recreation economy and serve a diversity of users and outdoor education groups."

Jamie Connell, the BLM's Colorado state director, said in the release. "This acquisition continues the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area tradition of local partners

coming together to protect one of Colorado's truly remarkable landscapes. On behalf of BLM, I want to thank all of the partners involved in the continued enhancement of this public land."

The BLM has opened two trails, 734 and 741A, to a parking area at the property boundary. The roads provide access from the Mack area, but the access requires vehicles to be able to travel rough, four-wheel-drive terrain. The roads also can be used by mountain bikers and hikers.

Ewing said that while the parcel isn't currently open to

See ACQUIRES, page 6A >



COURTESY OF BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
The area marked in red is the 177-acre Crow Bottom parcel that the Bureau of Land Management acquired for \$665,000.

Challenges

In recent years BLM has seen a drastic increase in overnight camping and user created campsites in the Rabbit Valley Recreation Area of MCNCA. Rabbit Valley is a popular recreation destination for off-highway vehicle riding (OHV), four-wheel drive (4x4), all-terrain vehicles (ATV), utility terrain vehicles (UTV), dirt bikes, mountain biking, as well as hiking, horseback riding and camping. The area is also a point of access to the Utah Rims trail system (managed by BLM Moab Field Office). The increase in camping demand is damaging sensitive resources including archaeology and rare plant species as well as impacting the camping experience. Therefore, BLM has developed a plan to expand and build campgrounds and limit camping to designated sites. Upon publication of the Federal Register Notice a camping permit and eventually a fee will be required.



Visitors

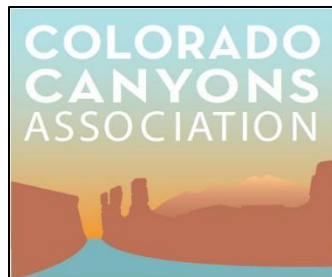
McInnis Canyons NCA has vast recreational opportunities. The City of Fruita has become an international destination for its outstanding recreational opportunities, most of which occur in MCNCA. In addition, local residents enjoy the close to home trails the NCA has to offer. The variety of recreational experiences include world-class mountain biking, river rafting, hiking, camping, hunting, fishing horseback riding, off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel, and wildlife viewing. Visitors can also enjoy a broad range of recreational settings, including remote wilderness, river corridors, and canyon rims and escarpments. The NCA provides scientists and the public access to riparian wetlands, and culturally or historically significant sites. The 142 mile Kokopelli Trail runs through MCNCA to Moab, Utah, and the Colorado River winds its way for 19 miles through the spectacular canyon country of MCNCA. BLM estimates over 300,000 people visited the NCA in 2021.



Partnerships

Colorado Canyons Association

CCA is the Friends group to the local National Conservation Areas. In FY 2021, they helped BLM staff host river cleanups, trail monitoring classes, and educational trips for area youth. CCA provided crucial assistance in visitor services for the NCAs at the BLM office, organizing volunteer projects, and creating awareness in the community surrounding the stewardship and management of MCNCA.



Colorado Mesa University

McInnis Canyons NCA staff partnered with Colorado Mesa University (CMU) for a variety of projects. McInnis Canyons NCA hosted several student interns from CMU's Environmental Science Program. The CMU interns completed Assessment, Inventory and Monitoring studies, while conducting plant inventory, rare plant monitoring, and visitor information services.

The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund (TCF) is partnered with the BLM for the acquisition of the Crow Bottom parcel. This acquisition enabled the BLM to protect a key inholding and improve access to recreation opportunities along the Colorado River in McInnis Canyons NCA.

Mesa County

BLM has established an assistance agreement with the Mesa County Trails Program, and Mesa County also completes important road maintenance projects in MCNCA. In FY2021, Mesa County secured an easement for the road to Loma Boat Launch, securing access to this important site for NCA visitors.

City of Fruita and the Fruita Trails Initiative

BLM managers met frequently with City of Fruita and the Fruita Trails initiative to develop projects relating to BLM-managed and City of Fruita lands. The BLM-Fruita partnership projects include a new proposal for new mountain bike trails at Kokopelli as well as and

the trash removal at the Devil's Canyon Trailhead. The City of Fruita featured NCA Manager Collin Ewing in their 2021 State of the City video, to talk about responsible recreation.



More Great Partners

McInnis Canyons NCA benefitted from strong partnerships with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado State University, Rivers Edge West, Western Colorado Conservation Corps (WCCC), Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Grand Mesa Backcountry Horsemen, Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association, Motorcycle Trail Riders Association, Museums of Western Colorado, and School District 51.

Science

Academic Research

Colorado State University is performing important research in MCNCA. Two ongoing studies are looking to determine how sagebrush islands of opportunity can aid arid rangeland conservation, as well as whether sagebrush restoration impacts native bee pollinators or their habitats.

Citizen Science

BLM is also engaging the community in citizen science projects and was selected with our partner Colorado Canyons Association as the BLM pilot site for the National Environmental Education Foundation's Greening STEM project.

BLM and volunteers installed three Chronolog sites in MCNCA to allow citizens to provide monitoring photos to help BLM monitor changes in the landscape.



chronolog Explore map For organizers Log in Get a chronolog

July 22, 2021

< Share View Organization

Knowles Campground, Rabbit Valley

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area

Climate Impacts

Drier, warmer conditions can affect restoration response, for example after fire, trail construction, or other disturbance. Water availability in canyons can also be affected by less snowpack, and warmer and drier periods, which may affect wildlife that depend on these areas.



Climate Resiliency

Ongoing research is being conducted and used to improve climate resilience through better informed and improved management actions. Past internal research on restoration after fire has been used to improve post-fire restoration techniques and has been implemented in the Seiber burned area.



Ongoing research in partnership with NASA and Colorado National Monument will consider past changes in sagebrush and pinyon juniper communities, and inform sage grouse habitat, fuels, and other treatments in these habitats. Ongoing research on amphibian use of canyons in partnership with US Geological Survey, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Colorado Mesa University will inform habitat, and population management, especially invasive bullfrog management.

Social and Environmental Justice

BLM works Colorado Canyons Association and our community partners to reach underserved youth in our communities. We have built partnerships with groups like the Riverside Education Center, Dual Immersion Academy, and Mesa County Partners to help remove barriers students may face when visiting and recreating on public lands. These partnerships provide the opportunity for the BLM to host students in an outdoor classroom setting and to provide a safe environment for students to feel supported while developing new skills and learning about the resources we manage. These partnerships provide hundreds of youth in our community with new experiences, such as place-based learning, hiking, rafting, and camping, on their public lands. While providing students with new knowledge, experiences, and skills we also teach them about potential careers in public land management. We are striving to build a workforce that reflects the face of the community we serve which will help us better reach underserved youth and help them understand that public lands are for all Americans and to see themselves in a career in conservation.



Events

Sieber Canyon Fire Restoration Volunteer Event

BLM and Colorado Canyons Association volunteers Over the course of two volunteers spent two days planting sagebrush seedlings in the Sieber Canyon burn area. Volunteers planted a total of 568 sagebrush seedlings to restore the sagebrush ecosystem for the many obligate species, including Gunnison sage grouse.



20th Anniversary

On October 24, 2020, McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area turned 20. To celebrate the value the NCA has brought to the community, multiple events were held in the month leading up to the anniversary. Though they had to be altered from what typical celebration events might look like in order to fit public health needs – masks, social distancing, limited participants – they were overall successful and received positive feedback. The events included four guided hikes discussing different topics within the NCA, a community horseback ride, a community bike ride, and a river trip focusing on paleontology, the life science lecture series, a Jr. Ranger demo, and the National Public Lands Day events. This all culminated in a larger event featuring many speakers including the NCA namesake Former U.S. Representative Scott McInnis and BLM Deputy Director for Policy and Programs. Most of these events were executed at the beginning of FY 21.





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McInnis Canyons

National Conservation Area

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