



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Field Manager Report

December 2022

Tres Rios Field Office (TRFO) Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (CANM)

Note to RAC Members: Topics below are labeled either “**Status Update**” or “**New Update**” to help members identify what has changed from the previous report. We will request feedback at the December RAC on how we can further make these reports useful to you.

Planning

Transportation and Access Plan (TAP 2) – Status Update The TAP plan is for Tres Rios lands located in Dolores, San Miguel, and Montrose counties. The project lead position for TAP2 (TRFO Planning & Environmental Coordinator Specialist) is presently vacant. This timeline for this project will be updated when this vacancy being filled. The BLM interdisciplinary team (IDT) is finalizing alternatives to share with the public for Transportation and Access Plan #2 (TAP 2). Scoping with public meetings will be planned to occur with the issuance of the environmental analysis.

Fuels and Timber

West Rim Timber cutting for Community Service and Pine Health – Status Update

To keep Ponderosa pine forests healthy, the BLM completed a contract on 484 acres in the East pines area. On North Pines, 178 acres of thinning have been completed to date. The BLM completed an additional 614 acres of thinning on the West Rim East Pines this summer. The BLM expects to thin 518 acres in 2023. Total thinning and logging on the West Rim are 1276 acres.

Dawson

Additional units in the Dawson project are going to be designed by CSU and Berkeley in conjunction with the BLM. The overarching goal is to create more research and literature on uniform PJ.

Yellow Jacket Noxious Tree/Brush Removal – Status Update

BLM completed a cut, pile, and spray of 20 acres of Tamarisk and Russian Olive along Yellow Jacket creek. The piles will be burned this winter or next.

Dawson Draw Prescribed Fire – Status Update

The Dawson prescribed fire units 1-3 were burned and seeded this fall for 912 acres. Additional units will be developed in the project area in conjunction with researchers from USGS, CSU, and UC Berkeley.

West Rim Prescribed Fire – Status Update

1128 acres are planned for prescribed burning this spring, weather dependent.

Durango Area Hazardous Fuels Projects (signed January 2021)

This project reduces hazards associated with vegetation near and around the Durango area. The BLM is implementing various treatments, including prescribed fire, manual tree removal/felling, pile burning,

understory burning, and vegetative mastication, and addresses a long-term need to manage vegetation adjacent to critical infrastructure, which includes reducing tree and shrub densities and fuel loads and protecting ecosystem heterogeneity.

Animas City Mountain – Status Update

As part of the Durango Area Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project the BLM will be planning on burning a 717-acre prescribed burn. Conditions will be monitored to determine the potential for burning for Spring 2023.

Edgemont Highlands

BLM completed 40 acres of tree removal work at Edgemont Highlands, near Durango in September.

Grandview – Status Update

BLM worked with Mule Deer Foundation on 77 acres of cut and pile, in addition The BLM also contracted 170 acres of cut and pile. Both contracts have been completed and piles will be burned when they have cured.

Sailing Hawks, Forrest Lakes (Grassy Mountain), and Skyline areas

In the next 2 years the BLM will be completing follow-up re-treatment actions on 5,638 acres that have been treated previously and initiate treatment actions on 2,710 acres in Ponderosa forests.

Wildlife

Durango Area Winter Wildlife Closures

BLM successfully awarded a contract to install permanent gates at popular recreation access points within the winter wildlife closures areas around Durango. This will help bolster enforceability of and conformance with the seasonal winter wildlife closures in this popular recreation area.

CANM Big Game Habitat Management

In 2019 Colorado Parks and Wildlife updated big game critical winter range mapping, adding 100,000+ acres of critical winter range to CANM. The BLM is currently working to determine how to manage these areas. Funding has been requested to allow the CANM to monitor wildlife and recreation use in critical winter range and identify possible management actions to effectively manage the area with the intent of balancing the needs of recreation and wildlife. An RMP amendment process is presently underway to incorporate these mapping updates.

Unit	FY 19 Acres	CPW Update Acres	Increase in Acres
TRFO	181,984	230,985	49,001
CANM	0	100,846	100,846

Monitoring Projects

The *Longnose leopard lizard*, is on BLM’s sensitive species list and presently occupies habitat in CANM. Current monitoring efforts include refining a lizard drift fence to facilitate recording the presence and habit of these unique desert reptiles.

Assessment, Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) Program will be wrapping up a multi-year Monitoring Study Design completing over 221 study plots. A final 53 plots will be completed this year. Winter 2023 BLM will be summarizing the data and report vegetation summaries for Grassland, Mixed Conifer, Mixed Mountain Shrub, Pinyon Juniper Woodland, Ponderosa Pine, Riparian, Sagebrush Steppe, Salt Desert, and Sage-grouse habitat.

Range and Weeds Management

General Permit Administration

TRFO Range staff have renewed all 2022 range permit renewals. BLM continues to pursue and complete the land health and cultural surveys required to issue fully process grazing permits that are presently set to expire in 2023.

Weeds

The local BLM weeds crew directly treats approximately 300 acres of BLM-managed lands on TRFO and CANM annually. These acres are treated strategically to benefit functioning ecosystems and to prevent new outbreaks from spreading, particularly in critical and potential habitat for Gunnison sage grouse.

Spring Creek Basin Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Area (HMA)

The current population is 64 – which is within the Appropriate Management Level (AML). A water catchment on the HMA was repaired by the BLM range shop early in the 2022 field season as part of the implementation of the 2020 HMAP revision. In 2022 PZP efforts focused on retreating the 23 mares that were not vaccinated last season.

Gypsum Valleys Grazing Decision

This final grazing decision was signed in August 2021 and appealed shortly thereafter by the Western Watershed Project. A petition for staying the decision was denied and the new permit was issued. The appeal is presently waiting before the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

Recreation

TAP 1 Implementation Actions

For FY22, we have continued implementing the TAP1 decision as funding and other opportunities present. An unplanned late season funding opportunity presented in the final days of FY22 will again enabled TRFO to inject much-needed funding into TAP1 area trailheads and parking areas. During FY23 we will prioritize installing these and other informational and interpretive signing, affecting an increasingly uniform visual presence for visitors to these public lands access points. Two thirds of the recreation staff have accepted promotions and other opportunities so the near-term focus will be to refill these vacancies and bring new staff up to speed on TAP1 implementation progress.

Aqueduct trail project

For FY22, all singletrack trails within the Aqueduct Parcel were constructed completed. Construction on this trail network restarted in 2022 with the lifting of the seasonal wildlife closure on May 1. This Mancos area trail construction has been an entirely volunteer effort between the Mancos Trail Group and Southwest Colorado Cycling Association. Additionally, way finding signage and updated maps were installed. The BLM has contracted for the construction of a new parking area on CR39 for Spring 2023.

Durango Area Trails Alliance (DATA)

The TRFO continues to participate in an inter-governmental working group with the City of Durango, La Plata County, CPW, and the San Juan National Forest. The purpose of the group is to balance enhanced recreational opportunities with improved coordinated wildlife habitat management around Durango, primarily through coordinated inter-agency trail management. In 2021, DATA was successfully awarded a \$60k trail maintenance grant and pursued additional grant funding options to improve resource management and recreation user experience across land ownership boundaries. For 2022 this collaboration continued in the form of trail maintenance and trail user information campaigns.

Cultural Resources

Phil's World Cultural Survey

As part of our effort to protect cultural resources at Phil's World, the TRFO have been collaborating with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office to delineate adjustments to the small, motorized trail network in the "original" part of Phil's World. A future EA will address potential trail closures and reroutes to enhance the preservation of cultural resources in this area.

Travel Planning and Implementation PA

In this BLM multi-office agreement, the TRFO archaeologists will continue selective cultural survey in the TAP2 area to bolster predictive modeling accuracy and precision. For TRFO this effort includes designating and nominating for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places several mining complexes near the Utah border. The route designation of an existing loop, accompanied by interpretive materials at select locations would be known as the Yellowcake Trail. The intent would be to preserve and share the history of uranium mining in this area.

Minerals (Fluid)

Oil and Gas Development Projects – Status Update

Kinder Morgan has several projects with the BLM currently and represent the largest federal customer for fluid mineral development (KM produces CO2 for secondary oil recovery operations in Texas primarily). Recent coordination meetings have resulted in the agreement to rescind the Risley Canyon #3 and #4 APDs, which were originally submitted to the BLM for analysis back in March of 2020 and had not progressed due to environmental concerns expressed by CPW at the BLM scoping and onsite meetings. This leaves just two federal APDs the TRFO is actively working, both from Kinder Morgan. The Doe Canyon DW-1, submitted in February of 2022 and deemed complete in July, this APD recently had another onsite conducted and the BLM ID team is actively working through scoping issues, including big game winter timing and access mitigation measures. No dates have been set yet for an external comment period on the forthcoming EA, but they are planned so stay tuned. The CB#4 is an APD that was recently resubmitted and is an exact copy of the recently expired CB#4 APD that was never drilled. Because the impacts, pad footprint, drilling and completion methods, etc. are all identical to the previous analysis, the BLM is currently planning on utilizing a DNA to complete the NEPA analysis and re-issue the APD with the identical set of COAs as the previous authorization.

Summary of FY22 Approvals – New Notice

Operator	APD/Facility	Disposition	Date of Disposition
Catamount Energy Partners	So. Ute 34-7-33#2	Approved	8/25/2022
Catamount Energy Partners	So. Ute 34-7-27 #3	Approved	8/25/2022
Simcoe LLC	Tiffany #5-2	Approved	7/18/2022
Simcoe LLC	Tiffany #5-3	Approved	7/18/2022
Red Willow Prod. Co	N. Carracas 32-5 #14E-1	Approved	9/26/2022
Red Willow Prod. Co	N. Carracas 32-4 #7F-6	Approved	3/21/2022
Red Willow Prod. Co	N. Carracas 32-5#7F-5	Approved	3/21/2022
Red Willow Prod. Co	Stone Point 33-6#7-3	Approved	1/12/2022
Red Willow Prod. Co	Stone Point 33-6#7-2	Approved	1/12/2022
Red Willow Prod. Co	Stone Point 33-6#7-1	Approved	1/12/2022
Gunnison Energy Co	IPU 1291#13-24/H2	Approved	12/2/2021

November 15, 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

The TRFO is actively seeking operator plans for wells that have been in Temporary Abandonment (TA) and

Shut-In (SI) statuses for over 6 months. Plug or produce letters have been sent to Petrox for many of their wells currently in TA and SI status in the northern portion of the TRFO area (primarily in San Miguel County). Plug or produce letters have also been sent on several tribal oil and gas producing locations. The November 15, 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) delineated new pots of money and authorities available for both Indian Mineral and Federal Mineral locations that “are not used for an authorized purpose, such as producing, injection, or monitoring, and for which no operator can be located, or the well operator is unable to plug the well and remediate and reclaim the well site.” The TRFO is working with the Sothern Ute Tribe, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, the BIA agency for each reservation, as well as our federal partners to take advantage of and work towards securing some of these funds for portions of our field in need of extra help with plugging/reclamation and remediation.

Coordination – New Notice

The TRFO held recent quarterly meetings with the Southern Ute Tribe as well as the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe to make sure our relationships and communication pathways remain open and collaborative. Quarterly meetings were also held with Kinder Morgan as our largest federal fluid mineral producer actively persuading APDs. Coordination meetings were also held with the Montezuma, Dolores, LaPlata and San Miguel BOCCs, as well as congressional representatives from the offices of Senator Bennet and Representative Boebert recently by now retired Field Manager Connie Clementson, which updated our local partners on Fluid an Solid mineral activities.

CPW/COGCC Coordination – New Notice

TRFO is working with the COSO to come up with issues and solutions to discuss with our State partners on some of their new rules and what opportunities for greater coordination those rules are providing. No meeting dates have been set yet.

Minerals (Solid)

Locatable Minerals

Sunday Mines Plan of Operations – Status Update

TRFO has completed an initial round of external scoping on the proposed action (conducted August 15th-September 14th). 14 scoping comments were received. The TRFO is incorporating the scoping comments and is evaluating its initial ID team assumptions and determinations based off of the content of the scoping comments. Edge Environmental (3rd party NEPA contractor) is actively helping TRFO staff work through process and project planning. Still currently targeting an EA, the TRFO anticipates a draft document to be posted for public review sometime in Spring of 2023.

Standard Minerals Notice-Level Exploration Plan

In January 2021 BLM received a proposed Notice Level exploration plan for a total of 15 drill holes from Standard Minerals which was approved. A field inspection of the proposed drill sites confirms that most sites are located on or adjacent to existing disturbance. Drilling is expected to begin in August 2022.

Copper Notices

An exploration company is investigating 2 separate notice-level drilling operations on claim blocks they have staked in the Tres Rios Field Office. One of the claim blocks is in the upper McEntire Canyon/Island Mesa area across the Utah state line near the Lisbon Valley Copper Mine, and the other claim block is in Klondike Basin just south of the County gravel pit and adjoining State Land. The Klondike Basin project has been approved and drilling is expected to begin in August 2022. The McEntire Canyon/Island Mesa being submitted in late spring.

Mineral Materials

Dry Creek Quarry Contract Renewal – New Notice

The BLM is initiating the process to authorize the continued removal of stone from the existing quarry after the present contract expires, with similar terms and conditions as those in the existing contract. It is a continuation of an existing activity. The pending contract request is for a 5-year, 3000 ton sales contract. Individual contracts are limited by regulation to 5 years (with a single, up to 1 year extension possible). No public notice or NEPA internal scoping has taken place yet on this very new proposal.

Disappointment Pit

BLM issued a free use permit for existing stock-piled materials in a formerly commercial gravel pit to Dolores County. TRFO is currently working with Dolores County to initiate environmental analysis (EA) to expand the pit area and issue a 10-year free use permit.

Black Snag Pit

Tres Rios anticipates processing an EA to expand the existing Black Snag pit located in upper Disappointment Valley. BLM is also working with Dolores County on a possible upgrade to the Disappointment Creek crossing on the access road.

Abandoned Mine Lands

Northwind

Northwind completed their physical safety hazard inventory on hundreds of mine openings in western San Miguel, Montrose, Dolores, and Montezuma counties in Summer 2021. They were issued a contract for remediation work to be completed in FY2022, which includes surveys, NEPA analysis, and closure construction. Survey efforts to complete this work are in progress. It is expected that this project will be completed in FY2023.

DOE-DRUM – Status Update

The Department of Energy is almost finished with survey work of Cold War-era defense-related uranium mines (DRUM) located in San Miguel, Dolores, and Montezuma counties. They finished the Bull Canyon, North Slick Rock, and most of South Slick Rock Mining Districts of TRFO, and this year they will be finishing the South Slick Rock Mining District, which includes mines on Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. Once inventory work is completed, they will have inventoried over 400 sites. NEPA documents have been approved for 2 projects in the Bishop Canyon and Spud Patch project areas, with closure work currently in progress. Additional physical safety hazard closure projects are anticipated for the next several years.

Freeport McMoRan – Status Update

BLM is waiting for a finalized proposed action from Freeport McMoRan for physical safety closures in Gypsum Valley. Closure of approximately 40 sites is anticipated in Summer or Fall 2023.

Lands and Reality

Tri-State Montrose-Nucla-Cahone 230kV Transmission Line Upgrade Project – Status Update

Tri-State completed their powerline upgrade from 115kV to 230kV along the Montrose-Nucla-Cahone Transmission Line this fiscal year. The 230 kV power line passes through parts of both the Uncompahgre and Tres Rios Field Offices. The original 115kV line was authorized in 1958 and has been in operation ever since. The completion of this project will allow for multiple distribution lines to branch off from the 230kV line allowing Tri-State Gen & Trans to meet the ever-increasing needs for rural electrification in Southwest CO. High-speed fiber optic cable has been collocated alongside the upgraded 230kV lines within the ROW corridor. Rural communities will benefit from having access to these high-speed internet services once connectivity has been established. Final reclamation and rehabilitation of disturbed areas within the Tres Rios Field Office has been completed with final site review Fall 2022 or spring of 2023.

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

Visitor Center and Museum – Status Update

The Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center, Museum, and Bookstore are open to the public under a typical winter operational schedule from Tuesday through Saturday from 10 to 4. A project to stabilize settling of the floor of the visitor center will lead to the center's closure in January and February, 2023.

Funds have been secured for a project to provide a major upgrade to the exhibits in the front, or visitor center portion of the facility. The new displays will provide a much-improved overview of the monument and public use opportunities and will be installed by September, 2023.

The special exhibit "Sand, Stone, and Songs. Ancient Lessons from a Living Landscape, opened in February and displays architectural drawings of several the monument's cultural sites which were created by the University of Colorado, Denver as a part of a program to document records of the sites for storage in the Library of Congress. The exhibit will be in place until December 2022.

Our next special exhibit will be a series of landscape paintings from the artist Stanton Englehart and will open in March, 2023.

Yellow Jacket and Flodine Park Grazing Allotments – Status Update

CANM initiated Section 106 consultation for a proposal to reissue permits for livestock grazing on the vacant Yellow Jacket and Flodine Park allotments. Staff are developing a programmatic agreement with the state historic preservation office and the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the San Il Defonso Tribe to identify potential adverse effects to cultural resources and associated mitigations. Once the agreement is complete, CANM will go through a National Environmental Policy Act process with input from tribes and other interested parties to analyze other potential impacts from the proposal.

Draft language for the identification portion of the agreement is being developed and will be distributed to interested parties for comment over the coming months.

Painted Hand Road Relocation and Trailhead Improvements Project

The road accessing the Painted Hand cultural site will be improved and relocated from private property onto nearby public lands managed by the BLM. In addition to a crowned, gravel road, the road will also provide a developed 20 site parking area, picnic shelter, restroom, and improved trail system with interpretive signs. Road improvements have begun with an anticipated project completion date in the spring of 2023,
