



Field Manager Report

October 2023

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

Note: Topics below are labeled either “**Status Update**” or “**New Update**” to help identify items that have changed from the previous report.

Planning

Transportation and Access Plan (TAP2) - Status Update

The second TAP plan involves BLM lands located in Dolores, San Miguel, and Montrose counties. While the project lead position was recently filled, other priorities have delayed reengaging on TAP2 until this fall. The BLM interdisciplinary team (IDT) is finalizing alternatives to share with the public. Scoping, with public meetings, will be planned to coincide with the issuance of the preliminary analysis.

Fuels and Timber

West Rim Timber Sale - Status Update

To keep ponderosa pine forests healthy, the BLM has completed a contract on 484 acres in the East Pines area, as well as 178 acres of thinning in the North Pines area. The BLM will complete an additional 110 acres of skidding on these previously thinned areas, as well as 545 acres of mastication.

Dawson

Additional units in the Dawson project were designed by Colorado State University and University of California Berkeley in conjunction with the BLM. The overarching goal is to create more research and literature on the pinyon and juniper vegetation type. Implementation of the prescription has begun and is anticipated to be completed by December 2023.

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

Dawson prescribed fire units 1-3 were burned and seeded last fall totaling 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

1,128 acres are planned for prescribed burning this fall, weather dependent. As of September 25, 340 acres have been completed. It is anticipated that the remaining acres will be completed by the SWRAC October meeting date.

Durango Area Hazardous Fuels Projects (signed January 2021)

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

Animas City Mountain - Status Update

As part of the Durango Area Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project, the BLM completed 495 acres of broadcast burning.

Edgemont Highlands

BLM completed 40 acres of tree removal work at Edgemont Highlands near Durango in September. As of early June, all logs were removed from the site.

Grandview - Status Update

BLM attempted to burn 247 acres of pile in early March but, due to poor consumption, operations were ceased until fall. Plans for completing this project are dependent on weather conditions, but remain on the program of work.

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

Over the next two years the BLM will be working to complete follow-up retreatment actions on 5,638 previously treated acres and to initiate treatment actions on 2,710 acres in Ponderosa forests.

Wildlife

Durango Area Winter Wildlife Closures

BLM successfully completed the installation of permanent gates at popular recreation access points within the winter wildlife closures areas around Durango. This action will help bolster enforceability of and conformance with annual winter wildlife closures in this popular recreation area. In winter 2022-2023, 231 groups and 318 individuals were caught on game cameras violating the seasonal closures for Animas City Mountain. There were also multiple pictures of dogs off leash chasing deer.

In summer 2023, TRFO added fencing around Sale Barn and Big Canyon trailheads to improve compliance with the winter wildlife closures. The BLM will also be installing fencing between two gates on Animas City Mountain to keep individuals from walking around closure gates and improve compliance; this is planned for October 2023.

Summit Point Habitat Improvement Project

This project is in the planning phase. Data is being collected in 2023, with a draft EA planned for release in fall 2023. The Summit Point area has been surveyed for cultural resources, woodland raptors, and pinyon jays. The project is being designed to improve habitat for mule deer and pinyon jays. Currently, no pinyon jays have been documented to use the area. If successful, this project will provide insights into managing fuels to improve habitat for pinyon jays.

CANM Big Game Habitat Management

In 2019, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) 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 CANM to monitor wildlife and recreation use in critical winter range and identify possible 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.

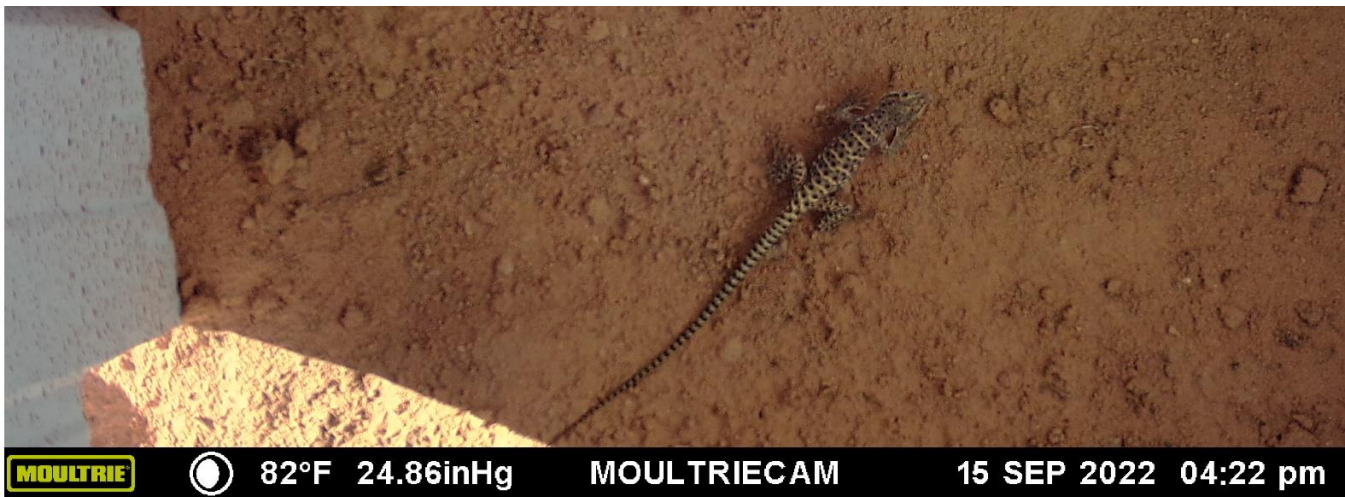
Unit	FY 19 Acres	CPW Update Acres	Increase in Acres
TRFO	181,984	230,985	49,001
CANM	0	100,846	100,846

Inventory/Monitoring Projects

TRFO, in coordination with the Fuels program, put out contracts to inventory almost 13,000 acres of habitat for forest-dwelling raptors. This would enable TRFO to improve efficiency in implementing fuels reduction projects.

The longnose leopard lizard is a BLM sensitive species and presently occupies habitat in CANM. Current monitoring efforts include refining a lizard drift fence to facilitate recording the presence and habitat of these unique desert reptiles. AIM data was collected at all sites to quantify soil and vegetation data near the trap locations. An increase in captures per day from 2021 to 2022 at both McElmo and Risley was recorded. McElmo 1 had a 92% increase and McElmo 2 had a 45% increase. Risley 1 increased by 80% from 2021 to 2022. Cannonball Mesa 1 showed a decline in 2022 of 42% and 49% at Cannonball Mesa 2. The increase in species detected is most likely due to modified camera trap design. The new design appears to increase the number of detections and image quality.





TRFO has increased efforts to monitor for pinyon jays on the landscape. Multiple new colonies were identified in spring 2023 and several thousand acres were inventoried.

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. In winter 2023, the BLM will summarize 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 completed all 2022 range permit renewals. The BLM continues to pursue and complete the land health and cultural surveys required to fully process grazing permits presently set to expire in 2023.

Weeds

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

Spring Creek Basin Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA)

Current HMA 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 (porcine zona pellucida vaccine) contraceptive efforts focused on retreating 23 mares that were not vaccinated last season.

Gypsum Valley Grazing Decision

The final grazing decision was signed in August 2021 and appealed shortly thereafter by Western Watersheds Project. A petition for staying the decision was denied and the new permit was

issued. The appeal is presently before the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

Recreation

TAP1 Implementation Actions

For FY22, we continue implementing the TAP1 decision as funding and other opportunities present. An unplanned late season funding opportunity presented in the final days of FY22 enabled TRFO to inject much-needed funding into TAP1 area trailheads and parking areas. During FY23, we prioritized installing these and other informational and interpretive signing, affecting an increasingly uniform visual presence for visitors to these public lands access points. Position vacancies were created in FY22 through recreation staff promotions and other opportunities. Newly hired staff are being brought up to speed on TAP1 implementation.

Aqueduct Trail Project

In FY22, construction of all but one singletrack trail within the Aqueduct Parcel was completed. The final singletrack trail was completed in spring 2023. Construction on this trail network restarted in 2022 with the lifting of the seasonal wildlife closure on May 1. Mancos-area trail construction has been an entirely volunteer effort between the Mancos Trail Group and Southwest Colorado Cycling Association. Currently, the construction of parking areas on County Road 39 to access the Aqueduct Trail system are being completed and wayfinding signs and updated maps are being finalized and installed.

Phil's World Travel Management Cultural Mitigation

As part of our effort to protect cultural resources at Phil's World, TRFO executed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to resolve adverse effects caused by portions of the motorized trail network in the original portion of the Phil's World trail system. A future EA will address trail closures and reroutes stipulated in the MOA to enhance the preservation of cultural resources in this area.

Durango Area Trails Alliance (DATA)

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. In 2022, this collaboration continued in the form of trail maintenance and trail user information campaigns. In spring 2023, trail maintenance and stabilization work was conducted by the Southwest Conservation Corps on the East Animas climbing access trail. The SCC also conducted trail construction on the undeveloped Lupine Trail on Animas City Mountain this summer.

Chutes and Ladders Dispersed Recreation Area

In 2022, TRFO staff took the SWRAC on a field trip of the Chutes and Ladders dispersed recreation area to discuss issues with neighbors in the area. The neighbors have appealed the Travel Analysis

Planning decision that allows for camping and development of more formal amenities. The appeal is still unresolved and there is no estimate of when resolution might occur. TRFO planned on initiating an EA during the appeal to evaluate a more formal campground opportunity, but due to staffing shortages, the effort has yet to be started.

Cultural Resources

Uravan Mineral Belt Interpretation Loop

The TRFO archaeologist is working on route designation of an existing driving loop, accompanied by interpretive materials at select locations, that would be known as the Yellowcake Trail. The intent of the historic interpretive loop would be to preserve and share the history of uranium mining around Radium and Wedding Bell Mountains.

National Register Nominations

In September 2023, the TRFO cultural program finalized a Multiple Property Listing (MPL) for historic mining in the Uravan Mineral Belt. As part of this effort, the Bachelor Mine was nominated and officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Burro Mine was recently approved and is anticipated to be officially listed by summer 2025.

Travel Planning and Implementation PA

In this BLM multi-office agreement, TRFO will continue to systematically complete cultural resource inventory of travel routes in the TAP2 planning area, and work towards revisitation of 183 historic properties with travel routes in their boundary and assess those sites for travel-related effects.

Animas City Mountain - Hanging Cactus Rock Art Fence and Trail Reroute

Identified during TAP1 planning efforts and as part of our efforts to protect the Hanging Cactus rock art site, in June 2023 SCC crews constructed a fence around the rock art and rerouted the trail further from the shelter the rock art is located in.

Minerals (Fluid)

Paradox Resources

TRFO has been working in conjunction with the BLM Colorado State Office, Utah State Office, and Office of Natural Resource Revenue (ONRR) on a long-running compliance issue regarding royalty payment from federal units existing in both Colorado and Utah. Shut-in requests were received from ONRR in January, and the orders were translated into Incidents of Non-Compliance (INCs) and issued to Paradox in early March. 42 wells within the Andy's Mesa Unit (San Miguel County, Colorado) were issued and executed, with potential civil penalties in excess of \$38,000,000.00 to begin on June 1, 2023.

In May 2023, Paradox filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy and is currently working with BLM solicitors, bankruptcy courts, and ONRR solicitors on a resolution that may or may not result in a lifting of the shut-in order. BLM Colorado has submitted a claim to the bankruptcy court for damages in excess of \$165,000,000 for plugging, abandoning, remediating, and reclaiming the surfaces of all Paradox held units and companies, should this bankruptcy move further towards liquidation of the company

and its assets. This is an evolving situation with weekly changes in the direction and intensity of work associated with the potential outcome of the bankruptcy as well as shut-in order.

Oil and Gas Development Projects - Status Update

Kinder Morgan has several projects with the BLM currently and represents 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 an agreement to rescind the Risley Canyon #3 and #4 APDs, which were originally submitted to the BLM for analysis in March 2020 but had not progressed due to environmental concerns expressed by CPW during BLM scoping and onsite meetings. This leaves just two federal APDs the TRFO is actively working, both from Kinder Morgan.

Doe Canyon DW-1 was submitted in February 2022 and deemed complete in July. This APD recently had another onsite conducted and the BLM IDT is actively working through scoping issues, including big game winter timing and access mitigation measures. Dates for an external comment period on the forthcoming EA have not yet been set but should be coming soon. 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 reissue the APD with the identical set of COAs as the previous authorization.

Summary of FY23 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)

TRFO is actively seeking operator plans for wells that have been in temporary abandonment (TA) or Shut-in (SI) status for over six 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.” TRFO is working with the Southern Ute Tribe, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs 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

TRFO held quarterly meetings with the Southern Ute Tribe, as well as the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, to ensure our relationships and communication pathways remain open and collaborative. Quarterly meetings were also held with Kinder Morgan, which is our largest federal fluid mineral producer actively pursuing APDs.

Coordination meetings were also held with the Montezuma, Dolores, LaPlata, and San Miguel Boards of County Commissioners, as well as congressional representatives from the offices of Senator Bennet and Representative Boebert by retired Field Manager Connie Clementson to update our local partners on fluid and solid mineral activities.

Proposed Methane Waste Prevention and Royalty Loss Rule Consultation

TRFO recently held meetings in conjunction with the BLM Colorado State Office (COSO) and Headquarters, regarding comments received from the Southern Ute Tribe on the proposed rulemaking. Substantive conversations were held in April and May with conclusory conversations scheduled for June.

CPW/Colorado Energy and Cabron Management Commission Coordination - New Notice

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

Minerals (Solid)

Locatable Minerals

Sunday Mines Plan of Operations - Status Update

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

Tarsis Resources (Tarsis)/Alianza Notice Level Exploration Plan

The “Stateline Exploratory Drill Project” notice to conduct exploration drilling on lands within TRFO was approved in early May. The notice was submitted in October 2022 for lands located in western San Miguel County. The notice is for up to six drill holes on up to six drill pads, with a laydown area.

Total disturbance is estimated at 1.79 acres, below the 5-acre limit that would necessitate a Plan of Operations. The San Miguel County BOCC has been kept in the loop and was involved in their own permitting of a special use permit for movement across county roads. Work was anticipated to begin in August 2023.

Section 23 (Standard Minerals) Notice Level Exploration Plan

On May 1, 2023, TRFO received Mine Area Notice COC080948 for Wedding Bell Project Section 23 submitted by World Industrial Minerals on behalf of Standard Minerals, to conduct exploratory drilling for uranium and vanadium on unpatented lode mining claims on BLM-administered lands in T.45N. R.18W. Sec 23, New Mexico Prime Meridian. World Industrial Minerals plans to drill 11 rotary drill holes with expected depths of between 325 and 525 feet.

Weddingbell (Standard Minerals) Notice Level Exploration Plan

On May 1, 2023, TRFO received Mine Area Notice COC080949 for Wedding Bell Project Groundhog submitted by World Industrial Minerals on behalf of Standard Minerals, to conduct exploratory drilling for uranium and vanadium on unpatented lode mining claims on BLM-administered public lands in T.45N. R.18W. Sec 21 and 22, New Mexico Prime Meridian. World Industrial Minerals plans to drill 8 rotary drill holes with expected depths of between 325 and 525 feet.

Rimrock (Standard Minerals) Notice Level Exploration Plan

On May 1, 2023, TRFO received Mine Area Notice COC080950 for Wedding Bell Project Rimrock submitted by World Industrial Minerals on behalf of Standard Minerals, to conduct exploratory drilling for uranium and vanadium on unpatented lode mining claims on BLM-administered lands in T.45N. R.18W. Sec 16, New Mexico Prime Meridian. World Industrial Minerals plans to drill 8 rotary drill holes with expected depths of between 325 and 525 feet.

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. 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 new proposal.

Disappointment Pit Expansion

TRFO is in the process of scoping an expansion for the Disappointment Gravel Pit (free use pit, permit held by Dolores County Road and Bridge) for the expansion of an additional 5 acres of disturbance associated with the continued use of the Disappointment Pit. In April 2023, TRFO approved an additional deepening of the existing pit to continue production while the field office analyzed the additional disturbance. External scoping of a draft EA is anticipated for November 2023.

Black Snag Pit

TRFO 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.

Montoya Pit

TRFO conducted an inspection of the currently operating Montoya Pit in LaPlata County. The continued production of gravel for the Four Corners Region is reliant on this pit. An additional quantity of disturbance (exact size unknown) is expected to be proposed in later 2023, recognizing the current production area will be mined out within the next 24 months. TRFO anticipates an EA for this likely beginning in winter 2023.

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 and were issued a contract for remediation work to be completed in FY2022, including surveys, NEPA analysis, and closure construction. Efforts to complete the work are still in progress.

DOE-DRUM - Status Update

The Department of Energy survey work is almost completed on Cold War-era defense-related uranium mines (DRUM) in San Miguel, Dolores, and Montezuma counties. Bull Canyon, North Slick Rock, and most of South Slick Rock Mining Districts in TRFO have been completed, and this year they will finish work on the South Slick Rock Mining District, which includes mines in CANM. Once completed, DOE will have inventoried over 400 sites. NEPA documents have been approved for two 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

The 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 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. Completion of this project will allow for multiple distribution lines to branch off from the 230kV line, enabling Tri-State 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 TRFO has been completed.

Hawkes Ditch

In 2018, the BLM collected money for a trespass maintenance action that took place on a historic ditch adjacent to privately held property, now in the possession of new ownership (Hawkes) in the southern portion of Montezuma County, near the town of Mancos. BLM is working with the landowner to secure the use of the trespass funding for restoration, along with the assignment of the ROWs associated with the ditch to the current owner.

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

Visitor Center and Museum - Status Update

Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum underwent a major floor stabilization project in spring and summer 2023. The project was completed in July and the center is open under a normal operating schedule, currently Tuesday through Saturday from 9 to 5.

New permanent visitor center exhibits were installed in August. The exhibit upgrades provide a much-improved overview of the Monument, as well as providing an opportunity to understand the opportunities available to visit public sites. The exhibits include a strong indigenous voice and visit with respect message. A new special exhibit opened in August 2023 featuring a series of landscape paintings from local artist Stanton Englehart. The title of the exhibit, "My Calendar", communicates that 12 of the paintings depict each month of the year. The exhibit will be in place through December 2024.

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 to identify potential adverse effects to cultural resources and associated mitigations. Once the agreement is complete, CANM will go through the NEPA 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 has been finalized. The next steps for the PA will be mitigation and resolution.

Painted Hand Road Relocation and Trailhead Improvements Project - Status Update

The road accessing the Painted Hand cultural site has been improved and relocated from private property onto nearby public lands managed by the BLM. In addition to a crowned gravel road, a developed 20-site parking area, picnic shelter, restroom, and improved trail system have also been completed. New interpretive signs will be installed along the trail by November.