

To: Erin Janicki[erin_janicki@nps.gov]; Matthew[mbetenso@blm.gov]; Tyler Hoskins[Tyler.Hoskins@jviation.com]; Lars Anderson[landerson@pec.us.com]; Dana Backer[dbacker@blm.gov]; Cynthia Staszak[cstaszak@blm.gov]; Larry Crutchfield[lcrutchf@blm.gov]; Paul Leatherbury[pleather@blm.gov]; to: Brian Bremner[engineer@color-country.net]
From: Bellenger, Gail
Sent: 2017-11-21T14:38:31-05:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: Update to comment matrix
Received: 2017-11-21T14:38:59-05:00
[Public comment matrix.pdf](#)

Hi, Team,



Tyler had a great idea, to number the comments. So I added a column with numbers to make it easier when referring to the comments. Thanks again.




Gail



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Gail Bellenger, M.A., RPA
Environmental Manager
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| <div>  <div> Hole-in-the-Rock Road Repair Project Public Comments </div> <div> <small>Department of Interior Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument</small>  </div> </div> | | | |
|---|--|--|----------|
| Comment Number | Name and Contact Information | Comment and Date | Response |
| 1 | Mark Nelson P.O. Box 1358, Boulder, UT 84716 435 335 7410 | The project as presented appears to be needed and beneficial as long as it does not represent a prelude to eventual paving. Please, no paving EVER!. Presentation, very good and information. Thank you. 10/25/17 | |
| 2 | Rosemary Heil 2100 Bywood Drive, Oakland, CA 94602 510 555 5555 | My concern would be if any outside material was brought in for this project. The Monument guidelines do not allow for any upgrading of existing roads by doing this. If this were an incremental step toward paving, I would object. If it were to increase useage or change its wilderness nature, I would object. I would like to see BLM funds used for purposes other than grazing in this area. 10/26/17 | |
| 3 | Tom Hoyt 2430 Broken Branch Road P.O. Box 1499, Boulder, UT 84716 720 226 1041, (b) (6) Organization GESP Board, upboard | In general, the project makes sense, assuming the road section is built up as planned and the drainage functions, water quality in the watershed should improve with less disturbance of the soil; bridge on Alvey and Twentymile really important to end up with lower maintenance and less constant disturbance; is there enough good road base material available to build the section show? Enough budget to do it?; improved dirt road, is any form of pavement important to maintain primitive nature of GSENM. 10/26/17 | |

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| 4 | Lisa Varga 1775 So. Lower Boulder Road, Boulder, UT 84716 Organization Earth Tours | I generally support this plan. The road needs to be able to be maintained and stabilized. I definitely support keeping the surface NATURAL and keepign the width consistent. 10/29/17 | |
| 5 | Dean Brooks P.O. Box 1403, Boulder, UT 84716 435 335 7533 (b) (6)  | I am opposed to any incremental steps toward paving this road. I would like to see how long it will take to recoup the 1.4 million spent by less grading and maintenance. The wild and rugged nature of this area is the biggest draw for visitors and any steps towards reducing that will negatively affect the visitors' experience. This Monument attracts a certain type of visitor; prepared, adventurous and looking for a challenge. Please don't improve roads that are an attraction because of their rugged, unpredictable nature. 10/26/17 | |

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| 6 | <p>Veronica Egen P.O. Box 202, Teasdale, UT 84773 970 799 4361</p> <p>(b) (6)</p> <p>Organization: Great Old Broads, retired E.D., founder, SAGE Wayne County Taxpayers Assoc. board</p> | <p>Please be sure that work done has minimal impact on surrounding areas, and that only native, local materials be used. 10/26/17</p> | |

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| 7 | Robert Heil 2100 Bywood Drive, Oakland, CA 94602 810 531 4472 (b) (6) | <p>In my view, the area (Escalante and Hole in the Rock) is unique on the planet and among the most spectacular. In general, this road project seems to be consistent with keeping it that way, but I do have two concerns, to make sure of this: (1) The GS Escalante NM Management Plan Ch 2, TRAN 2 provides for Hole in the Rock, that there shall be "no widening" of the road. The maps and other materials of the new project seem to make it clear that there <u>will be</u> some widening in some places. Would you be able to double check this, to ensure that no such widening will occur? (2) The Manageme Plan also provides that no "travel surface upgrades will occur". Some of the PEC consultants advised me that no outside materials would be brought in but some said that gravel and other road materials might or would be brought in. Would it be possible to double check and ensure that this Plan requirement is followed and that no outside materials will be brought in? Thank you for your diligent work on this project. 10/26/17</p> | |

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| 8 | Lauri Costello, MD 2338 Forest Ave, Durango, CO 81301 509 499 7246 (b) (6) | <p>I have several questions/concerns/comments. 1) The road is already over used and the resources overtaxed by dispersed camping. Although I'm concerned about fire rings, I'm much more concerned about the public health risk of improperly disposed of human waste (coliforms in open exposure, including rainwater contamination). Dispersed camping will ultimately tax the land from trampling/OHV use/off roading. 2) Improving only Garfield County with federal funds seems to be throwing money down the drain. Also, partial fixes (re doing the culverts vs. using a long term bridge) will require ongoing maintenance that is currently not being done how will it be done later? 3) I'm assuming the EA will be rigorous and will be followed. 4) Dust will seemingly be as bad a problem with the new surface as with the current surface. 5) Utah State's attitude toward public lands worries me greatly. I fear they may feel emboldened (even more, if that's possible!) by receiving federal funds for a project in the Monument and if the proposed Monument reduction happens, they will proceed with coal extraction on the Monument as well as passage of the St. George pipeline. I realize the RMP forbids paving and expects the fossil fuel industry will try to change that or get it ignored. 6) The health effects of oil extraction on the land and water and air are well documented. I hope there will be stringent management of existing (grandfathered) oil wells and absolutely no more oil/gas leases, even if the Monument gets shrunk. Thank you for taking our input! 7) The BLM, NPS and FS need to be funded to manage our public lands! 10/26/17</p> | |



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| 9 | Jenny West 624 Rock Garden Ln, Dammeron Valley, UT 84783 435 632 05679 (b) (6) | In "my perfect world" the road would have remained the single track of my youth! The preservation of this area (Grand Staircase NM) is very important to me! Keep it whole! Thus, improvements to the road seem necessary and this plan looks to be a good one. I do not want the HITRR paved! I am a 4th generation immigrant and stood with all those living and danced in Dance Hall Rock! Please don't pave this road! It needs bathroom facilities, please. The pullouts need support and this road plan seems to offer some! If (please NO!) the Monument is downsized, how will this Garfield County project be affected? I strongly oppose the loss of the Kaparowits Plateau or <u>ANY</u> portion of the current Monument! We began the fight to preserve this historical and relevant wild land for decades. Please help support the preservation of the Monument boundaries. The cattle leases should not drive the decisions on the use of our public lands and especially in this region! Utah, my home state and the state of my ancestors, has pushed back in resistance to federal control on many levels. The sagebrush rebellion, on and on, and now. These lands are public and not meant to be turned back to the few local cow lease holders, who feel entitled to these lands. Grow the development/improvement of this road and access to the beauty in a direction of preservation, reducing the overgrazing and blatant abuse of public lands. Please let's not sell this country to the coal, oil and cattle the \$. Thanks for the Open House! 10/26/17 | |



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| 10 | Grand Staircase Escalante Partners 310 S. 100 E. #7 P.O. Box 53, Kanab, UT 84741 435 644 2724 www.gsenm.org | <p>Thank you for providing Grand Staircase Escalante Partners with an opportunity to comment on the above mentioned proposed project. Our comments are set out below. Please include this letter in the official records of the Bureau of Land Management records relating to this project. Our comments are as follows;</p> <p>Supervision and Monitoring; We are concerned that on the ground work performed by or under the direction of Garfield County may exceed the scope of work described in the scoping documents without careful, full time supervision by Monument personnel. In the EA, please outline what steps the Monument plans to take to supervise the project so it doesn't exceed the scope of work, and provide the public with access to that information before a final decision is made. Cultural Resources: The scoping documentation fails to address the presence of the Hole In The Rock National Historic Trail within the project area, a recognized historical feature listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is likely that the project will impact the trail, and the public experience of the trail, in areas where the trail and the road are closely aligned. In the EA, please describe what protective actions the Monument will require to prevent such impacts. With regard to potential impacts on archaeological resources, the Monument should require that the entire length and breadth of the project, the Area of Potential Effect, be subjected to a Class III intensive archaeological survey. Any areas not previously covered by Class III surveys should be surveyed as part of the current project. Notice of this project should be provided to representatives of the tribes with a historic presence in the area. Any cultural sites within or immediately adjacent to the Area of Potential Effect should be tested for National Register Eligibility if it is not feasible to avoid them through project design. Standard Section 106 consultation with the State</p> | |



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| | | <p>Historic Preservation Office, in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, should be carried out for eligibility determinations and development of treatment plans for mitigation of project impacts. Biological Resources; Appropriate surveys should be conducted to determine if endangered, threatened, or sensitive species, or their habitats, within the Area of Potential Effect, may be impacted by the proposed project. In the event these species are identified, formal consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service should be initiated. Economics. The Monument should provide the public with the financial background information for the project; what the budget is for the overall project, for its various components, and the source of project funding. A proposed schedule for construction should be provided so that local business owners whose customers make frequent use of the Hole In The Rock Road can plan accordingly. Overall the project plan seems to fit in with the framework of the Monument Management Plan and would improve maintenance, travel safety, visitor experience and resource conditions. The work would improve drainage by reducing the width to fit better culvert crossings and improve drainage by raising the roadbed where there are channel conditions. There would be no hard surfacing so the character of the IDTRR would retain intact. We agree that the gravel surface should be no greater than two 11 foot travel lanes with a maximum of 2 foot shoulders. The typical sections #1 and #2 give a good idea of the construction. We stress that our Comment #1 is important to maintain the appropriate character, visitor experiences and resource conditions. Grand Staircase Escalante Partners believes that it could contribute more productively to the implementation of future projects within the</p> | |





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| | | Monument if it was notified of project proposals at a pre scoping stage; for example, many of the concerns outlined in this letter could potentially have been addressed before initiation of the NEPA public process with a pre NEPA proposal public trip on the 16 mile section in Garfield County with the County and GSENM staff. 11/13/17 | |
| 11 | Armand Winter (b) (6) | Since almost all of the descendants of Hole in the Rock live in Blanding and San Juan County, trade all the SITLA lands in Bears Ears National Monument for an easement to the Glen Canyon Recreational Area and let the state build the road and maintain it. 10/25/17 | |
| 12 | Deven Serr (b) (6) | I am submitting my comments in regards to proposed upgrades to HITR road. I feel strongly that this road is better served being a remote road. I would prefer it function better as far as maintaining it goes, but any improvements to it need to be done with the mindset that if you build it they will come. These areas people access to explore and recreate are not user friendly or safe most times of the year. I worry that easier access by putting in a 55 mph oiled dirt road in will attract more people who normally are not prepared for what they are getting into with extreme heat, no water and extreme flash floods potential. Improving this road for quick easy access is a major safety concern. Please take this safety concern into consideration. Thanks. 10/28/17 | |

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| 13 | <p>Laurence W. Spanne, M.A. Cultural Resources Consultant, Archaeological Assessment and Management 3915 E. Juniper Cliffs Drive, Kanab, UT 84741 4177 805 588 0822 cell 435 644 2815 office (b) (6)</p> | <p>I have reviewed the scoping letter and supplemental materials for the subject project and have the following comments for your consideration. I am familiar with the proposed project area through past visits. I understand the focus is on archaeological resources, although I expect all other resources to be addressed as well. Cultural Resources The historic Hole in the Rock Trail, which roughly more or less aligns with the existing Hole in the Rock Road, is a recognized historic property that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Consequently, it is essential that potential impacts to the trail be addressed in the Project Environmental Assessment. Since the trail is defined today as a corridor within which lie known reference points, its location relative to the existing road is only approximate. I would submit that the primary potential effect to the trail would be a visual one affecting the viewshed both from and toward the trail corridor. The current viewshed, as a likely contributing element to eligibility of the trail for placement in the NRHP, and because of its pristine or relatively unspoiled condition, could be affected by proposed modifications to the road and Dry Fork Trailhead. Some determining factors in this case that are often used to assess impacts to historic trails or road corridors are the answers to the questions: "Would the original travelers on the trail still recognize it if they could travel it today after the project is complete?" and "Will the modifications from the road project significantly diminish or detract from the feelings and perceptions experienced by the original travelers and modern visitors seeking a similar experience. There are also additional factors that are available in the President's Advisory Council Bulletins providing guidance for historic trails. I believe I could answer these questions based on my knowledge of the area, but will wait instead for the EA analysis.</p> | |

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| | | <p>I would further recommend that officials from the Church of Latter Day Saints as well as prominent Mormon Historians be consulted regarding the trail. With regard to potential impacts to archaeological resources, I would ask that you ensure that the entire length and breadth of the project, the Area of Potential Effect (APE), has been previously subjected to a Class III, intensive archaeological survey. Any areas not previously covered by Class III surveys should be surveyed as part of the current project. This survey should also be designed to identify any other cultural sites that might be of interest to local Native American groups. Any cultural sites within or immediately adjacent to the APE should then be tested for National Register Eligibility if it is not possible or feasible to avoid them through project redesign. Standard Section 106 consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer, in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, should be carried out for eligibility determinations and development of treatment plans for mitigation of project impacts, if necessary. This process should also require consultations with interested Native American groups, Church of Latter Day Saints Officials, and interested Mormon Historians as necessary. Biological Resources Conduct biological surveys and/or research as appropriate to determine the presence, or likely presence, of endangered, threatened, and sensitive species or habitats within or immediately adjacent to the APE. Address potential effects to any such species or habitats identified and consult with the appropriate agencies as required. Other Consider the potential effects of dust emissions from possible increased traffic on the new road on other resources identified and also consider what are appropriate speed limits to mitigate potential impacts as well as maintaining safety for both drivers and pedestrians.</p> | |

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| | | This concludes my comments. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Hole in the Rock Road Repair Project Scoping Documents. 11/02/17 | | | |
| 14 | Shauna Beard (b) (6) Property owner in Salt Gulch Boulder Utah | Two years ago the Salt Gulch/Hell's Backbone Road was surfaced to prevent continued erosion. There was a lot of controversy surrounding the impact increased traffic would have on the HITR road. To date, it has been a positive improvement. The dust has decreased, the surface has withstood the traffic and weather. I am in agreement with the repairs proposed on the HITRR. 10/30/17 | | | |
| 15 | Larry Clark (b) (6) | I have traveled that road, in a 1986 Audi 4000 with 4 1/2 inches of ground clearance. The trip was well worth the drive. I do support the two lane Crown and Ditch gravel road, as a preferred improvement. Make it too nice and it becomes another congested, crowded road with cars speeding by and seeing nothing. 10/28/17 | | | |
| 16 | Crockett Dumas P.O. Box 470, Escalante, UT 84726 (b) (6) | Do not make the road any wider. It used to be a slow, narrow road with turnouts. Now it is a hell of a wide swath with many roads off it that were never before. No new roads and many should be closed, stabilised and revegetated. 10/24/17 | | | |



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| 17 | Kate Behn (b) (6) | <p>Mr. Betenson, As an avid fan of southern Utah's public lands, I am writing to express my opinion on the proposed repairs to the Hole in the Rock Road. I have previously lived in northern Arizona and worked as an ecologist in the Colorado Plateau for over 15 years. I now live in southern Idaho, but continue to travel to southern Utah multiple times a year for recreational purposes including backpacking and river rafting. I agree that some areas of the Hole in the Rock road are in need of improvement in order to meet some basic expectation of safe roads, however I do not support moving towards wholesale improvement or re-engineering of the road as I believe that this would only further open the door to human impacts that the monument struggles to contain already. It saddens me to witness the high speed road rally of vehicles heading back to Escalante on any given Sunday in the summer. It contributes to my growing impression of the GSENM as being someplace where "nobody goes there anymore, it's too crowded". Although I still continue to recreate there despite this. If there is an end goal to establish a state park at the hole in the rock descent to the lake, perhaps a less destructive option would be to subsidize a tour boat route from Bullfrog. This would contain further human impacts to the ecosystem to Lake Powell, which is already drastically impacted by human alteration. I fully support restoration efforts along the Hole in the Rock road for decreased encroachment of non native vegetation and narrowing of the road. A desert tortoise would, unfortunately, have a heck of a time crossing that highway in many places due to the downcutting, and that's just not right. My two cents is to improve it for the ecosystem, but not for the convenience of quick stop tourists. Thanks for accepting input on this matter, Kate Behn. 11/8/17</p> | |







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| 18 | Dirk Clayson | <p>Dear Mr. Betenson, Kane County's response to the proposing Hole in the Rock Road Repair Project for Garfield County would be in favor of the action alternative. We understand the deteriorating conditions of the road and would like to see improvements placed as you suggested. Repairing the road would enable effective long term maintenance of the Hole in the Rock Road and protect the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument resources found along the road. The improvements to the road would insure the drainage issues getting resolved, facilitate easier automobile travel, enable long term maintenance, and improve recreation experiences for the locals and traveling groups. Kane County understands this proposed project will not only be for repair of the road from erosion and down cutting, but improvements for the restoration and revegetation, protection of native versus non native plants, and protection of vegetation in the surrounding areas, which Kane County supports. We would like to express the importance of the road on behalf of the visitors travelling to Garfield County, Kane County, and other surrounding areas. The road needs to be repaired and improved long term on behalf of the benefits listed above. Kane County fully supports the additional improvements and the action alternative to the Hole in the Rock Road Repair Project. Respectfully, Dirk Clayson, Kane County Commissioner Cc: Cynthia Staszak, GSENM, Monument Manager. 10/6/17</p> | |

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| 19 | Andy Anderson andy.anderson@kcc .com | <p>To whom it may concern. I spent a large part of my childhood and early adult years in Southern Utah, and worked five summers in Escalante as a fire fighter for the forest service. I love that area and return as much as time will allow. I hope that you will not make any improvements to Hole in the Rock Road above that which currently happens. It is a beautiful area, and has remained that way for years, precisely because of that road. Yes, it's a grueling and at times treacherous journey, but if it becomes easy, the area will be overrun by weekend warriors and minivan mavericks who have no business down there anyway. That area can and will kill anyone stupid enough not to take it seriously. Please keep it that way for those of us who remember, or want to experience, what the world was like before corporate American took it over. Let us desert rats have our playground. Ruby's Inn can take care of the rest. Regards, Andy Anderson.</p> <p>10/25/17</p> | |

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| 20 | Gretchen Demerad DuBois, Salt Lake City. (b) (6) | <p>I am writing to comment on the proposed rebuild of 16 miles of Hole In The Rock Road. I believe this rebuild should not be allowed to occur because it is not allowed or envisioned under the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument's management plan. The focus of the monument as defined in its founding documents is to manage uses to protect and prevent damage to monument resources, such as historic, paleontological, and biological resources. It is not to provide convenient travel for recreation or sight seeing. Rebuilding this portion of the road would likely increase visitor use to this area of the monument by making travel and access easier. More visitor use often equates to increased impacts on the fragile desert environment and the resources the monument was established to protect. This would be in addition to the growing visitor use I have witnessed in this area. In addition, Jerry Roundy, founder of the Escalante Heritage Center, stated in a recent Salt Lake Tribune article about the road rebuild that the ultimate goal of his group is to see the entire road surface eventually hardened, as well as a state park established at Hole In The Rock. Rebuilding this portion of Hole In The Rock road will set a precedent for rebuilding the entire road (and possibly paving it); this would make it easier for a state park to be established. The establishment of a state park at Hole In The Rock and a paved/hardened Hole In The Rock road would completely change this area of the monument by bringing in significantly more visitors, crowding, and result in more impacts on the park's resources. This would not be consistent or compliant with the monument's purpose or management plan.. However, continuing to manage Hole In The Rock road in the same way it has been naturally limits visitors and protects monument resources. The management plan states that motorized access should be limited in the monument. It designates a road network and specifies that the network</p> | |







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| | | <p>"will be left largely in its presently unimproved condition...in doing so, the BLM will ensure that the remote undeveloped nature of this landscape remains for generations to come." The rebuilding of the road does not leave it in its presently unimproved condition or limit motorized access; rather, it would begin to change the remote nature of the landscape. Not all roads on our public lands should be paved. Those who are willing and able to use dirt roads in less than ideal conditions should have the opportunity to do so, especially because there are plenty of paved roads that access public lands, parks, and monuments. Finally, the TRAN 7 objective in the management plan states that "with the exception of those segments listed below, open routes may be maintained within the disturbed travel surface area as of the date of this Plan; no widening, passing lanes, or other travel surface upgrades could occur. Deviations from the current management levels will be allowed as follows: Hole In The Rock Road: Allow stabilization of washout prone areas, primarily along the southeastern end, to prevent erosion and sediment loading in drainages." This objective does not allow for the widening, surface upgrade, or rebuilding of Hole In The Rock road. The management plan also states that commitments to work with other local and state governments must be consistent with the plan's decisions and objectives. Working with the county to rebuild this road is not consistent with the plan's decisions and objectives. As the management plan's overall vision states: First and foremost, the Monument remains a frontier.. The remote and undeveloped character of the Monument is responsible for the existence and quality of most of the scientific and historic resources described in the Presidential Proclamation.</p> | |

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| | | Safeguarding the remote and undeveloped frontier character of the Monument is essential to the protection of the scientific and historic resources as required by the Proclamation. For these reasons, this road rebuild project should be abandoned. 10/30/17 | | | | | |

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| 21 | Nicole Croft, Executive Director, Grand Staircase Escalante Partners | <p>Thank you for providing Grand Staircase Escalante Partners with an opportunity to comment on the above mentioned proposed project. Our comments are set out below. Please include this letter in the official records of the Bureau of Land Management records relating to this project. Our comments are as follows;</p> <p>Supervision and Monitoring; We are concerned that on the ground work performed by or under the direction of Garfield County may exceed the scope of work described in the scoping documents without careful, full time supervision by Monument personnel. In the EA, please outline what steps the Monument plans to take to supervise the project so it doesn't exceed the scope of work, and provide the public with access to that information before a final decision is made. Cultural Resources: The scoping documentation fails to address the presence of the Hole In The Rock National Historic Trail within the project area, a recognized historical feature listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is likely that the project will impact the trail, and the public experience of the trail, in areas where the trail and the road are closely aligned. In the EA, please describe what protective actions the Monument will require to prevent such impacts. With regard to potential impacts on archaeological resources, the Monument should require that the entire length and breadth of the project, the Area of Potential Effect, be subjected to a Class III intensive archaeological survey. Any areas not previously covered by Class III surveys should be surveyed as part of the current project. Notice of this project should be provided to representatives of the tribes with a historic presence in the area. Any cultural sites within or immediately adjacent to the Area of Potential Effect should be tested for National Register Eligibility if it is not feasible to avoid them through project design.</p> | |

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| | | <p>Standard Section 106 consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, should be carried out for eligibility determinations and development of treatment plans for mitigation of project impacts. Biological Resources; Appropriate surveys should be conducted to determine if endangered, threatened, or sensitive species, or their habitats, within the Area of Potential Effect, may be impacted by the proposed project. In the event these species are identified, formal consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service should be initiated. Economics. The Monument should provide the public with the financial background information for the project; what the budget is for the overall project, for its various components, and the source of project funding. A proposed schedule for construction should be provided so that local business owners whose customers make frequent use of the Hole In The Rock Road can plan accordingly. Overall the project plan seems to fit in with the framework of the Monument Management Plan and would improve maintenance, travel safety, visitor experience and resource conditions. The work would improve drainage by reducing the width to fit better culvert crossings and improve drainage by raising the roadbed where there are channel conditions. There would be no hard surfacing so the character of the IDTRR would retain intact. We agree that the gravel surface should be no greater than two 11 foot travel lanes with a maximum of 2 foot shoulders. The typical sections #1 and #2 give a good idea of the construction. We stress that our Comment #1 is important to maintain the appropriate character, visitor experiences and resource conditions. Grand Staircase Escalante Partners believes that it could contribute more productively</p> | |

| <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;">  <div style="text-align: center;"> Hole-in-the-Rock Road Repair Project Public Comments </div> <div style="text-align: right;"> <small>Department of Interior Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument</small>  </div> </div> | | | |
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| | | to the implementation of future projects within the Monument if it was notified of project proposals at a pre scoping stage; for example, many of the concerns outlined in this letter could potentially have been addressed before initiation of the NEPA public process with a pre NEPA proposal public trip on the 16 mile section in Garfield County with the County and GSENM staff. Thank you very much for providing Partners an opportunity to comment on this project. If you have any questions, please contact us. Sincerely, Nicole Croft Executive Director. 11/18/17 | |

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| 22 | Phil Hanceford, Conservation Director, BLM Action Center, The Wilderness Society, 303 225 4636 phil_hanceford@tw s.org Kya Marienfeld, Wildlands Attorney, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance 435 259 5440 kya@suwa.org Shelley Silbert, Executive Director, Great Old Broads for Wilderness 970 385 9577 shelly@greatoldbro ads.org | <p>Dear Mr. Betenson, Please accept and fully consider the following comments on DOI BLM UT 0300 2017 0066 EA or the “Hole in the Rock Road Repair Project,” the purpose of which is to “stabilize washout prone areas, prevent erosion, and sediment loading in drainages” for 16 miles of the road within Garfield County, Utah. The Wilderness Society, the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, and Great Old Broads for Wilderness represent more than half a million members and supporters nationwide and in Utah and our staff and members have great interest in the protection and enhancement of the natural and cultural resources of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument.</p> <p>We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the project and look forward to participating in this process to consider repairs to the Hole in the Rock Road. As a preliminary matter, we strongly oppose any attempt to pave the Hole in the Rock Road with asphalt or black top or any other material appearing unnatural to the area. We appreciate that the stated purpose of this EA does not including paving the road, preparing to pave the road or even consideration of such actions. Such an action would be inconsistent with the Proclamation establishing the Monument, the Monument Management Plan, manuals and policy guidance for the National Landscape Conservation System, the National Historic Preservation Act and other applicable laws and regulations. BLM Must Prioritize the Protection of Monument Objects: With the designation of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument in 1996, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was given a new mandate for management of these lands to protect the “objects” identified in Proclamation 6920 and to do so by preserving the primitive, frontier state of the landscape as the most important aspect of the monument. Because of its significance, which merited designation as a national monument and inclusion in the National Landscape Conservation</p> | |





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| | | <p>System (NLCS), the monument requires special management, different from other BLM lands. The overriding objective of the monument is the permanent conservation of its natural and cultural resources as described in the Proclamation. Management must place priority on conserving, protecting and restoring the natural and cultural values identified in the Proclamation, and must identify and restrict those uses of the land that are secondary to that objective. Secretarial Order 3308 declares, among other things, that BLM must ensure that the objects and values for which an NLCS unit is designated will be prioritized over other multiple uses if those uses conflict with those values: The BLM shall ensure that the components of the NLCS are managed to protect the values for which they were designated, including, where appropriate, prohibiting uses that are in conflict with those values.</p> | |

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| | | <p>If consistent with such protection, appropriate multiple uses may be allowed, consistent with the applicable law and the relevant designations under which the components were established. In order to ensure that no Monument objects will be harmed with this project, BLM should provide an updated inventory the Monument objects in the area that may be affected by the project and set appropriate criteria, terms and conditions on the project. Regarding the proposed project area, the Proclamation states: Early Mormon pioneers left many historic objects . . . and built and traversed the renowned Hole in the Rock Trail as part of their epic colonization efforts. Sixty miles of the Trail lie within the monument, as does the Dance Hall Rock, used by intrepid Mormon Pioneers and now a National Historic Site. In addition, there are likely other important or sensitive cultural or scientific resources in the area as identified in the Proclamation that require proper inventories and stipulations for protection prior to surface disturbance. The Proclamation also makes it clear that “this unspoiled natural area remains a frontier, a quality that greatly enhances the Monument’s value for scientific study” and “[r]emoteness, limited travel corridors and low visitation have all helped to preserve intact the monument’s important ecological values.” Thus, some of the most important qualities for the Monument’s protection are retaining its primitive, frontier character and moving towards a more natural state. Recommendation: The agency must take precautions to not allow harm to identified Monument objects. BLM should be explicit in the EA that the Monument, including the Hole in the Rock Road area is to be managed in its primitive, frontier state, which includes a sense of remoteness and limited travel corridors. The document should also include an inventory of objects found in the area with specific criteria and strong terms and conditions the project. BLM’s Actions Must Be Consistent with the Monument</p> | |





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| | | <p>Management Plan: The Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) requires that BLM manage public lands in accordance with land use plans, such that once a resource management plan is completed, FLPMA requires that “all future resource management authorizations and actions . . . and subsequent more detailed or specific planning shall conform to the approved plan.” 43 C.F.R. § 1610.5 3. FLPMA regulations further define “conformity” to mean “that a resource management action shall be specifically provided for in the plan, or if not specifically mentioned, shall be clearly consistent with the terms, conditions, and decisions of the approved plan or plan amendment.” 43 C.F.R. § 1601.0 5(b).1 The following comments and recommendations pertain to provisions of the Monument Management Plan (MMP) that should be directly addressed in the EA for the project: No Travel Surface Upgrades or Widening. The MMP clearly addresses maintenance activities with regard to transportation and access: . . . open routes may be maintained within the disturbed travel surface area as of the date of this Plan; no widening, passing lanes, or other travel surface upgrades could occur. MMP at 47; (TRAN 7). The MMP allows for deviation from current maintenance levels along the Hole in the Rock Road to “allow stabilization of washout prone areas, primarily along the southeastern end, to prevent erosion and sediment loading in drainages.” MMP at 47 (TRANS 7). It is noteworthy that the project is not in the southeastern end of the road but rather on the northwestern end. Recommendation : The EA and project design cannot, under any circumstance, upgrade the existing road surface or widen the existing road corridor. This includes the use of surfacing agents or other outside materials for hardening or otherwise upgrading the travel surface that</p> | |

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| | | <p>(1 In <i>Norton v. SUWA</i>, the Supreme Court elaborated on these two obligations: The statutory directive that BLM manage “in accordance with” land use plans, and the regulatory requirement that authorizations and actions “conform to” those plans, prevent BLM from taking actions inconsistent with the provisions of a land use plan.) currently exists on Hole in the Rock Road. After hearing from project engineers and consultants during the two public scoping meetings held regarding the proposed project, there seemed to be conflicting information from BLM staff and contractors, where some believed hardening agents would be added to the road surface and others stated clearly that the travel surface would not be upgraded in any fashion. The EA should clearly and definitively state what material will be used to repair the road surface.</p> | |



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| | | <p><u>Passage Zone</u> The majority of the project is within the “Passage Zone” of the Monument. The Passage Zone “includes secondary travel routes which receive use as throughways and recreation destinations. While rudimentary facilities necessary for safety, visitor interpretation, and for the protection of resources will be allowed in this zone, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will generally avoid directing or encouraging further increases in visitation due to the condition of routes and distance from communities.” MMP at 9.</p> <p><u>Recommendation</u> : The project must abide by these principles set forth in the MMP and avoid encouraging of uses and visitation in this area due to the condition of the road and its status as in a Passage Zone. <u>Mitigation for surface disturbance and plant removal</u> Associated surface disturbance from repairs to the road could include blading, leveling, soil displacement and removal of vegetation. The MMP requires mitigation for soil and plant disturbing activities in the monument. Specifically, the MMP states the following: Mitigation measures have been built into the Plan . . . During the next tier of planning, which allows for more detailed and site specific analysis, additional measures will be taken, as necessary, in order to mitigate subsequent impacts to the environment. MMP at x . The BLM will apply procedures to protect soils from accelerated or unnatural erosion in any ground disturbing activity, including route maintenance and restoration . . . This process will include inventories for affected resources and the identification of mitigation measures. MMP at 21; (SOIL 1) (emphasis added).</p> | |



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| | | <p>NEPA requires that BLM discuss mitigation measures in its environmental analysis. 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14, 1502.16. Also, under NEPA, BLM's Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is lawful only if "BLM has made a convincing case that no significant impact will result there from or that any such impact will be reduced to insignificance by the adoption of appropriate mitigation measures." Defenders of Wildlife, 152 IBLA 1, 6 (2000) (citations omitted). In general, in order to show that mitigation will reduce environmental impacts to an insignificant level, BLM must discuss the mitigation measures "in sufficient detail to ensure that environmental consequences have been fairly evaluated." Communities, Inc. v. Busey, 956 F.2d 619, 626 (6th Cir. 1992). Simply identifying mitigation measures, without analyzing the effectiveness of the measures, violates NEPA. Agencies must "analyze the mitigation measures in detail [and] explain how effective the measures would be . . . A mere listing of mitigation measures is insufficient to qualify as the reasoned discussion required by NEPA." Nw. Indian Cemetery Protective Ass'n v. Peterson, 764 F.2d 581, 588 (9th Cir. 1985), rev'd on other grounds, 485 U.S. 439 (1988). NEPA also directs that the "possibility of mitigation" should not be relied upon as a means to avoid further environmental analysis. Council on Environmental Quality, Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's National Environmental Policy Act Regulations, available at http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/40/40p3.htm; Davis v. Mineta, 302 F.3d at 1125. Further, general statements that BLM will conduct monitoring are also not an appropriate form of mitigation. Simply monitoring for expected damage does not actually reduce or alleviate any impacts.</p> | |







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| | | <p>The MMP requires all surface disturbing projects to require restoration or revegetation with a strong preference for the use of native species: Restoration provisions will be included in all surface disturbing projects including provisions for post restoration monitoring of the area. Costs for these activities will be included in the overall cost of the project and will come out of the entire project budget. MMP at 23. All projects proposed in the Monument will contain a restoration or revegetation component and will budget for the cost of seeding with native species. All planning for projects, in all except limited, emergency situations, will use native species, and the use of non native species will not be analyzed as an alternative. MMP at 30. <u>Recommendation</u> : BLM should set out measures in the EA to mitigate the unavoidable damage that will result from increased surface disturbance to the area. This does not only apply to direct mitigation of erosion or loss of vegetation, but where soils and vegetation may be removed from this project, BLM should prepare a plan for mitigating that loss by protecting and restoring other lands in the area, as required by the MMP. BLM Must Update its Inventory of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics FLPMA requires BLM to inventory and consider lands with wilderness characteristics on a continuing basis. 43 U.S.C. § 1711(a); <i>see also Ore. Natural Desert Ass'n v. BLM</i>, 625 F.3d 1092, 1122 (9th Cir. 2008) (holding that “wilderness characteristics are among the values that FLPMA specifically assigns to the BLM to manage”). IM 2011 154 and BLM Manuals 6310 and 6320 contain mandatory guidance on implementing that requirement. The IM directs BLM to “conduct and maintain inventories regarding the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics, and to consider identified lands with wilderness characteristics in land use plans and when analyzing projects under [NEPA].” (emphasis added).</p> | |

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| | | <p>This includes the “necessary forms for each area” including photo logs, route analysis forms and inventory area evaluations (Manual 6310, Appendices A D). Manual 6310 reiterates that, “[r]egardless of past inventory, the BLM must maintain and update as necessary, its inventory of wilderness resources on public lands.” BLM Manual 6310.06(A) Manual 6320 requires BLM to consider lands with wilderness characteristics in land use planning, both in evaluating the impacts of management alternatives on lands with wilderness characteristics and in evaluating alternatives that would protect those values. Wilderness inventories are to be done on a <i>continuing</i> basis and relevant citizen submitted data is to be evaluated. BLM Manual 6310.04(C)(1). We understand that BLM has been inventorying the Monument for wilderness characteristics per BLM Manual 6310. That inventory information has not yet been posted for the public to review. FLPMA’s mandate to maintain an inventory of public lands resources is the foundation on which all further management decisions are built, from land use allocations to site specific project planning. BLM should therefore complete the LWC inventory for lands that could be affected by this project. Additionally, Instruction Memorandum 2013 1063 instructs that BLM field offices should make finalized and signed wilderness characteristics inventory findings available to the public as soon as practicable after their completion and before the inventory data is used to inform decisions. <u>Recommendation</u> : The BLM must perform an inventory of wilderness characteristics before issuing a decision on this proposed project per FLPMA and BLM policy guidance. BLM Must Take a Hard Look at Impacts from the Project NEPA dictates that agencies take a “hard look” at the environmental consequences of a proposed action and the requisite environmental analysis “must be appropriate to the action in question.”</p> | |

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| | | <p>2 The BLM has taken the policy position that it does not designate new Wilderness Study Areas (WSA). We maintain that this policy is not valid and should not be maintained. BLM should specifically mention potential WSAs as something to inventory for during this process. 3 Available at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/regulations/Instruction_Memos_and_Bulletins/national_instruction/2013/IM_2013_106.print.html. Metcalf v. Daley, 214 F.3d 1135, 1151 (9th Cir. 2000); Robertson v. Methow Valley Citizens Council, 490 U.S. 332, 348 (1989). In order to take the “hard look” required by NEPA, the agencies are required to assess impacts and effects that include: “ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative.” 40 C.F.R. § 1508.8. (emphasis added). NEPA regulations define “cumulative impact” as: the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. 40 C.F.R. § 1508.7 (emphasis added). To satisfy NEPA’s hard look requirement, the cumulative impacts assessment must do two things. First, agencies must catalogue the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the area that</p> | |





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| | | <p>might impact the environment. Muckleshoot Indian Tribe v. U.S. Forest Service, 177 F.3d 800, 809 10 (9th Cir. 1999). Second, agencies must analyze these impacts in light of the proposed action. Id. If agencies determine that certain actions are not relevant to the cumulative impacts analysis, it must “demonstrat[e] the scientific basis for this assertion.” Sierra Club v. Bosworth, 199 F.Supp.2d 971, 983 (N.D. Ca. 2002). A failure to include a cumulative impact analysis of actions within a larger region will render NEPA analysis insufficient. See, e.g., Kern v. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 284 F.3d 1062, 1078 (9th Cir. 2002) (analysis of root fungus on cedar timber sales was necessary for an entire area). Recommendation: BLM must perform a detailed evaluation of the impacts to natural and cultural resources, including specific Monument objects, from the proposed project. Recommendation: Pursuant to NEPA, BLM must take a hard look at the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts resulting from the potential road repair project. Cumulative and indirect impacts include growth inducing impacts on Hole in the Rock Road and adjacent areas, including increases in dispersed camping along the route and connected roads, an increase in visitor numbers and expansion of potential seasons of use, and other foreseeable impacts to Monument objects when road access is improved. Recommendation: BLM’s scoping letter regarding the Hole in the Rock Road Repair Project states that it includes the entire Hole in the Rock Road in the project analysis area. However, based on all other information presented to the public on ePlanning and at BLM’s two public scoping hearings in late October, only the Garfield County portion of the road is</p> | |

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| | | <p>undergoing site specific design proposals and is currently being analyzed and funded for repair. Due to the language of the scoping letter referencing the Kane County section of Hole in the Rock Road, it should be clarified in the forthcoming EA that additional project specific NEPA analysis will be required in the future if repairs are also considered and planned for other sections of the Hole in the Rock Road outside the current repairs proposed for the 16 mile section of the road within Garfield County. BLM Must Consider Protection of Historic Properties Recognizing that “historic properties significant to the Nation’s heritage are being lost or substantially altered with increasing frequency,” Congress enacted the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966 to implement a broad national policy encouraging the preservation and protection of America’s historic and cultural resources. 16 U.S.C. §§ 470(b), 470 1. The “fundamental purpose” of the NHPA is “to ensure the preservation of historical resources.” <i>Te Moak Tribe of W. Shoshone of Nev. v. U.S. Dep’t of Interior</i>, 608 F.3d 592, 609 (9th Cir. 2010) (emphasis added). To promote this purpose, the NHPA requires that federal agencies “take into account any adverse effects on historical places from actions concerning that property.” <i>Friends of the Atglen Susquehanna Trail, Inc. v. Surface Transp. Bd.</i>, 252 F.3d 246, 252 (3rd Cir. 2001); see also 16 U.S.C. §§ 470f, 470h 2(a)(2). The heart of the NHPA is Section 106, which prohibits federal agencies from approving any federal “undertaking,” 16 U.S.C. § 470w(7), unless the agency takes into account the effects of the undertaking on historic properties that are “included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register.” <i>Id.</i> § 470f.</p> | |



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| | | <p>Section 106 has been characterized as a “stop, look and listen” procedural provision that, like NEPA, requires federal agencies to consider the impacts of their actions on historic properties before acting. The goal of the Section 106 process is not to generate paperwork, but rather to provide a mechanism by which governmental agencies will play an important role in “preserving, restoring, and maintaining the historic and cultural foundations of the nation.” 16 U.S.C. § 470. Recommendation: Pursuant to the NHPA, the BLM must initiate meaningful consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer, relevant and affected Tribes and other interested parties, determine the area of potential effects, and conduct a Class III cultural resource inventory of the area of potential effects of the Hole in the Rock Road Repair project prior to issuing a decision. The BLM must also seek ways to avoid, mitigate, or minimize these effects on cultural resources. Conclusion We appreciate the opportunity to provide scoping comments on this project and look forward to remaining engaged as BLM develops the forthcoming EA. Please keep us informed of any future activity that occurs in relation to this project or the Hole in the Rock Road, via the email addresses listed below. Additionally, please send a copy of the Draft EA and other documents to either kya@suwa.org or Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, P.O. Box 968, Moab, Utah 84532. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us. 11/9/17</p> | |