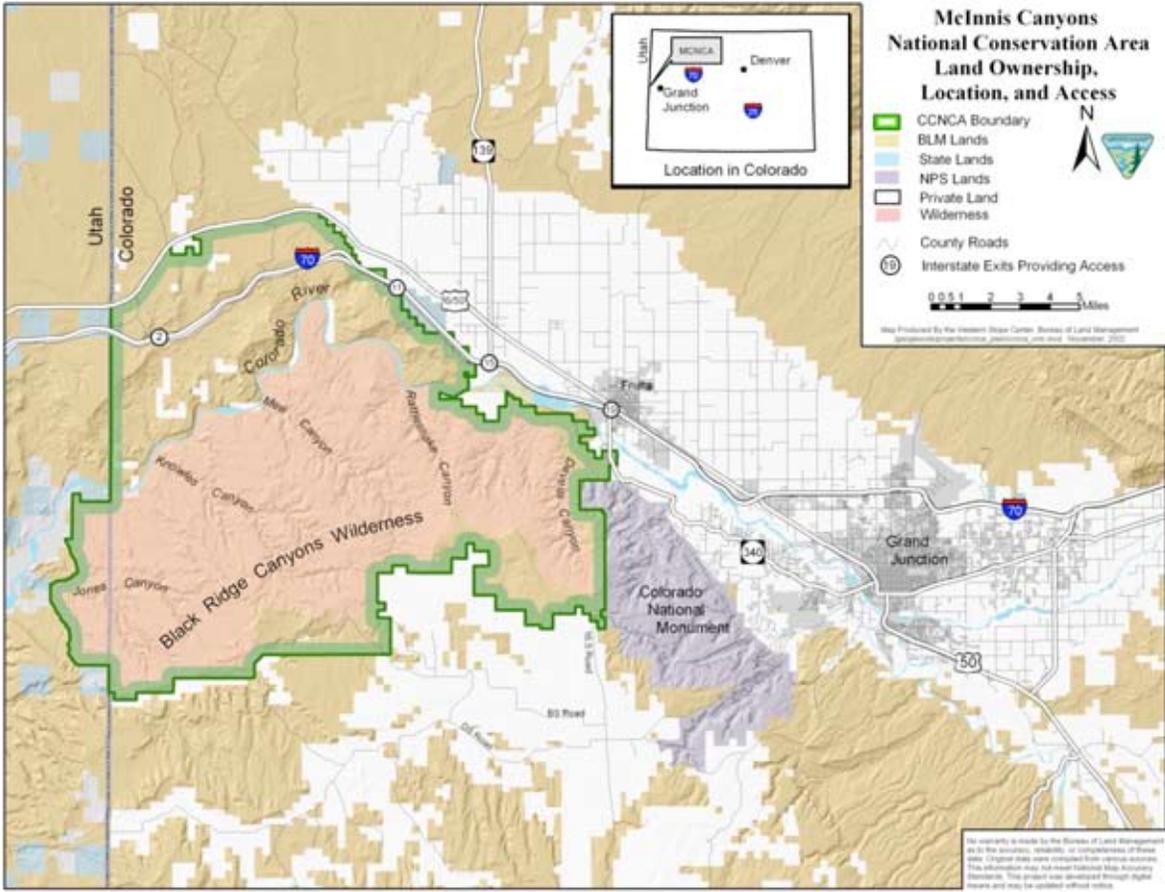


McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area

National Landscape Conservation System FY 2010 Annual Managers Report



Pollock Canyon. Photo by Matt McGrath



I. Introduction

Unit

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area

Contact Information

<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/mcnca.html>

Manager

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2815 H Road, Grand Junction, Colorado 81506

Established

Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area and Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-353, October 21, 2000; revised through P.L. 108-400)

Acreage

123,430 acres, including 75,550 acres of Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness

Field Offices

BLM Colorado's Northwest District
(Grand Junction Field Office)

Estimated Annual Visitation

282,113

The McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area and Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness were added to the National Landscape Conservation System in 2000, as the result of a series of conversations centered on the theme of community stewardship. The proximity of this NCA to the communities of Grand Junction and Fruita, Colorado, make it a daily destination for local residents to hike its trails or raft the Colorado River. The area also attracts visitors from all over the world who come for its world-class mountain biking trails or learn about its important scientific resources by participating in a dinosaur dig adventure.

The unique and nationally important values of the NCA include geological, cultural, paleontological, natural, scientific, recreational, environmental, biological, wilderness, wildlife education and scenic resources. These lands are managed for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

This report summarizes the notable achievements within the McInnis Canyons NCA between October 1, 2009, and September 30, 2010.

II. Land Use Planning

a. Overview

Management for the area is based on the 2004 Resource Management Plan. The plan is due for an evaluation, which should be completed in the next year along with an implementation strategy. The implementation strategy would reflect work accomplished in the first five years following the plan's completion, as well as highlight existing partnerships.

b. Implementation-Level Planning

In 2010, the BLM continued work on a recreation implementation plan to update the River Management Plan for the Ruby-Horsethief section of the Colorado River.

The notion of permitting for the Colorado River was suggested as early as the 1998 Ruby-Horsethief Plan. The plan indicated that allocation of river use should be delayed until other options were exhausted. By 2008, monitoring and visitor feedback indicated that the social experience and natural resource condition within the river corridor were being degraded by noncompliance with the voluntary registration system based on the increasing level of visitation (which reached a high in 2010 at 20,000 camp nights).

In 2009, the BLM began updating its management plan for river-related recreation. In 2010, the BLM worked with its Advisory Council, the Northwest Resource Advisory Council, members of the Colorado and Utah guides and outfitters and the public to identify several management options with different levels and approaches to permitting. This plan is slated for completion in 2011.



The Boat Ramp at Loma on a busy day



Looking down on a river campsite.

c. Land Use Plan Implementation

In 2010, the BLM published final Supplemental Rules in the Federal Register. These rules represent a major step forward in the ability of NCA Law Enforcement staff to protect natural and heritage resources, putting into practice many of the decisions made in the 2004 Resource Management Plan.

Colorado State Director Helen Hankins presents an award to MCNCA Law Enforcement Ranger Ken Lloyd at his swearing-in ceremony. The award recognized Lloyd's contributions during service in Iraq, prior to being hired as a BLM Ranger.

III. Protecting America's Natural Resources

There is a significant amount of overlap between the various types of efforts described throughout the rest of this report, particularly in the areas of science, partnerships, volunteers, and environmental education. The NCA has a long history of cooperative efforts, which are highlighted in this annual report for 2010.

a. Notable Natural Resources

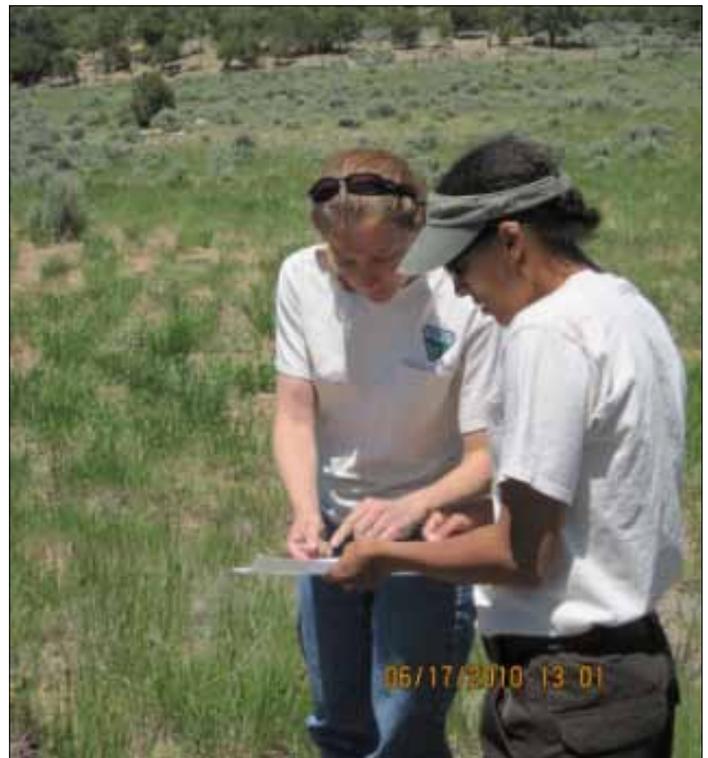
The legislation designating the NCA specifically recognized its natural, environmental, biological, wilderness, wildlife and scenic resources, as well as the scientific and educational values. Desert Bighorn sheep, endangered big-river fishes, rare river otters and key habitat for a significant diversity of bird species are among the notable natural resources described in this report.

b. Land Health Assessments

Up-to-date information on the status of biological and natural resources is available in this area and 100 percent of the NCA has been assessed for land health. For the NCA as a whole, BLM specialists have determined that approximately 94,000 acres (76 percent of the NCA) is meeting land health standards, with the remainder either meeting with problems or not meeting. In areas not meeting or meeting with problems, presence of invasive non-native species such as cheatgrass is typically the issue. Where applicable, the BLM has made adjustments to grazing systems based on land health and Ecological Site Inventory data.



A river otter checks out a BLM ranger on the Ruby-Horsethief section of the Colorado.



BLM staff record ecological data near Black Ridge.



Desert bighorn sheep in MCNCA.

c. Inventory and Monitoring Efforts

In 2010, the BLM inventoried and filed for water rights on two springs in the NCA, conducted riparian assessments for proper functioning condition on approximately 3.5 miles of riparian habitat and performed a level I Rosgen inventory on the Colorado River between Loma and West Water.

In 2010, the BLM continued to partner with the Colorado Division of Wildlife to monitor the Black Ridge Desert bighorn sheep herd. This ongoing monitoring partnership was highly successful in yielding important biological information on the Black Ridge herd. The scientific aspects of this project are explained in the science section of this report. The BLM used funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to support this project in 2010.

Fiscal Year 2010 was the third and final year of monitoring for the Knowles Canyon fire. This monitoring revealed some unusual results related to the combined effects of fire and tamarisk leaf beetle on tamarisk mortality (see the science section of this report).

The BLM also continued to monitor cottonwood trees as part of the priority the NCA places on biological restoration. One of the NCA's park rangers focuses almost entirely on

biological restoration during the spring and summer months. In 2010, he worked with the NCA Science Ecologist to adjust monitoring protocols and to improve the BLM's ability to draw long-term management conclusions from the biological trends documented by monitoring.

The BLM completed its third year of campsite monitoring in 2010. Over time, BLM recreation staff will use data to measure the degree and intensity of recreational disturbance in the Colorado River corridor and adjust management for river recreation in order to protect riparian resources.

d. Restoration Efforts

The NCA has a dynamic and successful native species restoration program. The program is supported by NCA river management staff and the Grand Junction Field Office's weed treatment team, in partnership with Mesa County weed staff, the Tamarisk Coalition, the Colorado Department of Agriculture, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and the Western Colorado Conservation Youth Corps. See the partnership section of this report for additional information on each of these projects.

As of 2010, BLM river rangers have protected more than 259 native Fremont cottonwood saplings with mesh cages. Through working with volunteers, the BLM has planted more than 200 new saplings. NCA Park Ranger Troy Schnurr continues to pioneer innovative techniques to respond to altered flow regimes on the Colorado River, including using a system of water barrels and drip irrigation to support native Fremont cottonwoods until they establish adequate root systems. River staff added eight new barrels in 2010, which supported these young trees through the hot summer months until their root systems are established. This allowed important riparian species under less-than-natural flow regimes to recover.



BLM staff record baseline monitoring measurements at a river camp.



Beaver, one of the reasons we wrap cottonwoods during high water!

Invasive species treatments are also a major prong of the NCA's restoration program. Treatments in the NCA in 2010 focused on Russian knapweed and musk thistle. For these species, the BLM uses its "Weed Raft", a raft outfitted with specialized weed treatment equipment that makes treating weeds in the river corridor feasible. As the treatment program has progressed through the years, the treatment objectives for knapweed are starting to focus on spot treatment of smaller infestations, with more attention placed on whitetop.

The NCA's weed management team in 2010 continued its "zero tolerance policy" for infestations of purple loosestrife, perennial pepperweed and Russian olive. The BLM and Mesa County continue to treat all known infestations of these three species every year.

The tamarisk treatment program in the NCA successfully uses tamarisk leaf beetle to restore watersheds. The beetles were released in the NCA in the mid-2000s. By 2010, the BLM and partners at the Palisade Insectary, which leads the tamarisk beetle release program, began seeing tamarisk die



BLM River ranger Troy Schnurr with an unlucky purple loosestrife.

off. As tamarisk die off the BLM is able to remove, pile and burn tamarisk.

BLM staff also completed work at campsites to reduce the fire danger that tamarisk poses to native Fremont cottonwoods (four additional acres of work). In 2010, NCA ecology staff initiated a study plot for native



Burning piled tamarisk at Black Rocks to improve campsites.



Burning piled tamarisk at Black Rocks to improve campsites.



Burning piled tamarisk at Black Rocks to improve campsites.

species restoration in a cheatgrass-dominated rangeland to examine restoration techniques and strategies to determine appropriate restoration methods.

See the science and partnerships sections of this report for additional information on these restoration projects.

IV. Protecting America's Heritage Resources

a. Notable Heritage Resources

The cultural, paleontological and wilderness resources of this NCA were all referenced in its designating legislation, and the NCA protects a rich record of historic and prehistoric resources. The 75,550 Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness comprises 61 percent of the NCA's total land mass, and encompasses beautiful natural sandstone arches, rugged canyons and ephemeral desert streams that may emerge during spring or following flashy summer thunderstorms.

The scientific value of the NCA's paleontological resources has drawn researchers to western Colorado since the early 1900s. The NCA contains two active quarries where researchers under permit with the BLM work to uncover the secrets contained in the NCA's fossil record. In particular, the Mygatt-Moore quarry in Rabbit Valley produced the first North American Jurassic ankylosaurian dinosaur (*Mymoorapelta*) plus other herbivorous, as well as carnivorous taxa and three types of non-dinosaur reptiles. Although six of the seven known species from the quarry are well-known from other sites in the Morrison Formation, the Mygatt-Moore Quarry is unusual in preserving thousands of bones, almost none of which are in articulation. Also unique for the quarry is the number of *Apatosaurus* and *Allosaurus* bones and the chewed bone elements preserved along with hundreds of shed teeth of carnivores, suggesting possible scavenging of carcasses by predators.

Parts of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail are thought to run near the NCA. A project to trace the route of the trail was initiated in 2010.

b. Inventory Efforts

In 2010, BLM staff completed an inventory on the NCA's trail systems. See the ARRA section of this report for more detail.

Cultural specialists also completed an inventory of existing river campsites to support the permit analysis for the Colorado River, which would involve designating campsites and directing use to certain approved areas. These surveys will assist BLM managers in understanding the implications of concentrating use in existing sites.



Archaeologists completing river cultural survey.

c. Other Accomplishments

The Ute Ethnohistory project and the Ute Ethnobotany project continued in 2010 (these projects were first described in the 2009 report).

V. Providing Recreation and Visitor Experiences

a. Overview

The NCA's legislation referenced the outstanding recreational value of the resources within the NCA. The NCA includes more than 200 miles of designated roads and trails, which provide opportunities to enjoy the NCA's scenic resources while horseback riding, trail riding (motorized and mountain biking) hiking and engaging in world-class mountain biking on Mack Ridge.



Room with a View: View from a tent near Mee Canyon.

b. Facilities, Construction, and Maintenance

In 2010, the BLM completed work on a new trail system at Opal Hill. This trail system is adjacent to a City of Fruita trail system. In the future, this trail system may provide opportunities for an interpretive loop, which the BLM is considering in partnership with a local geologist.

Following publication of the Supplementary Rules in the Federal Register, NCA staff completed a substantial update of all signs within the NCA to disseminate those rules. The BLM also used this as an opportunity to make our signs more attractive and include messaging based on land ethic and personal stewardship.

c. Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management

Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management decisions have been in place since completion of the Resource Management Plan in 2004.

In 2010, the BLM initiated a comprehensive review of trails in the “Front Country” portion of the NCA. This project examined existing alignments of trails, made adjustments for sustainability where necessary and identified social trails, which are trails developed by users but not approved by BLM, for closure.

d. Recreation Fee Program

There are no recreation fee sites within the NCA. However, as described in the Implementation Planning section, the potential need for a fee and permit system was suggested for the Colorado River in the 1990s. In 2010, NCA recreation staff initiated significant staff work to prepare for potential implementation of a fee for overnight camping in the river corridor. If approved in 2011, a fee program would be initiated in the NCA in 2012.

VI. Your Recovery Dollars At Work

In 2010, the BLM continued work on three American Recovery and Reinvestment Act projects within the MCNCA.

The BLM initiated two separate contracts for cultural survey and subsequent trail work for more than 100 miles of NCA trails. Since many of the NCA's trails predated the NCA designation, this level of comprehensive survey had not been done for trails outside the Mack Ridge area. By contracting

this important cultural survey work, the BLM was able to provide jobs for local contractors as well as assemble information that will enhance the level of information available to protect cultural resources from recreation-related impacts. The trail work portion of the project was awarded in 2010 to the Western Colorado Conservation Corps, and those outcomes will be described in the 2011 Manager's Report.

The BLM also used recovery act funding to hire seasonal bighorn sheep monitors and provide funding to the Colorado Division of Wildlife for contracted monitoring flights. In all, these projects amounted to more than \$380,000 of financial stimulation to local contractors.

The BLM also completed initial work for a proposed new campground near Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness. This project was not completed because the estimate came in substantially higher than anticipated.

VII. Engaging Youth in America's Great Outdoors

a. Youth Engagement

BLM river rangers supported one Eagle Scout project, which resulted in removal of 0.5 acres of tamarisk and planting 10 new native Fremont cottonwoods in May 2010.

BLM staff with Eagle Scout crew.

The BLM co-sponsored two new projects in 2010 to get kids outdoors. These projects both focused on environmental education outcomes, and are described in the Partnerships Section of this report.



Conservation Corps celebrating a good work week.



Conservation Corps working at Rattlesnake.

b. Youth Employment

Through a grant and partnership with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, 32 Western Colorado Conservation Corps youth treated tamarisk and Russian olive in the river corridor (eight person crews, four weeks of work).

VIII. Partnership and Volunteer Efforts

a. Overview

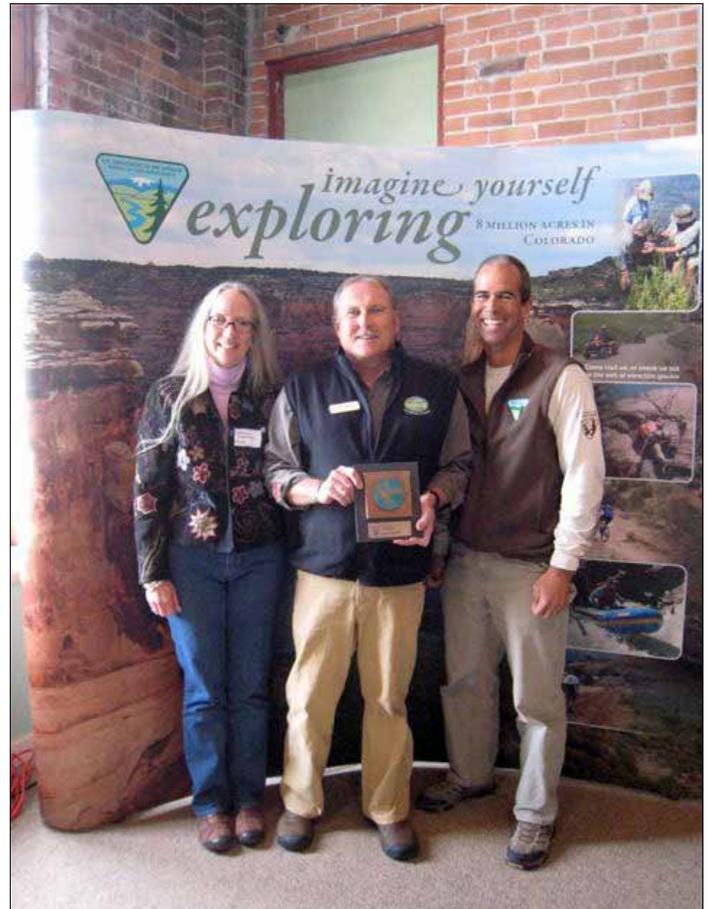
The NCA benefits from the attention of many dedicated ongoing partnerships. Partners and cooperators include:

- All Metals Welding and Fabrication
- Backcountry Horsemen
- Bicycle Colorado
- City of Fruita
- City of Grand Junction
- Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW)
- Colorado Natural Areas
- Colorado State Parks
- Colorado Environmental Coalition (CEC)
- Colorado Mountain Club (CMC)
- Colorado Mountain College
- Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO)
- Colorado Welcome Center
- Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association (COPMOBA)
- Delta Correctional Facility
- Dinosaur Diamond National Scenic Byway
- Friends of McInnis Canyons
- Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau
- Grand Valley Bike Patrol (GVBP)
- Mesa County
- Mesa State College
- Motorcycle Trail Riders Association

- Museum of Western Colorado
- Outdoor Stewardship Institute (OSI)
- Recreation Equipment, Inc. (REI)
- School District 51
- Tamarisk Coalition
- Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC)
- W.A.T.E.R Club
- Western Colorado Congress
- Western Colorado Conservation Corps of Partners
- Western Slope 4 Wheelers
- Western Slope ATV Association
- Wilderness Society
- Whitewater Canoe Company

Several of the significant partnership achievements this year include:

- The successful weed treatment partnership with Mesa County Weed and Pest entered its 11th year in 2010
- The Friends of McInnis Canyons celebrated five years of partnering with the BLM in 2010
- Colorado Department of Agriculture, the Museum of Western Colorado, Colorado Division of Wildlife, the Tamarisk Coalition, and Mesa State College are important partners whose accomplishments are described in the Science section of this report



Grand Junction Field Manager Catherine Robertson, COPMOBA President Chris Muhr, and Park Ranger Chris Pipkin.

b. Volunteer Accomplishments

In July 2010, the BLM and the One of the NCA's key volunteer supporters, the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association (COPMOBA), received the Director's Volunteer of the Year Award in 2010, in recognition of significant, ongoing service and contributions to the mountain bike trails system in the NCA and Grand Junction Field Office.

As a follow-up to the Youth Corps work, NCA staff worked side-by-side with 67 volunteers from Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) to cut and pile an additional eight acres of tamarisk over one long weekend, supported by Centennial Canoe. Fiscal Year 2010 marked the third anniversary of this successful ongoing National Public Lands Day partnership. A team of dedicated volunteers completed the equivalent of several months worth of work (as compared to the amount of time it would take had BLM had tackled the project alone with available staff) in one long weekend.

The Friends of McInnis Canyons completed important internal strategic planning in 2010. They developed business plans, committee plans, strategic vision and other organizational planning documents with the goal of competing successfully for the capacity building grants that would be necessary to hire one permanent staff person and provide more volunteer support for MCNCA. In addition, the Friends completed their annual significant contributions, which include two highway cleanups in Rabbit Valley, membership mixers, educational events and community outreach.

Major categories of volunteer work completed in the NCA are summarized in Table 1.

c. Partnership Accomplishments

Fiscal Year 2010 marked 11 years of partnering with Mesa County Weed and Pest to treat the Colorado River corridor holistically and cooperatively. In 2010, the BLM and Mesa County treated 49 acres of Russian Knapweed, 200 infestations of Perennial Pepperweed, and 11 acres of Tamarisk re-sprouts during a month of cooperative work on the Ruby Horsethief section of the NCA.

In September, the Friends of McInnis Canyons floated down the river corridor to help the BLM plant 35 additional native Cottonwood trees and spread 300 pounds of native seed. This project, which the Friends have termed their "Cottonwood Club," was in its second year in 2010.

Other significant partnership accomplishments are described in the Science and Environmental Education sections of this report.



Friends Board Members assist in a native species seeding project.



Friends of McInnis Canyons members plant native Fremont Cottonwood saplings.

**Table 1
National Monuments/National Conservation Areas
Fiscal Year 2010 Volunteer Hours and Accomplishments**

Project Name and Description	Labor Category	Accomplishments	Monetary and In-Kind Contributions	
			BLM	Partner
Friends of <u>Mclnnis</u> Canyons, Grand Valley Bike Patrol, Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association, Western Slope ATV Association, Colorado Mountain Club	Recreation	Maintaining recreation sites and trails, environmental education, cleanups	Staff time	\$25520
Volunteer Interns	Biological Resources	Monitoring	Staff time	\$8173
Friends of <u>Mclnnis</u> Canyons	Riparian/Watershed	Planting cottonwood trees, cutting tamarisk	Staff time	\$7756
Volunteer office workers, Friends of <u>Mclnnis</u> Canyons	Support Services	Office tasks	Staff time	\$5004
Miscellaneous	Other		Staff time	\$4003
NCA Maintenance	Hosted Worker Program (Mesa County and Delta County)		\$1,940 (supplies)	\$97682
Totals			\$1940	\$148138

IX. Science

Each of the following projects overlapped significantly with partnerships (described in section VIII of this report), youth (section VII), and natural resources (described in section I of this report) and are dependent on these efforts for success. In 2010, the BLM continued existing science partnerships and kicked off several new investigations with partners including the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Mesa State College, the Museum of Western Colorado and the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

The Colorado NLCS units benefit from a shared Science Ecologist position, currently occupied by Madeline (Nikki) Grant-Hoffman. Nikki adds science capacity for the NLCS units, working closely with the Field Office support ecologists, biologists, and vegetation specialists to provide additional science support for projects. This extra capacity assists specialists in setting projects up to be scientifically viable, taking advantage of interns and citizen science capacity, and designing and completing effective

monitoring programs. In 2010, NCA staff completed the first comprehensive Science Plan for MCNCA, which will guide science activities within the NCA, and created an MCNCA Science website (<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/mcnca/science.html>). The Science Plan is available online through this website. These efforts will be expanded to Gunnison Gorge in 2011.

Black Ridge Desert Bighorn Sheep monitoring: ongoing, partnership-based monitoring efforts between the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the BLM and the National Park Service at Colorado National Monument have produced valuable information about the Black Ridge herd. Lambing has been documented in early February through mid-May, a much longer time period and with a significantly earlier start than previously documented. No interchange between the Black Ridge desert sheep and the Dominguez-Escalante herd has been documented. Currently, about 200 sheep exist in the Black Ridge herd, which is much higher than previous estimates of 75 sheep.

Mesa State College continued a *Sclerocactus parviflorus* (Smallflower fishhook cactus) transplant study in Rabbit Valley. This project is in its final years, with a scientific paper in the works. The study analyzed different transplanting techniques and survival rates of the smallflower fishhook cactus, which is closely related the federally-listed *Sclerocactus glaucus* (Colorado hookless cactus). Study findings are intended to inform future recovery and restoration methods for the listed species.

Mesa State College, with support from the BLM's science ecologist, initiated germination trials for native plants in established, non-native stands in 2010. Through this project, several species of native plants are being tested in a greenhouse environment to determine if they will germinate in established cheatgrass stands and crested wheatgrass stands. Results will provide information on cheatgrass management before seedings and assist in determining whether natives are able to establish in areas with established crested wheatgrass.

In fall 2010, the Museum of Western Colorado, with financial grant support from the BLM, initiated an examination of the origins of the Mygatt-Moore Dinosaur Quarry deposit and its fauna (see the heritage resources section of this report for a discussion of the significance of the Mygatt-Moore quarry). Through this study, researchers will examine how these animals and their bones ended up in this one relatively thin concentration in western Colorado and how this origin compares with other large dinosaur sites in the Morrison Formation – a comparison that will shed light on Late Jurassic ecosystems as well as today's environment.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture, through its Palisade Insectary, continued to investigate biological control of tamarisk and Russian knapweed. The long-term impact of tamarisk leaf beetle, *Diorhabda carinulata*, on tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.) is being monitored at two field sites within the NCA. After beetle releases in 2005, 2006 and 2007, ongoing monitoring in 2010 continued to document significant die off of tamarisk plants and high mortality at levels higher than anticipated for western Colorado. This monitoring has led to further investigation of the combined effect of beetles with other sources of stress on tamarisk plants, including major fire (illustrating the effects of defoliation when plants are prevented from fully recovering) and the role that summer water stress may play in weakening plants in side canyons such as those prevalent in the NCA.

In 2010, the Insectary received approval to release a new biocontrol agent for use on Russian knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*), another major invasive weed within the NCA that grows in the same areas as tamarisk. This new biological

control agent, a gall-forming midge (*Jaapiella ivannikovi*) will be released on Russian knapweed at an initial study site within the NCA, with more releases as additional insects become available. The BLM and the Colorado Department of Agriculture will work together to provide for long-term monitoring at these sites to document and learn from the midge's effects on tamarisk.

X. Outreach, Environmental Education, and Interpretation Efforts

a. Overview

Outreach and environmental education are the primary focus for the NCA's three park rangers, especially during the busy seasons (spring and fall) and on the river during the summer.

The BLM completes most outreach, environmental education, and interpretation by working through our partners. In particular, the Friends of McInnis Canyons place a dedicated emphasis on supporting the NCA's outreach and environmental education efforts, as do our other partners.

b. Visitor Centers

There are no visitor centers within the NCA. The Fruita Welcome Center and the Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau provide outreach support for the NCA.

c. Environmental Education

In 2010, the BLM and the Friends of McInnis Canyons co-sponsored their first cooperative environmental education project that brought fifty 3rd graders from area elementary schools to Devil's Canyon in the NCA for a "Nature Scavenger Hunt." Through this unique place-based environmental education experience, many of these children were exposed to the NCA for the first time. Students visited stations featuring lessons about geology, wildlife, recreation and conservation ecology. At each station, students received a card with a picture of a feature in the NCA and a brief fact that corresponded to a lesson plan used in their classrooms. This project is designed for annual delivery; based on 2010's success, 280 kids have signed up for 2011.

In 2010, the Friends commissioned and completed an oral history documentary for the NCA. This is a unique, important project that the Friends developed to capture messages of stewardship, conservation and personal attachment to the NCA. The documentary is available from the Friends and is being provided at no charge to schools for use in Grand Valley classrooms (see the manager's corner section for more detail).

The BLM also partnered with Western Colorado Conservation Corps on a new, grant-funded project that matches younger children (11-14 year-olds) with environmental education learning opportunities and projects. Two “crews” of students received environmental education on the ground in the NCA before working together to develop programs that would deliver this education in area schools: each child who goes through this program is required to teach their fellow classmates about their work. This project also offers younger kids an early opportunity to learn about the Western Colorado Conservation Corps and BLM natural resources project work and careers before they are able to apply for the outdoor jobs offered to older students. Several of the projects developed by the Learn and Serve crews will be offered as community outreach opportunities by the Friends of McInnis Canyons, including a Trick-or-Treat Trail through the Devil’s Canyon area in October 2011.

BLM specialists partnered with the Colorado Division of Wildlife to develop an environmental education curriculum for older kids, for use by area high schools. Through this project, titled Grand Valley TEN (Teaching Education Naturally), GPS units and data guidelines are available for area high schools visiting the NCA to record biological data on Desert bighorn sheep.

The Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition’s “Stay the Trail” trailer made two stops in Rabbit Valley to educate motorized and mountain bike users about the importance of staying on designated trails.

d. Interpretation

In 2010, BLM park rangers maintained interpretive signs in the NCA, updating the entire collection of BLM signs to include new interpretive messages about place-based stewardship to develop a personal land ethic.

NCA staff continued to work with an area geologist to develop an interpretive loop for use by area high schools. This project is anticipated to be completed in fiscal year 2011 or 2012.

XI. Manager’s Corner Happy Birthday NCA!

On October 21, 2010, the NCA celebrated ten years as an NCA, continuing a long tradition of place-based community stewardship that predated the NCA designation for important landscapes such as Ruby and Horsethief Canyons. While several of the 10th Anniversary activities fell outside



Cottonwood turning in Pollock Canyon.

of the period covered by this report, the celebration began in 2010 and will be described in this year's report.

The first event commemorating the 10th Anniversary began in August with a community art show sponsored by the Friends of McInnis Canyons. Close to thirty entries, each inspired by the NCA, were submitted for consideration by a panel of local judges. Four of the winning entries were made into postcards which are available through the Friends group.

In September, the Friends unveiled "Stories from the Land: McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area," a documentary they commissioned to celebrate the NCA's history. The Friends offered this first viewing at Grand Junction's historic Avalon Theatre in celebration of the NCA's 10th Anniversary. Talented local filmmaker Mara Ferris labored over the project for a full year, talking to the NCA's variety of visitors and learning the personal stories that create each unique connection to this piece of ground, eventually building a story that will be used to demonstrate the connection that underlies the importance of this special NCA.

In November 2010, the formal celebration of the NCA's designation was held in Devil's Canyon. Nearly 75 people gathered together on a warm, sunny 80-degree day,

remembering what it felt like when the NCA was designated, reflecting on the successes of the past 10 years and envisioning the future for this special place.

At the 10-year mark, and especially in preparing this year's report, I was struck by the amount of overlap between the different topics. Youth, science, partnerships, environmental education and natural resources have become integrated, ongoing programs. It is difficult to determine which category they truly fit. Youth and partners made our environmental education projects possible and almost all of our natural resource and environmental education work relies heavily on volunteers and partnerships. Each of our land restoration projects has a strong science base and we're working together with partners to learn from these projects to increase our chances of success. In celebrating 10 years since the NCA's designation, the most apparent theme was the amazing amount of work that has been achieved by working cooperatively toward common interests around high-quality conservation and land stewardship. Quite simply, the amount of work and education completed to benefit current and future generations in this NCA during the 10 years since its creation would not be possible without our partners.

Katie Stevens, NCA Manager
McInnis Canyons NCA