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BLM Releases Draft Recreation Management Plan for Alpine Triangle

DURANGO, Colo. – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released a Draft Recreation Area Management Plan and related Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Alpine Triangle Special Management Area for public review and comment. The Draft Recreation Plan was derived from public scoping, interagency dialogue, and BLM input in the past four years. The goal is to update the area's current management plan, which dates back to 1986. Central to the RAMP is the recognition that current management in the Project Area is serving both visitors and the environment relatively well; no major shift in the current approach to managing recreation in the Project Area is proposed. New management direction is still needed to address issues (including increased motorized recreation and deteriorating historic sites) and anticipated issues and concerns. The Draft Plan does not contain any proposals for National Conservation Area designation.

The Draft Recreation Plan allows for sustainable motorized and non-motorized recreation in the area, while protecting the area's unique natural and heritage resources. The public will have the opportunity to learn about the Draft Plan at an open house at the Kendal Mountain Recreation Center in Silverton on Thursday, May 27, 2010. BLM staff will be on hand to offer information and answer questions from 5-7 p.m.

The Draft Recreation Plan pertains to BLM lands managed by the San Juan and Gunnison field offices, encompassing 186,252 acres in the project analysis area of the Alpine Triangle, a high-alpine area located between Silverton, Lake City and Ouray. The area is now receiving more than 600,000 visitor days annually. From 1982 to 2000, use of ATVs has followed a national trend by increasing more than 100 percent. Scenic driving and sightseeing have also increased, along with winter recreation, including backcountry skiing, snowmobiling, ice climbing, heli-skiing, and dog sledding.

The Draft Recreation Plan would help reduce crowding during the peak summer season and redistribute recreation use to shoulder and winter seasons. It would also reduce conflicts among our various uses, such as recreation, grazing and mining. These goals would be attained through construction of minor new visitor facilities and projects, and by further collaboration between BLM, communities, and other agencies.

The Draft Plan does not contain any proposals for National Conservation Area designation. It does not propose to limit or change any current activities or permits on BLM lands in the Alpine

Triangle. It also does not propose to withdrawal any BLM lands from mineral entry or propose limitations on snowmobile use outside of designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study areas. In addition, the Draft Plan does not compromise private rights on private lands.

Management changes proposed in the Draft Recreation Plan include:

- Expanding selected trailhead facilities and parking areas,
- Managing alpine backcountry with minimal signage and no additional development,
- Managing heavily used areas more intensively for camping and other forms of recreation,
- Restricting mountain bikes to designated roads and trails,
- Converting some existing informal trails to formally maintained system trails and setting up criteria to evaluate proposals for new routes,
- Improving fishing access to Lake San Cristobal,
- Managing geo-caching to reduce the potential to degrade natural or cultural resources, and banning geo-caches in current Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas,
- Banning permanent climbing anchors in Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas,
- Limiting the size of tour groups that are associated with larger special events,
- Authorizing only air tours that facilitate skiing,
- Banning competitive motorized race events,
- Authorizing permits for competitive non-motorized race events only during shoulder seasons,
- Banning camping and campfires adjacent to historic structures, and
- Adding Corkscrew Gulch to the Alpine Loop.

The BLM Alpine Triangle Draft Recreation Plan and EA will be open for public review and comment for the next 30 days. The EA is available for review and download at:

http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gfo/loop_plan.html.

A limited number of hard copies will also be available at the San Juan Public Lands Center, 15 Burnett Court in Durango, and Columbine Public Lands Office, 367 Pearl Street, Bayfield.

Written, hand-delivered, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted until Monday, June 21, 2010. Written comments may be mailed to: Jed Botsford, Columbine Field Office, POB 439, 367 S. Pearl Street, Bayfield, CO 81122, or hand-delivered to the same address. Electronic comments can be e-mailed to: jed_botsford@blm.gov.

For more information or to request a copy of the EA, contact Jed Botsford, Columbine Ranger District / Field Office Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner at (970) 884-1436.

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