

Major Themes:

- Discussion throughout: National Conservation Area, not a National Recreation Area
 - The council discussed the benefits and drawbacks of SRMA-style management vs. ERMA style management, and tradeoffs for each, at multiple meetings
- Cactus Park is of great interest to the involved public: Following discussion of Cactus Park, the public returned to this geographic area in almost all opportunities for public comment at subsequent meetings

Zone 1: The Hunting Grounds (4.6.2011 and 5.4.2011 meetings)

- Community Connection Trail: A community trail is important to local economies, and should be multi-use. May already exist except at Well's Gulch-action needed is largely just putting segments together and designating it
- Old Spanish Trail-protect sections of trail that are still visible but give people the experience of the Old Spanish Trail. Consider interpretive displays, but maybe along the road or along jeep roads
- This zone is one where it may be important to protect other uses (more than recreation).
 - Counterpoints:
 - There will be demand for use here, as the zone closest to a population center and most people have access;
 - Front Country recreation (here, Escalante Canyon, Cactus Park) but note that this level of development helps manage the impacts of recreation
 - Rec activity is growing, especially among the 55-70 year olds who are influencing demand.
- Would like to see an alternative that is based on "Change only where required" but is otherwise largely similar to current situation (changes justified by cultural, unsustainable routes, dead end routes that aren't necessary)
- Might not be a need for a "quiet" alternative: Quiet users who were present indicated that they don't need a separate area: want a few non-motorized trails but don't require motors to be excluded entirely from this zone.
- Most of the commitments to recreation in this area should be at the lower end of the spectrum. None of the public or advisory council members see a need for this area to be turned into an SRMA-like experience with enhanced recreation facilities
- This is a fragile area, so we should not be building things here that draw a huge number of folks.
- Expect tradeoffs for conservation—it's a National Conservation Area, not a National Recreation Area
- Suggestions for criteria to use during travel management
 - Trail and road sustainability: expect closures or reroutes for user-created routes with erosion occurring
 - Parallel trails: consider reducing number of parallel trails and spur routes
 - Dead end routes: lead to route proliferation and should be closed, although members of the public would like BLM to look at creating loops from dead end roads as well
 - Closing dead-end roads
 - High density of cultural sites
 - Prairie dogs

- Potential Management Actions/Allowable Uses: Consider requiring routes to be built and closed simultaneously on work days for new projects
 - Consider a restriction on bringing glass into this zone.
 - Consider designating dispersed campsites. Katie Steele notes the tremendous amount of litter and resource damage evident from camping in this zone. Tamera noted that this could be done initially, or using an adaptive management approach based on defined indicators.
 - If a Rim Trail is developed, it should be multiple use (both motorized and quiet users agree)
 - Any main trails or motorized routes should have cattleguards with gates beside them to reduce occurrence of people on or in vehicles leaving gates open.
- In desert country, restrictions should be aimed at all user groups, not just motorized—there will be places where people should stay on trail regardless of mode of travel

Comments and Reminders from the public to the Advisory Council

- Quiet Use (includes hiking, dog walking, photographers, artists, wildlife viewing, hunting, bird watching) group suggestions:
 - Would like to see some separation of motorized and non-motorized uses (clarified, through later public discussion, that motorized use does not necessarily need to be excluded from this area, but would like to see some separate trails)
 - As a group, quiet users will accept restrictions where they are necessary for resource protection (e.g., even hikers staying on trails where necessary)
 - Think forward: in 10-15 years, will visitation spoil enjoyment?
 - Consider adaptive management—triggers for when restrictions will increase. May need a permit system eventually to preserve sense of isolation.
 - While separating quiet and non-quiet uses geographically isn't necessary, there might be an opportunity to funnel quiet users to the south end of the zone as there already seems to be a "natural" geographic split with fewer roads and uses toward the south end.
 - Keep door open for future quiet use even as visitation increases.
- Wildlife
 - White tailed prairie dog colonies should be considered important here (e.g., consider not putting trails through)
 - Work with DOW on antelope population objectives
- Travel Management
 - Look for opportunities for loop trails (created from two spurs)
 - Consider White tailed prairie dogs/burrowing owls and not funneling use through colonies through travel management—also peregrine falcons.
 - In fragile areas, focus people on trails, regardless of mode of travel
 - Wells Gulch south—seems to be very little recreational use and very few roads
 - Remind that travel designations can change along segments, e.g. Rim Trail would not need one designation end-to-end if there were opportunities to divide use meaningfully
 - Parking lots focus use—consider several small parking lots vs. one big one
- Target Shooting: Remember that target shooting should be addressed—not discussed much by Council—prefer no target shooting or if allowed, only where very specifically designated for safety reasons and dispersed trash reasons
- Camping: Well spread out, dispersed designated campsites recommended.

Zone 2: The Gunnison River (5.18.2011 meeting)

- This zone appears to be one where intensive management of recreation is needed, and where it may be important to manage for outcomes and settings.
- Potential Management Actions or Allowable Uses:
 - Consider whether restrictions are needed on motorized boats (e.g., jet boats). Restrictions could be seasonal (e.g., just during summer) to avoid unnecessary restrictions on duck hunters, if that's the primary use. Seasonal conditions of the Gunnison may prevent jet boat use during summer/fall
 - Consider potential need to manage use at mouth of Dominguez in the future—management actions to disperse people away from this area, as well as potential restrictions on number
 - Any restrictions should be fair (consider all user groups, not just boaters or just hikers)
 - Consider options for increasing supply of camps (at Dominguez, as well as above and below). May also be opportunities in the future on bench above the river for hikers.
 - Look for opportunities to improve access (current access all within railroad right-of-way, not adequate for rafters).
 - May be options to extend the new trail up to the east-side canyon rim trail, plus dispersed campgrounds to take pressure off the mouth of Dominguez.
- Consider increased enforcement at launches
- Consider effect of potential increases in use
- Consider defining limits to casual use mining throughout the NCA, including Rattlesnake Gulch.

Comments and Reminders from the public to the Advisory Council

- Special care for hookless cactus populations and hawk habitat needed in this area
- Cottonwood restoration: plant both male and female cottonwoods.
- Firewood limitations should be considered in riparian areas.
- Consider regulating jet boats
- Gold Prospecting Association of America (GPAA) have historically used gold pans, four-inch dredges and sluice box with spray bar to wash and process gravel from gravel bars above the Gunnison River at Rattlesnake Gulch. In 2009, BLM determined this activity exceeded "casual use mining" because of damage to the endangered Colorado hookless cactus and public safety concerns. Current regulations prohibit gold extraction activity outside of the Gunnison River itself, which means the GPAA cannot currently use the benches above the river.
- Division of Wildlife sees activity along the Gunnison River during the fall waterfowl hunting season. Much of this activity does not involve the use of motorized boats. There may not be a need to regulate the use of motorized boats by waterfowl hunters because it is so infrequent.
- Consider improved signage for riverside campsites, even posting GPS coordinates of sites on the internet
- Consider permit systems before resources are damaged by over-use. Boating on the Gunnison River should have a permit system by next summer. Expanded foot traffic over bridge has damaged back country experience. Other campsites along river have problems and are less desirable. Outfitters and private groups race to snag scarce campsites at mouth of Dominguez Canyon. This area being "loved to death".

Other discussion topics

- Council members continued to express the perspective that while they're focusing on recreation as a way of organizing discussions, this is a National Conservation Area, not a National Recreation Area. Biological and cultural management is important and may need to be revisited as the Council learns more.
- More discussion is needed regarding gold prospecting in the NCA. Should the BLM consider re-opening the benches above Rattlesnake Gulch to gold prospecting and if so, under what limitations? Should the Council make a recommendation regarding casual use mining that applies throughout the NCA?

Special Topic: Wild and Scenic Rivers (6.1.2011 and 6.15.2011 notes)

- Generally, several Council members expressed the desire to protect the ORVs of the river segments, by using legislative, administrative and regulatory tools other than the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, to prevent additional layers of bureaucracy
- Through majority vote (following discussion), the Council recommended all four D-E NCA river/stream segments (Gunnison River Segment 3, Escalante Creek Segment 1, Rose Creek and Cottonwood Creek) be found not suitable for protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
 - Neuhof recommended an approach of suitability without a recommendation to Congress should be considered, and that at least a few segments should be suitable.
 - Harris also recommended suitability for Cottonwood Creek but was not present for the vote.

Comments and Reminders from the public to the Advisory Council:

- Preserve habitat for birds when recommending policies regarding gold panning in the NCA.
- Request/encouragement to consider a range of options for the W&SR issue, and to have some give and take during discussions.
- Without suitability, Dry Fork of the Escalante Creek has a rare plant community that still needs protection, and a full range of alternatives should include one alternative that makes all stream segments suitable.
- Recommend some level of protection for all the Outstandingly Remarkable Values, if suitability is not recommended.

Zone 3: Cactus Park potential recommendations (7.6.2011 and 7.20.2011)

- BLM should consider the costs of law enforcement in determining whether SRMA-style management is appropriate for Cactus Park
- Enhance biodiversity when re-seeding areas and avoid mono-cultures – perhaps working through the Uncompahgre Plateau project
 - But consider the value of crested wheatgrass for livestock forage and taking pressure off of native species in early spring.
- Ninemile Hill area is an important desert bighorn lambing area and may need seasonal closures.
- Consider management of the Dominguez North area of Zone 3 for wilderness values and the Gibbler Mountain area be used for quiet use trail opportunities.
- Travel Management criteria:

- Consider quality of future trails: Mountain bikes (and motorized recreation) will stay on single-track trail, especially in cactus country, as long as the experience is fun and the road goes somewhere interesting
- Close dead-end trails in areas with low road density.
- Eliminate what doesn't make sense, but otherwise not make changes in the NCA – unless it is to protect cultural sites or private property. Avoid adding routes in areas that currently have low road density for the sake of wildlife.
- Most important to protect the NCA's cultural resources and biological sustainability.
- In areas of Zone 3 with high road density, consider a range of alternatives from ERMA to SRMA-style management. In areas with low road density, consider a range from No RMA to ERMA. The size of each the SRMA-like area could also vary by alternative.

Comments and Reminders from the public to the Advisory Council:

- Request to the Council to recommend the Zone 3 region (Cactus Park) as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and manage it for motorized and multiple use recreation.
- In considering the travel system, try to imagine a transportation system built from scratch, so that so the trail system meets public needs, as opposed to focusing on what's there now.
- Quiet users, Great Old Broads, Backcountry Horsemanship met and prepared recommendations to treat Cactus Park as a SRMA with two zones – the northern zone to be used for quiet use, the southern to have an emphasis on motorized recreation. The dividing line would be between Ninemile Hill and Gibbler Mountain. The detailed recommendation should be ready in September.
- Acknowledge the wilderness characteristics found in Dominguez North. Consider the old North Dominguez wilderness plan within the range of alternatives.
- In determining future management, consider the current number one use in this area – motorized recreation
- Old Highway (Tabeguache Trail) provides opportunities for long-distance travel, while the old Whitewater dump would make an ideal location for trials competition (challenging rides where points are deducted when feet touch the ground).
- Request to the Council to consider recommending one or two quiet-use trails in Cactus Park, noting that no road or trail in Zone 3 is designated "quiet use." He said the group recognizes the predominance of motorized recreation in Cactus Park, and doesn't want to change that
- Before any new routes are opened in north Cactus Park, the BLM should first close old, unsustainable routes.
- Digging up plants should not be permitted in an NCA.
- Put a lot of thought into how to manage the desert bighorn population.
- Always err on side of protecting resources.
- Horse riders would like access to Triangle Mesa in the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness. A horse trailer parking lot near the wilderness border would help.
- Cactus Park is a microcosm of the DENCA, with extensive opportunities for motorized recreation, hiking, mountain biking, quiet and wilderness recreation. BLM is required during a planning process, to maintain an inventory of lands with wilderness characteristics, then decide whether to protect those characteristics, within alternative development and impact analysis. Citizen Proposals such as Dominguez North should be considered.
- Do cultural surveys on all existing trails.
- Create small parking spots along Highway 141, to allow hikers with low clearance vehicles to easily get to Cactus Park.

- Acknowledge that motorized recreation has been pushed into Cactus Park from other areas. Leave existing trails alone, and if a user-created trail is judged non-sustainable, create an alternative before closing the bad trail. Trails are there for a reason; if they are closed, ATV riders will go somewhere else
- Concerned about motorcycle trials in the NCA and effects on vegetation, any use of lights at night (effects on wildlife), and group size (specific suggestion for a limit of 12). Counterpoint: Smaller venue for trials could be adequate: 30 motorcycles, with no spectators.
- Horses: Consider a limit of “25 heartbeats” meaning horses, pack animals and people.
- Give wildlife emphasis where there is low trail density, such as the Gunnison Bluffs, Gibbler Peak and Gibbler Gulch. Create Special Wildlife Management Areas (SWMAs) in these parts of Zone 3.
- North side of Cactus Park should not have roads improved for the passage of passenger cars, so as to reduce the number of visitors and thus impact to the area.
- Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs) might have less negative impact on the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area than Special Resource Management Areas (SRMAs).

Zone 4: Dominguez Canyon Wilderness (8.17.2011 and 9.7.2011)

- Consider some level of seasonal restrictions on dogs in Dominguez Canyon (lambing season)(offered during a previous meeting)
- Keep motorized routes open to the wilderness boundary so that people can access the wilderness area.
- Council requested more information on desert bighorns.
- Great potential for site stewardship but some cultural sites are better off without the public knowing about them.

Comments and Reminders from the public to the Advisory Council:

- Recognize the need for a quiet use trail in every zone, because more quiet users will be coming to the D-E NCA. Limiting them all to the wilderness will affect the wilderness resource.
- Create more trails in the lands with wilderness characteristics in order to protect resources.
- Concern: health and size of the wilderness bighorn herd. Wilderness focus groups (Grand Junction specifically) supported whatever was needed to help the bighorn. Hikers with dogs increase stress among bighorn, because the dogs are viewed as predator threats.
- Recognize that the legislation allows for construction of new wilderness water developments. BLM is authorized to approve these developments through the legislation.

Zone 5: Escalante Canyon (absence of quorum)(8.3.2011 meeting)

- Both the City of Delta and Delta County see D-E NCA as an opportunity for bringing more tourism and recreation to Delta. However, city and county perceptions about tourism and recreation may not be the same.
 - Delta County values tourism, but would want to be cognizant of effects to livestock grazing.
 - Additional conversations are necessary to determine the extent of overlap between Delta County and City of Delta in objectives/vision for the area including the NCA.
- Whatever plan emerges, BLM will need more financial help to address trail maintenance.

- Area identified as a potential mountain bike area is used infrequently for grazing and so may not lead to recreation/grazing conflicts.
- If recreation (and/or heritage tourism) is going to be pushed in Escalante Canyon, a greater investment will be needed for road safety and maintenance-from the County or BLM. If more money is spent on better roads, more tourists will come and then more money will need to be spent on road and safety infrastructure.
- If heritage tourism would change the character of Escalante Canyon, it may not be worth the tradeoff.
- Key roads should be kept open in Zone 5 (Escalante Canyon, Sawmill and Dry Mesas, and the ridges southwest of Dominguez Canyon Wilderness).
- Roads in Zone 5 are important for Delta residents and should be left open to motor vehicles, as they provide winter riding opportunities in some years.
- If the cottonwood gallery along Cottonwood Creek is biologically important, it should be considered.

Comments and Reminders from the public to the Advisory Council:

- Current county road system is not adequate for tourism.
- Doing nothing means trouble. Recreation is here and BLM needs to plan for future. More people are coming no matter what we do. Visitation growth is already happening. Parking at McCarty Trail used to be one car, now it can be as high as nine.
- General interest in partnering for trail maintenance and site stewardship.
- Heritage and Conservation tourism will be important; remember the quiet user.
- Interest in horse parking at McCarty trail.
- Quiet use trail desired in Escalante Canyon from the McCarty Trail to a rim site above the Gunnison River. The McCarty trailhead needs more parking.

Special Topic: Bighorn Sheep (9.7.2011 meeting)

- The Council would like to find out how the permittees use these allotments. Are they vital, incidental? Which grazing "best practices" are they already using? Would they be interested in grazing allotment trades that would move operations away from bighorn.
- Should be followup discussions about the issue.
- Consider whether the Gunnison River is enough of a barrier.
- In determining acceptable management for bighorns, consider the restrictions that were placed on the public by wilderness designation.

Other (potential recommendations offered by the Council that were not zone-specific)

- Well-designed trails can protect resources.
- The D-E NCA management plan should consider the use of "adaptive management" and establish "triggers" for certain activities, which will produce defined actions when certain growth thresholds are crossed (e.g., recreational use).