

CANYON CLARION

DOMINGUEZ-ESCALANTE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA & DOMINGUEZ CANYON WILDERNESS PLANNING NEWSLETTER

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www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca/denca_rmp.html

What's new with the RMP? An update on the planning process



BLM staff and Advisory Council members meet with the public at an open house in Delta, Colorado, in June 2013

Resource management plans are comprehensive land use plans, required by law, that direct how federal agencies manage the lands and resources they are responsible for. These plans account for all the activities that occur on public lands, including livestock grazing, recreation, education, scientific research and travel, as well as actions associated with the management of fires, wildlife, special status species, and special designations.

The BLM released a draft RMP for the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area in May 2013, initiating a public review and comment period, and subsequently held two open houses to discuss the draft RMP with the public. In addition, the Advisory Council met several times June through August to

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discuss specific topics related to the draft RMP. These meetings were also open to the public.

Public comment period closed

The public review and comment period ended on September 23, 2013. The purpose of the comment period for the draft RMP was to provide an opportunity for

the public to learn more about the plan, discuss it with BLM staff or Advisory Council members, and submit their comments about the plan to the BLM. Initially, the comment period for the draft RMP was from the date of its release (May 17) until August 22. However, at the request of

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the Delta and Mesa County Commissioners and others, the BLM extended the deadline for another 30 days, until September 23, 2013, to give the public enough time to respond to the draft plan.

Now that the comment period has closed, the BLM will thoroughly analyze the comments and use them to help decide which aspects of the plan to change.

Virtual re-creation of draft RMP open houses is now online

In the third week of June, the BLM held two open houses in Mesa and Delta Counties to allow the public to have one-on-one conversations with BLM subject-area experts and to present the ideas in the draft RMP in a more visual and dynamic way---using large scale maps

and videos---than is possible through the online, CD or print versions of the draft plan. Anyone who missed the open houses can visit a virtual recreation of them on the Dominguez-Escalante RMP website: http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca/denca_rmp/draft_rmp_open_houses.html.

Subject-specific Advisory Council meetings held

Created by the same act that designated the Dominguez-Escalante NCA (the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009), the Advisory Council is a group of 10 people from the local area who represent a broad spectrum of interests and uses in the NCA, from grazing and water rights to motorized use and rare or protected plants and wildlife. Advisory Council meetings are open to the public

and include time for attendees to make comments directly to Advisory Council members.

The Advisory Council met three times in June and July and twice in August to discuss specific topics covered in the Dominguez-Escalante draft RMP and to compare the BLM's Preferred Alternative (Alternative E) as described in the draft plan to the recommendations the Advisory Council made to the BLM prior to the release of the draft RMP.

The Advisory Council meetings held June through August covered 14 separate topics (see box below). Meeting minutes, schedule, updates, and other information can be found on the Advisory Council website: http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca/denca_rmp/DENCA_Resource_Advisory_Council.html.

Topics covered at the Advisory Council meetings, June-August 2013

The Dominguez-Escalante NCA Advisory Council met five times June through August 2013 to discuss specific topics in relation to the alternatives presented in the Dominguez-Escalante draft RMP. These meetings were open to the public.

Missed the meetings? Find meeting minutes, schedule, updates and other information on the Advisory Council website: http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca/denca_rmp/DENCA_Resource_Advisory_Council.html.

Date	Location	Topics
June 26	Bill Heddles Recreation Center, Delta, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilderness • Lands with Wilderness Characteristics • Areas of Critical Environmental Concern • Wild and Scenic Rivers • Wilderness Study Areas
July 17	John McConnell Math and Science Center, Grand Junction, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Resources • National Trails • Scenic Resources • Land Tenure and Land Use Authorizations • Social and Economic Conditions
July 31	Delta County Courthouse, Delta, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological Systems • Grazing
August 19	Mesa County Courthouse Annex, Grand Junction, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational Use • Transportation and Travel Management
August 21	Bill Heddles Recreation Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational Use • Transportation and Travel Management

Meet the new NCA manager

As those of you who read the last issue of the Canyon Clarion know, Katie Stevens, interim manager of the Dominguez-Escalante NCA for three years, is now the Grand Junction Field Manager. In July, the BLM announced that **Collin Ewing** will be the new Dominguez-Escalante NCA Interim Manager.

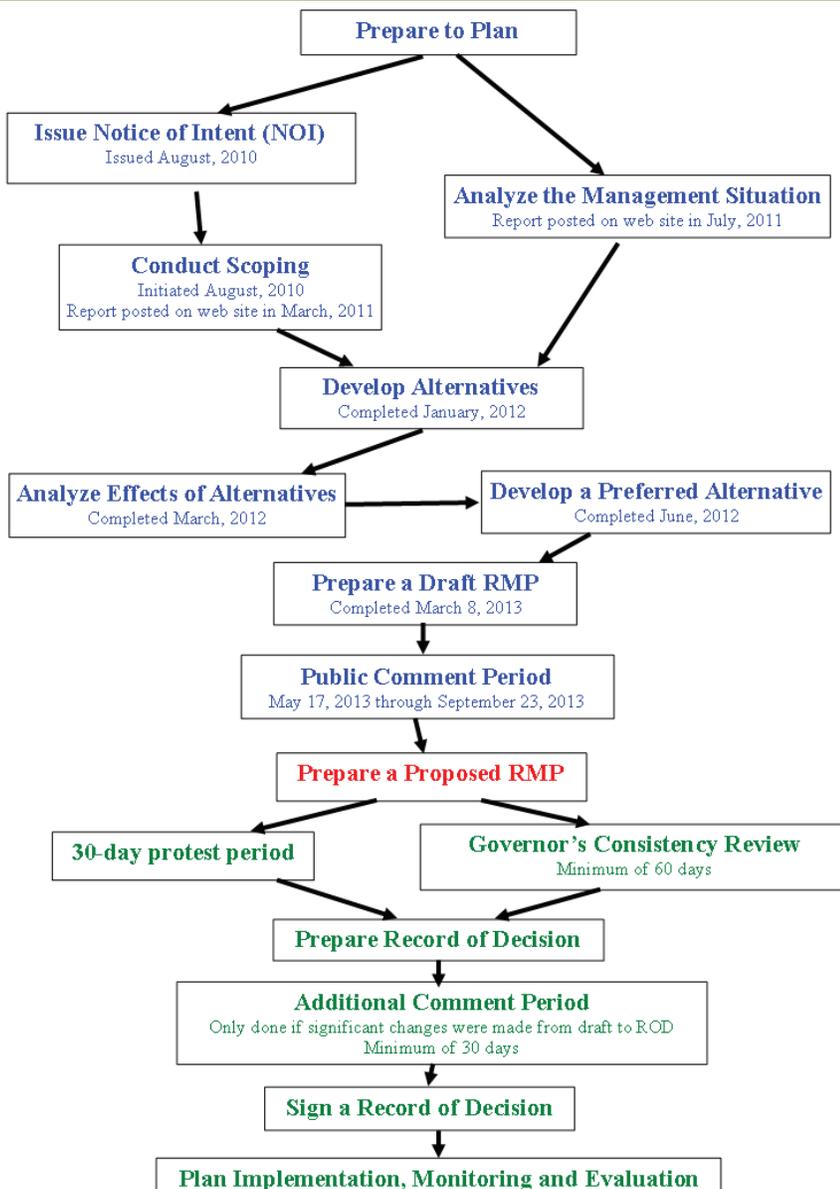
Collin was born in Colorado and earned a bachelor's degree in rangeland ecology from Colorado State University. He has worked as a rangeland management specialist and has experience with managing threatened and endangered species and archaeological resources.

In his spare time, Collin likes to fish, hunt, and hike on public lands, and he floats the rivers when he can. He lives in Delta County, Colorado, with his wife Amanda, daughters Taylor and Valerie, and some livestock.



Collin, Taylor and Valerie

FLOW CHART OF THE PLANNING PROCESS



The diagram at left depicts the different stages of development for the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan. The blue boxes represent completed steps, the red box represents the current step, and the green boxes represent future steps (courtesy of Ben Blom, BLM Grand Junction Field Office).

Want more information?

Visit the NCA website:
<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca.html>

Dominguez-Escalante NCA Staff

NCA Manager: Collin Ewing

Planning & Environmental Coordinator: Samantha Staley

Outdoor Recreation Planner: Andy Windsor

Writer-Editor: Marie Lawrence

The NCA also receives staffing support from the Grand Junction Field Office.

Volunteer site stewards help monitor cultural resources in the NCA

The successful management of public lands often depends on the dedicated efforts of trained and skilled volunteers. An outstanding example of this is the Grand Junction Field Office's cultural resources volunteer site steward program.



Volunteers and BLM archaeological staff look for and mark artifacts

Site steward volunteers help the BLM's staff archaeologists take care of the vast array of cultural resources in the field office, including those within the Dominguez-Escalante NCA.

The BLM provides new volunteer site stewards with formal classroom and field training, after which, site stewards may be responsible for recording, surveying, or monitoring cultural sites, and educating the public about cultural resources. These volunteers enjoy their work because they know it is valuable and appreciated; in addition, the possibility of discovering a new artifact or site is always exciting.

Last year, as a training exercise, volunteers in the site steward program conducted a survey in the Cactus Park area of the NCA, assisting BLM

archaeological staff to collect field data. They found numerous archaeological sites and isolated finds, which indicate repeated prehistoric and historic use



A prehistoric grinding stone

of the area. Volunteers conducted the survey during the spring and fall seasons, taking detailed notes and photographs. The information they accumulated

will be compiled into a report BLM archaeologists and volunteers can refer to for baseline information when monitoring these areas in the future.

As of August 2013, site stewards monitored four sites in the Lower Big Dominguez and Deer Creek areas of the Dominguez-Escalante NCA. Overall, 14 historic and prehistoric sites in the NCA are under the stewardship of these dedicated volunteers.

For further information about the Grand Junction Field Office's cultural resources volunteer site steward program, visit the Volunteer Outdoors website operated by Volunteers for Outdoors Colorado at <http://www.volunteeroutdoors.net/>, or call the Grand Junction Field Office at (970) 244-3000.

An interview with Ben Blom



Ben was the planning and environmental coordinator for the Dominguez-Escalante NCA from 2010 to 2013.

He was a familiar face at public meetings. A native of Boston, Massachusetts, Ben attended Colgate University then spent several years doing field work in New Mexico and California before earning a master's degree in forestry from Yale University.

While at Yale, Ben won a fellowship in the Presidential Management Fellows Program, through which he got the planning coordinator position for the Dominguez-Escalante NCA.

In April 2013, Ben left Colorado to become the Manager of the BLM's Headwaters Forest Reserve in Arcata, California. The *Canyon Clarion* interviewed him just before he left Colorado.

CC: What made you decide to work for the BLM?

BB: I thought it sounded like a great opportunity to shape a new national conservation area and learn about the people out here and the resources in western Colorado.

CC: Was there anything in particular that drew you to the West?

BB: Being from Boston where we don't have public lands like they do out here, I definitely appreciate the wide open spaces and the recreation opportunities and the weather. I love hiking and mountain biking and snowboarding and

exploring, and those are all great things to do out here.

CC: Can you describe the job of planning team lead for Dominguez? What were your major responsibilities?

BB: Well, I was definitely kind of thrown into the fire with that position. There's a lot of coordination involved in it...trying to build some consensus on the way that this NCA should be managed into the future, and it's definitely a challenge, but it's something that I really enjoyed: trying to work with different people with different viewpoints on how things should be managed and trying to find some sort of common ground to move forward on.

CC: How was the RMP created?

BB: It kind of evolved over time, so it went through different phases where we were working as an interdisciplinary team within the BLM, and I was getting input from our other cooperating agencies and the Advisory Council and comments from the public. All that shaped what went into the plan. The text itself was written by various different people within the BLM and then either edited or reworked by me and the writer-editor that worked with us.

CC: What were your most formidable challenges as planning coordinator?

BB: I found the wide range of opinions here to be a challenge. People here have all sorts of opinions about how public lands should be managed. They are passionate about their interests, which can be very divergent.

CC: What did you like best about working for Dominguez?

BB: I liked the idea that I would be helping to shape management strategies for the next 20 years.

CC: What is your favorite kind of recreational activity in the NCA?

BB: I like to go hiking and wandering about in the NCA...the area provides excellent opportunities for exploration and solitude.

CC: Are there any areas that you like the best?

BB: I like Big and Little Dominguez and certain areas of Cactus Park, but I also like some of the less visited areas like Sowbelly Ridge and Cottonwood Canyon.

CC: What do you consider to be the most important issues facing Dominguez?

BB: I think the most important thing is to balance national visitation with preserving the landscape undisturbed. Dominguez gets 100,000 visitors yearly, and this is going to go up. It's a challenge to balance increased use with preserving opportunities for solitude and other NCA values and resources.

CC: Is there anything else you would like to add?

BB: I think it's important to note that compared to Gunnison Gorge and McInnis, there is less intensive recreational use in Dominguez. Gunnison Gorge and McInnis were already well-established recreation areas before their management plans were developed, and that led to some challenges that Dominguez is in a good position to avoid.

