Bureau of Land Management 2815 H Road • Grand Junction, Colorado 81506
BLM GRAND JUNCTION NEWS

Grand Junction Draft Travel Management Plan FAQs
Updated April 5, 2013

Q. Why are you doing this? What's wrong with the current route system?
A. The BLM's basic goal is to designate a route system that provides for quality recreation opportunities, allows grazing permittees and energy companies to access their facilities, and protects sensitive resources.
Routes within the GJFO were constructed to create access to public land improvements, timber and vegetation management projects, gas and mineral development, range management, etc. Of these routes, many were not necessarily intended to be left behind or open for recreational use but are now being used for mechanized and motorized recreation activities. Some routes were created or pioneered by visitors. Open travel designations that permit cross-country mechanized and motorized use, high levels of use, and improvements in mechanized and motorized vehicle technology have allowed public land users to gain access to and through more terrain. These routes are not typically maintained by the BLM; rather, it is the repeated passage of vehicles that maintains these routes. Not designed but created, these routes are often rutted and eroded. Many routes do not contain trails built with consideration for sustainability, resource concerns or conditions, or recreation experiences. Most routes either follow historic routes, such as those for grazing, mining, or administrative access, or they were user created. In any of these cases, the trails do not always provide desirable recreation experiences and have unmitigated impacts to natural or cultural resources.
This plan is intended to designate a route system that provides for a diversity of high quality recreational experiences. BLM is directed to complete travel management planning by Executive Orders, Federal Regulations, and BLM policy.

Q. Are you really closing 65 percent of the roads currently open in the planning area?
A. No, the preferred alternative proposes to close less than one quarter of the routes in the planning area.

The BLM currently has 4 Draft management plan alternatives available for public comment. One alternative is labeled "Preferred", but the BLM can pick and choose from all 4 alternatives when developing the Proposed Plan after this comment period.

Based on public interest, we have developed a new Route Designation Fact Sheet that is available on our website (http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo/rmp/rmp/schedule.html). This includes a breakdown of the route designations down by total mileage per designation for each alternative.

Q. What types of roads are you closing?
A. Routes proposed for closure are causing impacts to sensitive resources such as soil, wildlife, water quality, native vegetation, air quality, and heritage resources. They are typically unimproved dirt roads that were created by the passage of vehicles. Most are not considered high quality recreation

routes. Many are in places where the amount of surface disturbance associated with a high density of routes is causing erosion.

Q. Why would you close roads when there is more demand than ever for outdoor recreation?
A. All closures are specifically proposed to minimize impacts to one or more of the following sensitive resources: soil, wildlife, water quality, native vegetation, air quality, heritage resources, and other resources. BLM proposes to designate routes that offer quality recreation experiences that the quality of the route system is more important to recreationists than the sheer mileage of routes. Over time, the objective is to ensure both high quality and adequate quantity of routes, but the first step is to abandon unsustainable or duplicative routes.

Q. What about the economic impacts of these closures?
A. BLM understands that outdoor recreation is a huge economic driver for the western slope. Economists from Colorado Mesa University prepared a Draft Economic Impact Analysis for BLM. This information can be found on our website in Chapter 4 of the Draft RMP. We have been getting a lot of feedback about the analysis, and will work with CMU to conduct more analysis.

Q. Why doesn't the travel plan identify new routes that may be needed?
A. The Draft Travel Management Plan does allow for the approval and construction of new routes in the future. There are no specific new route proposals being proposed under this plan because. After establishing the designations for around 4,000 miles of existing routes, we can then focus our effort on identifying new routes in the areas they are needed most.

Q. Why did BLM move the North Desert open OHV area from its current location (Alternative A) to the Alternative B and D locations?
A. The Alternative B and D Grand Valley Open Area would be established northwest of 27 ¼ road, in an area more frequently used by off road enthusiasts than the current open area (northeast of the airport). They are intended to fit BLM policy because they are more easily defined and marked on the ground, and they offer good portals for staging and entry. Please see Section 2.6.1 of Appendix M Draft Travel Management Plan (Volume III page M-8) for more information.

Q. What was the rationale for making the open area substantially smaller than it currently is?
A. Intensive cross country OHV travel can have significant impacts to sensitive resources such as soil, wildlife, water quality, native vegetation, air quality, and heritage resources. Therefore BLM is considering managing 12,500 acres as OHV Open areas in Alternative A, 5,400 acres in Alternative B, zero acres in Alternative C, and 10,200 acres in Alternative D.

Q. What is the definition of the term "Administrative Use/permitted use only"?
A. Administrative routes are those that are limited to authorized users (typically motorized access). These are existing routes that lead to developments that have an administrative purpose, where the BLM or a permitted user must have access for regular maintenance or operation. These authorized developments could include such items as power lines, cabins, weather stations, communication sites, spring developments, corrals, or water troughs.

Q. On roads designated "Administrative Use/permitted use only" will travel by foot or horseback still be allowed?

A. In general, administrative route designations would apply only to motorized and mechanized travel. Foot and horse travel would be allowed unless the area is closed to foot or horse travel or unless specified otherwise for a particular route.

Q. If a private land owner has a private motorized route that connects to an "administrative use" route, will the private land owner be able to drive motorized vehicles on the road?
A. Only if that land owner has special permission granted by the BLM. Examples could include a right-of-way, range permit or special recreation permit, and this would be decided on a case by case basis when permitting those activities.

Q. If a BLM permitted outfitter has an outfitter/guide permit in an area; will the outfitter be able to drive motorized vehicles on the "Administrative Use" routes in his permitted area?
A. This is typically not allowed but would be determined on a case by case basis and specifically addressed in the permit.

Q. Please define "Mechanized Travel" or refer to the page in the RMP that does.
A. Volume 2, pg.-Glossary-17 - Mechanical Transport. Any vehicle, device, or contrivance for moving people or material in or over land, water, snow, or air that has moving parts.

Q. How did you decide what roads to close? Who decided to close all of these roads?
A. BLM has not <u>decided</u> to close any roads yet. The proposed route designations were developed by a team of BLM employees representing sensitive resources as well as recreation, grazing, and energy specialists.
BLM considered the public comments received in during the comment periods in 2008-2009 for each route during this process. The team sat down and looked at each route during 6 weeks of meetings. Cooperating agencies such as Mesa County and Colorado Parks and Wildlife participated as well.
The Decision will come in late 2014 after considering public input and releasing a Proposed RMP for a public protest period.

Q. Have BLM staff even been to some of these routes?
A. BLM staff have been on the ground at least once on all of these routes and used a combination of on the ground knowledge and resource data to develop the proposed route system. Past scoping periods and the current public comment period also provide valuable input regarding the route system.

Q. How are you going to enforce all of these rules with no funding?
A. BLM expects to foster partnerships with businesses and the local community to encourage safe and responsible use of public lands. Volunteer groups may assist with monitoring, public education, and special events. When necessary BLM rangers will conduct high profile, routine patrols, concentrating on high use times, focusing on "hot spots".

Q. Why don't you fund these projects with the annual fees for ATV?
A. BLM does apply for and receive state OHV grants. We have used these funds to help plan for new trails, sign and maintain trails, as well as enforce existing rules.

Q. Can we get out on the ground with BLM staff to look at these routes?
A. The BLM plans to host several field trips to areas of particular interest to the public. There will also likely be some opportunities for less formal field site visits.

Q. In an area like the North Desert with a high density of existing routes, how are we supposed to identify specific routes on a map or pick which ones are the best routes?
A. In those areas it was difficult to delineate a precise designated route system, so the routes shown on the maps for each alternative are representative of the proposed route density. More on-the-ground work with interested partners will be needed to identify the route system that makes the most sense.

Q. Will cross country motorized travel be allowed for big game retrieval?
A. Alternative A allows cross country travel for game retrieval. Alternatives B, C, and D would only allow game carts for game retrieval off of designated routes outside open OHV areas.

Q. Is dispersed camping still allowed?
A. Dispersed camping would be allowed in the planning area. Existing spur routes that lead to campsites were designated and identified. No cross-country travel associated with dispersed camping is allowed outside the open areas, and dispersed camping was largely addressed in most zones. During the implementation of approved designations, some additional spur routes to potential campsites may be designated as open to accommodate use consistent with resource concerns and desired future outcomes of the recreation program.