Chapter 1

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The United States (US) Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared this proposed resource management plan (RMP) revision and final environmental impact statement (EIS). The purposes of this document are:

- To provide direction for managing public lands under the jurisdiction of the BLM Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO)
- To analyze the environmental effects that could result from implementing the alternatives addressed in the RMP

The affected lands are managed under the 1987 Grand Junction RMP (BLM 1987) and associated plan amendments.

The land use planning process is the key tool the BLM uses to manage resources and to designate uses on its lands, in coordination with tribal, other federal, state, and local government, land users, and interested members of the public. Generally, an RMP does not result in a wholesale change of management direction; accordingly, this RMP incorporates new information and regulatory guidance that has been adopted since the previous plan (BLM 1987) and provides management direction where it may be lacking or where it requires clarification to resolve land use issues or conflicts. Current management direction that has proven effective and requires no change has been carried forward into this RMP and is considered throughout the analysis process.

This RMP is being prepared using BLM planning regulations and guidance issued under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 US Code [USC] 1701 et seq.) and the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1 (BLM 2005a). An EIS is incorporated into this document to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

(NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), BLM NEPA regulations (43 CFR Part 46), and requirements of the BLM's NEPA Handbook, H-1790-1 (BLM 2008a). Because this RMP/EIS contains a broad range of information, **Diagram 1-1**, Document Organization, provides an outline of the RMP/EIS and describes the information found within each section. All maps for the RMP/EIS are provided in **Appendix A**, Figures. The management alternatives are presented in **Chapter 2**, Alternatives, and are supported by the stipulations contained in **Appendix B**, Stipulations Applicable to Fluid Mineral Leasing and Other Surface-disturbing Activities.

1.2 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The purpose of this RMP revision is to ensure that public lands are managed in accordance with the intent of Congress, as stated in the FLPMA, under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. This will be accomplished by establishing desired goals, objectives, allowable uses, and management actions needed to achieve the desired conditions for resources and resource uses. The RMP incorporates new data, addresses land use issues and conflicts, specifies where and under what circumstances particular activities would be allowed on BLM-administered lands, and incorporates the mandate of multiple uses in accordance with the FLPMA. The RMP does not describe how particular programs or projects would be implemented or prioritized; rather, those decisions are deferred to more detailed implementation-level planning.

The FLPMA requires that the BLM "develop, maintain, and, when appropriate, revise land use plans" (43 USC 1712 [a]). The BLM-administered lands within the GJFO planning area are currently managed in accordance with the decisions in the 1987 Grand Junction RMP (BLM 1987). The BLM has completed approximately 50 maintenance actions and 12 RMP amendments since the 1987 Record of Decision (ROD) was signed. There is a need to revise the GJFO RMP due to new issues that have arisen since the original plan was prepared. Major issues contributing to the RMP revision include the following (additional planning issues identified for this plan are outlined in Section 1.6.1:

- Management of BLM-administered land to support numerous wildlife species and their habitats
- Management of BLM-administered lands containing both wilderness character and oil and gas potential, including areas not designated as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)
- Management of energy and mineral resources, including identifying areas and conditions in which mineral development can occur
- Management of increased visitation by way of off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and nonmotorized uses (e.g., mountain biking and hiking) that have led to increased concerns regarding resource protection and conflicting uses

Diagram 1-1
Document Organization

Volume I

Executive Summary

Provides a concise overview of the RMP/EIS

Chapter 1 Introduction

Summarizes the proposed action, purpose and need, and decisions to be made in the RMP/EIS

Chapter 2 Alternatives

Describes and compares the proposed management alternatives

Chapter 3 Affected Environment (part 1 of 2)

Presents the existing biological, physical and socioeconomic resources that could be affected by implementing the management alternatives.

Volume II

Chapter 3 Affected Environment (part 2 of 2)

Chapter 4 Environmental Consequences

Evaluates the impacts of the alternatives on the human and natural environment in terms of environmental, social and economic consequences projected to occur from implementing the alternatives.

Chapter 5 Consultation and Coordination

Describes the scoping and public comment process, agencies consulted, and government-to-government consultation, and lists the preparers of the RMP/EIS.

Volume III

Chapter 6 Comments Received on Grand Junction RMP/EIS

Presents all substantive written submissions received on the Draft RMP/EIS and the BLM's responses.

References

Lists the documents and other sources used to prepare the RMP/EIS.

Glossary

Provides definitions for important terms used in the RMP/EIS.

Index

Lists where significant issues, resource descriptions, NEPA terms, and agencies and groups discussed in the RMP/EIS are located.

Appendix B Stipulations Applicable to Fluid Mineral Leasing and Other Surface-disturbing Activities

Appendix H Best Management Practices and Standard Operating Procedures

Volume IV (electronic copies only)

Appendix A Figures

Appendix C Wild and Scenic River Suitability Report

Appendix D Summary of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Report on the Application of Relevance and Importance Criteria

Appendix E BLM Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management in Colorado

Appendix F Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

Appendix G Comprehensive Air Resources Protection Protocol

Appendix I Cultural Resources Allocation to Use Categories

Appendix J Allotments and Allotment Management Levels

Appendix K Recreation and Visitor Services Management Framework

Appendix L Special Recreation Permits

Appendix M Travel Management Plan

Appendix N Coal Screening Criteria

Appendix O Air Emissions Inventory

Future Appendices P and Q Biological Assessment and Biological Opinion

- Completion of Wild and Scenic River (WSR) eligibility and suitability studies on river segments within the GJFO planning area
- Consideration of opportunities for land tenure adjustment to improve public land manageability
- Expansion of communities and the urban interface
- Consideration of right-of-way (ROW) exclusion areas and corridors
- The needs of local government and citizens to be heard on an array of issues regarding both traditional and emerging uses of BLM-administered land and their potential social and economic effects on local communities and values

In addition, new resource assessments and scientific information is available to help the GJFO in revising previous decisions. Specifically, there may be a need to evaluate management prescriptions and resource allocations to address the increase in uses and demands on BLM-administered lands (such as natural gas development and recreation), as well as the interest in protecting natural and cultural resources. There is also the need to revise the RMP to allow for updated BLM management direction, guidance, and policy. Land use plan decisions may be changed only through the amendment or revision process.

1.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The GJFO planning area is composed of BLM; US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service (US Forest Service); US DOI, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR); and State of Colorado lands (**Table 1-1**, Land Status within the GJFO Planning Area) in Garfield, Mesa, Montrose, and Rio Blanco Counties in western Colorado. There are nearly 1.1 million acres of BLM-administered lands and 1.2 million acres of federal mineral estate in the planning area. The McInnis Canyons and Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Areas (NCAs), while managed by the BLM and within the GJFO boundary, are or will be managed under separate RMPs. As such, these NCAs are not within the GJFO RMP decision area and are not part of this planning effort, with the exception of the portion of the Colorado River within the McInnis Canyons NCA that is being studied under the WSR Suitability Report (**Appendix C**). This is because the Colorado River is not part of the McInnis Canyons NCA (Public Law 106-353). If the segment is found suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, a separate activity-level plan will be prepared to provide for the management of the river as suitable. In addition, the Colorado National Monument, managed by the National Park Service (NPS), is within the GJFO boundary but is not included in the planning area or this RMP effort. A map of the planning area is provided as **Figure 1-1**, Project Planning Area, in **Appendix A**, Figures.

The decision area for the RMP revision—those lands on which the RMP will make decisions—is composed of GJFO BLM-administered lands within the

Table 1-1
Land Status within the GJFO Planning Area

Land Status	Acres	Percentage of Planning Area
BLM	1,061,400	50
US BOR	7,900	less than 1
Local (State, County, and City)	3,400	less than 1
Private	714,100	30
State Wildlife Areas and State Recreation Areas (Colorado Parks and Wildlife [CPW])	1,400	less than 1
US Forest Service	380,000	20
Other	370	less than 1
Total	**2,168,600**	**100**

Source: BLM 2010a

larger planning area only, which comprise nearly 50 percent of the planning area (**Table 1-1**, Land Status within the GJFO Planning Area). Management direction and actions outlined in the RMP apply only to these BLM-administered lands in the planning area and to federal mineral estate under BLM jurisdiction that may lie beneath other surface ownership. Federal mineral estate under BLM jurisdiction is composed of mineral estate underlying BLM-administered lands, privately owned lands, and state-owned lands (**Table 1-2**, Mineral Status within the GJFO Planning Area by County). As such, federal mineral estate acres are greater than BLM-administered surface acres. No specific measures have been developed for private, state, or other federal lands, but given that these lands are interspersed with BLM-administered lands, they could be influenced or be indirectly affected by BLM management actions. BLM management authority on lands with a split estate (e.g., private surface but federal minerals) is limited to activities (both surface and subsurface) related to exploration and development of the minerals. Other surface-managing agencies give BLM consent to lease the mineral estate under those lands with a split estate. National Forest System lands would have leasing decisions made in the appropriate US Forest Service Land and Resource Management Plan/EIS. In its plans, the US Forest Service analyzes impacts from oil and gas leasing and development on National Forest System Lands and describes where the US Forest Service will or will not consent to leasing.

1.4 PLANNING PROCESS

The process for developing, approving, maintaining, and amending or revising the RMP was initiated under the authority of Section 202(f) of FLPMA and Section 202(c) of NEPA. The process is guided by BLM planning regulations codified in 43 CFR 1600 and Council on Environmental Quality regulations codified in 40 CFR 1500 and has two tiers:

1. Land Use Planning
2. Implementation

Table 1-2
Mineral Status within the GJFO Planning Area by County

Land Status (acres)	Garfield County	Mesa County	Montrose County	Rio Blanco County	Total
BLM/Federal Minerals	322,600	721,700	17,100	0	1,061,400
Private Surface/Federal Minerals	33,300	132,700	200	400	166,600
State Surface/Federal Minerals	0	1,200	0	0	1,200
Local Surface/Federal Minerals	0	2,100	0	0	2,100

Source: BLM 2010a

In the land use planning tier, the BLM develops the RMP. The RMP prescribes the allocation of and general future management direction for the resources and land uses of BLM-managed lands in the GJFO planning area. The RMP then guides the implementation tier, which includes site-specific activity or implementation planning and daily operations. Activity or implementation planning converts the resource and land use decisions of the RMP into site-specific management decisions for smaller geographic units of BLM-administered lands within the GJFO planning area. Activity planning includes elements such as allotment management plans (AMPs), habitat management plans, and interdisciplinary or coordinated activity plans that issue various land and resource use authorizations. Activity planning also may include identification of specific mitigation needs and development and implementation of other similar plans and actions.

An RMP guides the management of BLM-administered lands in a particular area or administrative unit and is usually prepared to cover the lands administered by a certain BLM field office. As part of this RMP revision, published documents will include a Draft RMP/EIS, a Proposed RMP/Final EIS, and an Approved RMP/ROD. The approved RMP/ROD will describe the following:

- Resource conditions goals and objectives
- Allowable resource uses and related levels of production or use to be maintained
- Land areas to be managed for limited, restricted, or exclusive resource uses or for transfer from BLM administration
- Program constraints and general management practices and protocols
- General implementation schedule or sequences
- Intervals and standards for monitoring the RMP

Preparation of an RMP involves interrelated steps, as illustrated in **Diagram 1-2**, BLM Planning Process, and described in **Table 1-3**, BLM Planning Steps.

Diagram 1-2
BLM Planning Process

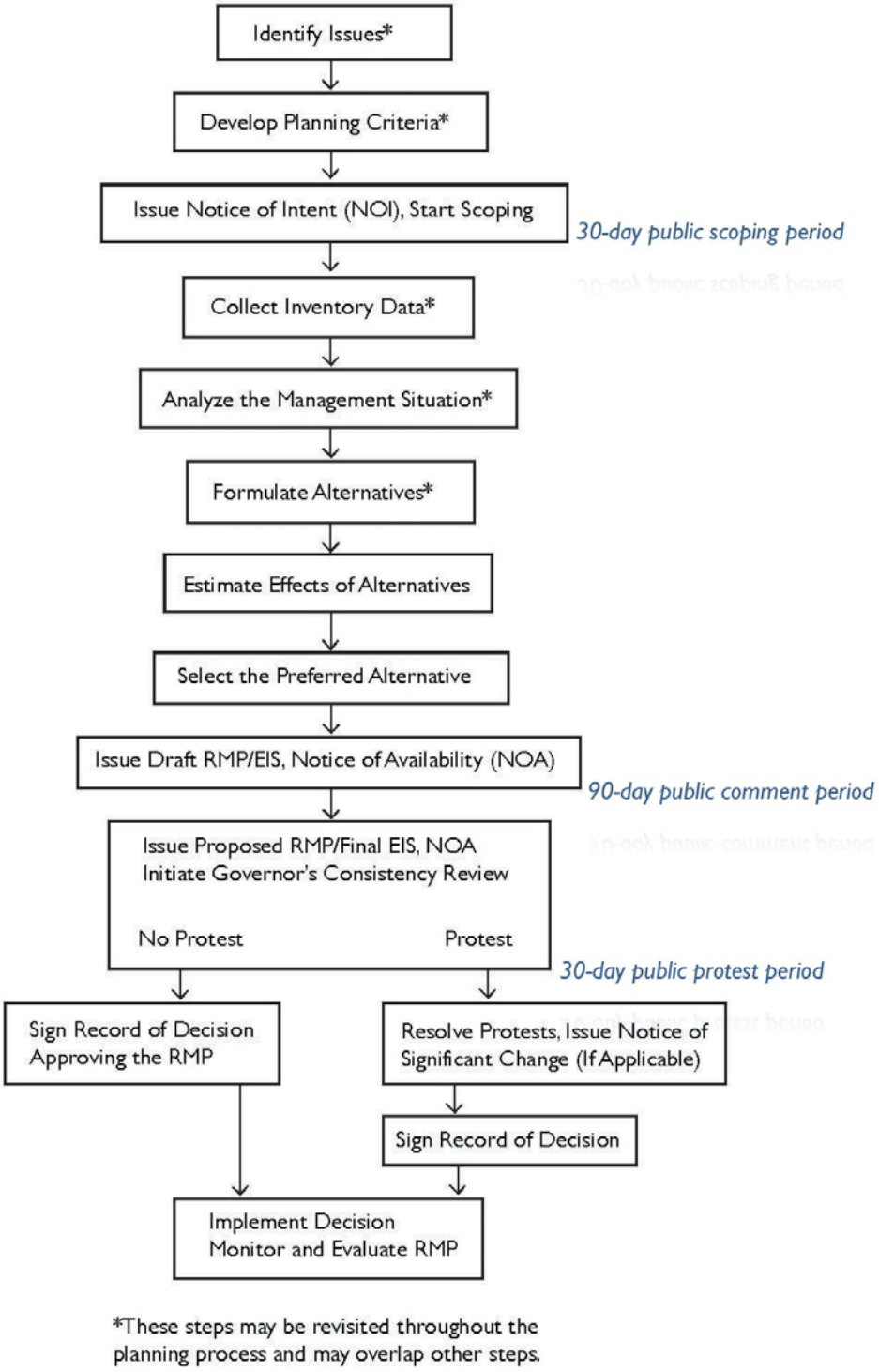

Table 1-3
BLM Planning Steps

BLM Planning Process Step	Description	Timeframe
Step 1—Prepare to Plan	A properly prepared preparation plan provides the foundation for the entire planning process.	July to November 2008
Step 2—Analyze the Management Situation	The current management of resources in the planning area is assessed.	March to August 2009
Step 3—Issue Notice of Intent to Prepare the RMP/EIS and Start Scoping	Notify the public, tribes, other federal agencies, and state and local governments about the BLM's intent to engage in land use planning for the GJFO.	October 2008
Step 4—Conduct Scoping	Issues and concerns are identified through a scoping process that includes the public, tribes, other federal agencies, and state and local governments.	October 2008 to January 2009
Step 5—Formulate Alternatives	A range of reasonable management alternatives is developed to address issues identified during scoping.	September 2009 to October 2010
Step 6—Analyze Effects of Alternatives	The effects of each alternative are estimated.	October 2010 to April 2011
Step 7—Select a Preferred Alternative	The alternative that best resolves planning issues is identified as the preferred alternative.	April 2011
Step 8—Prepare a Draft RMP/Draft EIS	This document describes the purpose and need for the plan, the affected environment, the alternatives for managing BLM-administered lands within the planning area (including the preferred alternative), the environmental impacts of those alternatives, and the consultation and coordination in which the BLM engaged during development of the plan	May 2011 to December 2012
Step 9—Publish Notice of Availability	Provide a 90-day public comment period.	January 2013 to April 2013
Step 10—Prepare a Proposed RMP/Final EIS	After comments on the draft document have been received and analyzed, it is modified as necessary.	Spring 2013 to Summer 2014
Step 11—Publish Notice of Availability	Provide a 30-day public protest period.	Winter 2015
Step 12—Provide a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review Period	Concurrent with the 30-day public protest period.	Winter 2015
Step 13—Prepare a Record of Decision/Approved RMP	An ROD is signed to approve the RMP/EIS.	*Estimated* Spring 2015
Step 14—Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate Plan Decisions	Management measures outlined in the approved plan are implemented on the ground, and monitoring is conducted to test their effectiveness. Changes are made as necessary to achieve desired results.	Ongoing after RMP approval

1.5 SCOPING AND PLANNING

Public involvement is a vital component of both the RMP and EIS processes. Public involvement includes the public in the decision-making process and allows for full environmental disclosure. The regulatory requirements for public involvement in NEPA procedures are addressed in 40 CFR 1506.6. Section 202 of FLPMA directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish procedures for public involvement during land use planning actions on BLM-administered lands. These procedures can be found in 43 CFR 1610.2 and the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1 (BLM 2005a). Public involvement for the GJFO RMP/EIS includes the following four phases:

- Public scoping before NEPA analysis begins, to determine the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the RMP/EIS
- Public outreach via newsletters and news releases
- Collaboration with federal, state, local, and tribal governments, the BLM Colorado Northwest Resource Advisory Council (RAC), and cooperating agencies
- Public review of and comment on the draft RMP/EIS, which analyzes likely environmental effects and identifies the BLM's preferred alternative

The public scoping phase of the process has been completed and is described in Section 1.5.1, Public Scoping. Information about the RMP/EIS process can be obtained by the public at any time on the project website at http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo/rmp.html. This website contains background information about the project, a public involvement timeline and calendar, maps and photos of the planning area, and copies of public information documents released throughout the RMP/EIS process.

1.5.1 Public Scoping

The formal public scoping process for the GJFO RMP/EIS began on October 15, 2008, with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register (Vol. 73, No. 200, page 61164). The Notice of Intent, also posted on the project website, notified the public of the BLM's intent to develop an RMP for the GJFO; it also initiated the public scoping period, which closed on January 9, 2009. Pubic scoping activities included the following:

- The BLM issued a news release to local news organizations on November 6, 2008, announcing the scoping period for the GJFO RMP/EIS process and providing information on the scoping open houses.
- The BLM compiled a mailing list of over 680 individuals, agencies, and organizations that have participated in past BLM projects. Attendees at the scoping open houses were added to the mailing list if they wanted to receive or continue to receive project

information. In addition, all individuals or organizations who submitted scoping comments were added to the mailing list. Through this process, the mailing list was revised to include approximately 870 entries.

- The BLM mailed a newsletter on November 11, 2008, announcing the start of the scoping period for the GJFO RMP/EIS to the over 680 individuals, agencies, and organizations on the initial mailing list. The newsletter provided the dates and venues for the three scoping open houses, included a comment form for submitting scoping comments, and described the various methods for submitting comments, including dedicated email and postal addresses.
- The BLM hosted three scoping open houses to provide the public with opportunities to become involved, to learn about the project and the planning process, to meet the GJFO RMP team members, and to offer comments. Open houses were held in Grand Junction, Colorado, on December 2, 2008; in Moab, Utah on December 3, 2008; and in Collbran, Colorado, on December 4, 2008. In total, 114 people attended these open houses.

The BLM received 149 unique written submissions containing 953 separate comments during the public scoping period. Detailed information about the comments received and about the public outreach process can be found in the Grand Junction Field Office RMP Revision Scoping Summary Report, finalized in April 2009 (BLM 2009a), and available on the project website. A summary of the issues identified during public scoping and outreach is included in Section 1.6, Issues, of this RMP/EIS.

1.6 ISSUES

The GJFO enacted a multi-step issue-identification process for the RMP planning effort. The GJFO provided numerous opportunities to the public, various groups, other federal agencies, Native American tribal members, and state and local governments to participate meaningfully and substantively and to give input and comments to the BLM during the preparation of the RMP/EIS. Early in the planning process, the public was invited to identify planning issues and concerns for managing BLM-administered lands, resources, and uses in the planning area.

1.6.1 Issue Identification

Issue identification is the first step of the BLM planning process (**Diagram 1-2**). A planning issue is a major controversy or dispute regarding management of resources or uses on BLM-administered lands that can be addressed in a variety of ways, which is within the BLM's authority to resolve.

The issue-identification process began with the creation of a preparation plan for the GJFO RMP/EIS in January 2008. This plan, used by the interdisciplinary team to begin the planning process, highlighted anticipated planning issues, management concerns, and preliminary planning criteria developed internally by

the BLM interdisciplinary team. Based on the lands and resources managed in the planning area, preliminary issues fell into 20 planning issue categories in the pre-scoping analysis. The comments received during the public scoping process were analyzed, and the pre-scoping planning issues were reorganized into 17 planning issue categories. Based on the issues and concerns heard during public scoping, a planning issue statement was developed for each planning issue category. The 17 planning issue categories and statements are presented in **Table 1-4**, Planning Issue Categories and Statements. The BLM used the planning issues and statements to help guide the development of a reasonable range of alternative management strategies for the RMP.

Table 1-4
Planning Issue Categories and Statements

Issue	Planning Issue Category	Planning Issue Statement
1.	Travel Management	How will motorized, nonmotorized, and mechanized travel be managed to provide commodity, amenity, and recreation opportunities, reduce user conflicts, enforce route designations and closures, reduce fragmentation and habitat degradation, and protect natural and cultural resources?
2.	Energy Development	Which areas should be open to oil and gas leasing, coal mining, and uranium development, and what restrictions should be employed to protect natural and cultural resources and minimize user conflicts? Should a Master Leasing Plan be developed and how would it affect the leasing and development of fluid minerals?
3.	Recreation Management	How will recreation be managed to provide for a variety of recreational activities, while protecting natural and cultural resources, minimizing user conflicts, and providing socioeconomic benefits to local communities?
4.	Lands and Realty / Community Growth and Expansion	What opportunities exist to make adjustments to public land ownership that would increase the benefit to the public, local communities, and natural resources, while working towards BLM management goals? Should the BLM designate areas to accommodate major ROW corridors across the GJFO planning area, and are there areas that should be avoided or excluded from ROWs?
5.	Wildlife and Fish	How will land uses be managed to maintain and improve terrestrial and aquatic habitats? How will the BLM manage the public lands to provide for the needs of fish and wildlife species?
6.	Special Designation Areas	Where and what types of special designations should be enacted to protect and enhance unique resources and educational and research opportunities, and how will the BLM manage them to maximize recreational opportunities and socioeconomic benefits?
7.	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	How will the BLM protect and manage lands with wilderness characteristics?

Table 1-4
Planning Issue Categories and Statements

Issue	Planning Issue Category	Planning Issue Statement
8.	Water, Soil, and Riparian Areas	What measures will be implemented to protect water resources and source water protection areas from the effects of other uses while rehabilitating areas with soils degradation?
9.	Special Status Species Management	How will the BLM manage the public lands to provide for the needs of sensitive fish, wildlife, and plant species?
10.	Vegetation Management	What measures should be implemented to protect native vegetation and riparian areas, prevent the spread of noxious weeds, and manage wildland fires?
11.	Air Quality	What measures and monitoring should the BLM implement to maintain air quality standards?
12.	Grazing	How will the BLM manage livestock grazing on public lands, while protecting, managing, and restoring the land?
13.	Cultural, Heritage, and Paleontological Resources and Native American Religious Concerns	How can the BLM protect and conserve cultural and paleontological resources while allowing for other land and resource uses, and where should BLM manage heritage resources and areas?
14.	Social and Economic Considerations	How can the BLM promote or maintain activities that provide social and economic benefits to local communities?
15.	Public Health and Safety	What measures should be undertaken to promote a healthy environment for local communities?
16.	Noise	What measures should the BLM implement to preserve the natural soundscape in the planning area?
17.	Drought Management / Climate Change	How will the BLM incorporate the analysis of the impacts of a changing climate on natural resources in the planning area?

1.6.2 Issues Considered but Not Further Analyzed

In addition to planning issues, public scoping comments also addressed issues that are policy or administrative actions; issues that have been or will be addressed by the GJFO outside of the RMP; and issues that are outside the scope of the RMP. The Grand Junction Field Office RMP Revision Scoping Summary Report (BLM 2009a) provides a comprehensive list of issues outside the scope of the RMP.

1.7 Legislative Constraints and Planning Criteria

The FLPMA is the primary authority for the BLM to manage its lands. This law establishes provisions for land use planning, land acquisition and disposition, administration, rangeland management, ROWs, and designated management areas, and the repeal of certain laws and statutes. NEPA requires the

consideration and public availability of information on the environmental impacts of major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.

Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and guidelines that help guide data collection and alternative formulation and selection in the RMP-development process. In conjunction with the planning issues, planning criteria ensure that the planning process is focused. The criteria also help guide the final plan selection and provide a basis for judging the responsiveness of the planning options.

The BLM developed preliminary planning criteria before public scoping meetings to set the side boards for focused planning of the GJFO RMP revision and to guide decision making by topic. The BLM introduced these criteria to the public for review in December 2008 at all scoping meetings and encouraged the public to comment on and suggest additions to these criteria through written correspondence and at the GJFO RMP revision website, http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo/rmp.html. The planning criteria are:

1. Only public lands and mineral resources managed by BLM are covered in the RMP. No decisions will be made relative to non-BLM-administered lands.
2. The planning process will follow the 14 stages of an EIS-level planning process (Table 1-3). For specific information, refer to the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1 (BLM 2005a).
3. For program-specific guidance of land use planning level decisions, the process will follow the Land Use Planning Manual 1601 (BLM 2000) and Handbook H-1601-1, Appendix C (BLM 2005a).
4. Broad-based public participation will be an integral part of the planning and EIS process.
5. Decisions in the RMP will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, federal, and tribal agencies, as long as the decisions are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law and regulations applicable to BLM-administered lands.
6. The RMP will recognize the state's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife.
7. The RMP will recognize the Office of Surface Mining's responsibility and authority to regulate coal activities.
8. The BLM will recognize the State's responsibility for permitting related to oil and gas activities and in regulating air quality impacts.
9. The BLM will recognize the State's and counties' responsibilities for permitting related to mineral extraction activities (i.e., uranium,

gold, coal, and sand and gravel), and in regulating water quality impacts.

10. The National Sage-Grouse Strategy directs that impacts to sagebrush habitat and sagebrush-dependent wildlife species be analyzed and considered in BLM land use planning efforts for public lands with sagebrush habitat in the planning area. The Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse RMP will make final decisions with respect to Sage-Grouse habitat.
11. The RMP will recognize valid existing rights.
12. The RMP/EIS will incorporate existing adequate management decisions brought forward from existing planning documents.
13. The planning team will work cooperatively and collaboratively with cooperating agencies and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals.
14. The BLM and cooperating agencies will jointly develop alternatives for resolution of resource management issues and management concerns.
15. The planning process will incorporate the BLM Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management in Colorado (BLM 1997a) as goal statements.
16. Areas with special environmental quality will be protected and, if necessary, designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), WSRs, or other appropriate designations.
17. Any BLM-administered land surface found to meet the suitability factors to be given further consideration for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS) will be addressed in the RMP revision effort in terms of developing interim management options in the EIS alternatives.
18. The WSAs will continue to be managed according to BLM Manual 6330, Management of Wilderness Study Areas (BLM 2012i) until Congress either designates all or portions of the WSA as wilderness or releases the lands from further wilderness consideration. It is no longer the policy of the BLM to make formal determinations regarding wilderness character, to designate additional WSAs through the RMP process, or to manage any lands other than existing WSAs in accordance with the Interim Management Policy.
19. Forest management strategies will be consistent with the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.
20. The planning process will involve American Indian tribal governments and will provide strategies for the protection of recognized traditional uses.

21. Any location-specific information pertaining to cultural or paleontological resources (map, description, or photo) is proprietary to the BLM and will not become the property of any contractors working on the EIS or attached to any document (paper or electronic), nor is this information subject to any public release or Freedom of Information Act requests (43 CFR 7.18).
22. All proposed management actions will be based upon current scientific information, research, and technology, as well as existing inventory and monitoring information.
23. The RMP will include adaptive management criteria and protocol to deal with future issues.
24. The planning process will use applicable BLM Colorado mitigation guidelines to develop management options and alternatives and to analyze their impacts. The guidelines will also be part of the planning criteria for developing the options and alternatives, as well as for determining mitigation requirements.
25. A reasonable foreseeable development scenario for fluid minerals will be developed from analysis of past activity and production, which will aid in the environmental consequences analysis.
26. Planning and management direction will be focused on the relative values of resources and not on the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or economic output.
27. Where practicable and timely for the planning effort, current scientific information, research, and new technologies will be considered.

Additional criteria received in public scoping comments suggested during the scoping period (October 15, 2008, to January 9, 2009) and added to the list of planning criteria include the following:

1. The BLM will address lands with wilderness characteristics as a separate and unique issue in the planning process, including in its planning criteria.
2. The BLM will incorporate key aspects of its OHV regulations, as well as ecological metrics, in planning criteria.
3. The National Sage-grouse Strategy criteria should state that impacts to sagebrush-dependent wildlife will be minimized whenever possible. Current scientific information should be used, especially regarding buffer areas around leks, nesting areas, and brood rearing areas for both sage-grouse species.

All management direction and/or actions developed as part of the BLM planning process are subject to valid existing rights and must meet the objectives of

BLM's multiple-use management mandate and responsibilities (FLPMA Section 202[c] and [e]). Valid existing rights include all valid lease, permit, patent, ROWs, or other land use rights or authorizations in effect on the date of approval of this RMP. Current BLM policy does not allow BLM to consider unadjudicated Revised Statute 2477 claims as valid existing rights. The current moratorium precluding the BLM from processing Revised Statute 2477 claims is still in effect, making Revised Statute 2477 assertions a legal issue beyond the scope of this planning effort.

1.8 Resource Management Plan Amendments and Implementation-level Plans

Since the GJFO RMP (BLM 1987) was developed and approved, it has been necessary to amend it to respond to new issues and conditions. As the land use plan guidance is put into practice on the ground, implementation-level (activity-level) planning is directed by the land use plan (RMP), BLM policy, and program-specific guidance. **Table 1-5**, RMP Amendments and Implementation-level Plans, identifies approved plan amendments incorporated into the current land use plan and implementation-level plans. These amendments and plans provide a perspective of the many management considerations pertinent to the decision area.

Table 1-5
RMP Amendments and Implementation-level Plans

Amendments to 1987 RMP
Environmental Assessment (EA) for Hawxhurst Land Exchange and RMP Amendment (BLM 1993a)
Withdrawal of Public Lands from Location and Entry Under the Mining Laws, and Amendment to the Grand Junction Resource Area RMP (Walker Field Airport) (BLM 1993b)
EA for Grand Mesa Slopes Special Management Area Management Plan (BLM 1995a)
EA for Gunnison River Bluffs Plan and Powerline Road Public Access (BLM 1997b)
EA for Mineral Withdrawal for Unaweep Seep/West Creek Area (BLM 1999a)
EA for Oil Shale Withdrawal Revocation/RMP Amendment (BLM 2001)
North Fruita Desert Management Plan and Grand Junction RMP Amendment (BLM 2004a)
EA for Bangs Canyon Management Plan Implementation (BLM 2004b)
Record of Decision for Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program and Associated Land Use Plan Amendments (BLM 2005b)
BLM Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in 17 Western States – Final Programmatic EIS Record of Decision (BLM 2007)
Approved RMP Amendments and Record of Decision for Oil Shale and Tar Sands Resources to Address Land Use Allocations in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, and Final Programmatic EIS (BLM 2013c)
Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan Amendments for Geothermal Leasing in the Western United States (BLM 2008d)

Table 1-5
RMP Amendments and Implementation-level Plans

Amendments to 1987 RMP
Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/Record of Decision for Designation of Energy Corridors on Bureau of Land Management-Administered Lands in the 11 Western States (US Department of Energy [US DOE] and BLM 2009)
Implementation-Level Plans
Grand Junction Grazing Management, Proposed Domestic Livestock Grazing Program, Final EIS (BLM 1979)
Badger Wash, Pyramid Rock, and Rough Canyon Combined Activity Plan and EA (BLM 1992a)
Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Management Plan (BLM 1992b)
Grand Mesa Slopes Special Management Area Management Plan (BLM et. al. 1993)
Gunnison River Bluffs Public Use Plan (BLM 1995b)
Bangs Canyon Management Plan (BLM 1999b)
Unaweep Seep Natural Area Management Plan and EA (BLM 1999c)
Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range Population Management Plan (BLM 2002)
Fire Management Plan for the Colorado National Monument and BLM Grand Junction Field Office (BLM 2008b)
EA for Integrated Weed Management (BLM 2010b)

1.9 COLLABORATION

The benefits of enhanced collaboration among agencies in preparing NEPA analyses include the following:

- Disclosing relevant information early in the analytical process
- Applying available technical expertise and staff support
- Avoiding duplication with other federal, state, tribal, and local procedures
- Establishing a mechanism for addressing intergovernmental issues

Additional information regarding collaboration with governments, agencies, and tribal representatives is provided in **Chapter 5**, Consultation and Coordination.

1.10 RELATED LAND USE PLANS

The BLM's planning regulations require that its RMPs be consistent with officially approved or adopted land use-related plans of other federal, state, local, and tribal governments, to the extent that those plans are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. Plans formulated by federal, state, local, and tribal governments that relate to managing lands and resources have been reviewed and considered as the RMP/EIS has been developed. These plans are listed below.

1.10.1 Other Federal Plans

National and Regional BLM

- National Sage-grouse Planning Strategy (in progress)
- Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States (Solar PEIS; BLM 2012e)

Neighboring BLM Offices

- Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and EIS (in progress)
- Colorado River Valley Field Office RMP revision (in progress)
- Uncompahgre Field Office RMP revision (in progress)
- Dominguez-Escalante NCA RMP (in progress)
- McInnis Canyons NCA RMP (BLM 2004e)
- Moab Field Office RMP (BLM 2008e)
- White River Field Office RMP revision (BLM 1997c)
- White River Field Office Oil and Gas Development Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement (in progress)

US Fish and Wildlife Service, Colorado

- Programmatic Biological Opinion for Water Depletions Associated with BLM's Fluid Minerals Program Within the Upper Colorado River Basin in Colorado, issued December 19, 2008 (#ES/GJ-6-CO-08-F-0006)
- Programmatic Biological Opinion for Water Depletions Associated with BLM Projects (excluding Fluid Minerals Development) Authorized by BLM in the Upper Colorado River Basin in Colorado, issued February 25, 2009 (#ES/GJ-6-CO-08-F-0010)

US Forest Service, National and Colorado

- Planning Rule for Land Management Planning for the National Forest System (US Forest Service 2012)
- Noxious and Invasive Weed Management Plan for Oil and Gas Operators (US Forest Service and BLM 2007)
- US Forest Service Roadless Inventory and Associated EIS (US Forest Service 2001)
- Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests Oil and Gas Leasing Final Environmental Impact Statement (US Forest Service 1993)

- White River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (US Forest Service 2002)
- White River National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing EIS (in progress)

1.10.2 State Plans

- Colorado River Cutthroat Trout Conservation Agreement (CPW 2006b)
- Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission's Regulations
- Colorado Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan (CPW 2008a)
- Colorado Division of Wildlife (now Colorado Parks and Wildlife [CPW]) Strategic Plan 2010-2020 (CPW 2009a)
- Gunnison Sage-grouse Conservation Plan, Piñon Mesa, Colorado (Piñon Mesa Gunnison Sage Grouse Partnership 2000)
- Gunnison Sage-grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan (Gunnison Sage-grouse Rangewide Steering Committee 2005)
- Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-grouse and Sagebrush Habitats (Connelly et al. 2004)
- Colorado Sagebrush: A Conservation Assessment and Strategy (Boyle and Reeder 2005)
- Colorado's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CPW 2006a)
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife Data Analysis Unit Plans (CPW undated)
- Parachute-Piceance-Roan Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan (Parachute-Piceance-Roan Greater Sage-grouse Work Group 2008)

1.10.3 Local Government Plans

- Garfield County Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (Garfield County 2013)
- Mesa County Noxious Weed Management Plan (Mesa County 2009a)
- Mesa County Mineral and Energy Resources Master Plan (Mesa County 2011)
- Mesa County Master Plan, as amended (Mesa County 1996)
- City of Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan (City of Grand Junction 2009)
- Fruita Community Plan (City of Fruita 2008)
- Town of Palisade Comprehensive Plan (Town of Palisade 2007)

1.11 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Implementation of the RMP would begin when the Colorado BLM State Director signs the ROD for the RMP. Decisions in the RMP would be tied to the BLM budgeting process. An implementation schedule would be developed, providing for systematic accomplishment of decisions in the approved RMP. The BLM will prepare supplementary rules in order to provide full authority to BLM Law Enforcement to enforce management decisions made in the approved RMP pursuant to the BLM's authority under 43 CFR Part 8365.1-6.

During implementation of the RMP, site-specific analysis may be required, which can vary from a simple statement of conformance with the ROD to more complex documents that analyze several alternatives. For example, an EA could be required for some large-scale implementation decisions, such as travel management decisions. An EA documents the NEPA requirements for site-specific actions.

The RMP would be monitored and periodically evaluated based on guidance in the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1 (BLM 2005a). Monitoring is the process of tracking and documenting the implementation (or the progress of implementation) of land use plan decisions. Evaluation is the process of reviewing the land use plan and the periodic plan monitoring reports to determine whether the land use plan decisions and NEPA analysis are still valid and where the plan is being implemented. As outlined in BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1, the plan should be periodically evaluated (at a minimum every 5 years) as documented in an evaluation schedule. Revisions or amendments to the RMP may be necessary to accommodate changes in resource needs, policies, or regulations. Other decisions would be issued in order to fully implement the RMP.

1.12 CHANGES FROM THE DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN TO THE PROPOSED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

As a result of public comment and internal BLM review, the BLM's Preferred Alternative, identified as Alternative B as presented in the December 2012 Grand Junction Draft RMP/EIS, has been modified and is now considered the Proposed RMP for managing BLM-administered lands within the GJFO. The Proposed RMP is a refinement of Alternative B from the Draft RMP/EIS, with consideration given to public comments, correction, and rewording for clarification of purpose and intent. The Draft RMP/EIS was available for a 150-day comment period ending on June 24, 2013. The Proposed RMP/Final EIS is designed to be used in conjunction with the Draft RMP/EIS in regard to page numbers cited in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS comment and response section (**Chapter 6**).

Modifications to Alternative B focused on addressing public comments, while continuing to meet the BLM's legal and regulatory mandates. Chapter 5 of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS contains a summary of the public comment process and

the comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS. All comment letters received and the BLM's responses are in **Chapter 6**. New text throughout this Proposed RMP/Final EIS generally includes the following:

- Adjustments to **Chapter 2**, Alternatives, to modify Alternative B (the Proposed RMP)
- Additions to **Chapter 3**, Affected Environment
- Revisions to **Chapter 4**, Environmental Consequences, to make corrections and reflect changes in management direction (Proposed RMP) and subsequent impact analysis
- Additions to **Chapter 5**, Consultation and Coordination, to describe the public comment process on the Draft RMP/EIS
- Additions to **Chapters 1, 2, 3,** and **4** to incorporate the Shale Ridges and Canyons Master Leasing Plan (MLP), identified in the Draft RMP/EIS as Appendix P
- Incorporation of new information
- Minor corrections, such as typographical errors

The detailed description of the Proposed RMP is included in Chapter 2, Table 2-2. The environmental consequences of implementing the Proposed RMP (Alternative B from the Draft RMP/EIS, as edited) are described in Chapter 4.

1.12.1 Changes to the Alternatives (Chapter 2)

Alternative B from the Draft RMP/EIS has been modified and now represents the Proposed RMP. Major modifications to Alternative B from the Draft RMP/EIS include the following, which are based on public comment and internal review.

- Light gray shading in **Chapter 2** was applied to text and decisions that are new to the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, building on the concepts that were analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS and public comments on that document. Revisions made to clarify decisions that were already in the Draft RMP/EIS, or revisions to correct management inconsistencies that were identified in the Draft RMP/EIS, were not shaded gray, as the decision(s) in question were contained in the Draft RMP/EIS, and any revisions in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS are for clarification purposes only.
- Text was added to explain the process of adjusting the Preferred Alternative (Alternative B in the Draft RMP/EIS) to become the Proposed RMP (Alternative B in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS).
- Some management decisions from the current RMP (BLM 1987) and associated amendments were not included in Alternative A (No Action Alternative) or were incorrectly ascribed to the current

RMP where no such management existed. The omissions were added and the errors were corrected.

- The Air Resources Management Plan (ARMP) process was modified and is now called the Comprehensive Air Resource Protection Protocol (CARPP) (see **Appendix G**).
- Since the Draft RMP/EIS was published, the BLM Colorado has developed statewide stipulations for fluid mineral leasing in accordance with BLM IM 2010-117, Oil and Gas Leasing Reform – Land Use Planning and Lease Parcel Reviews. Statewide stipulations with corresponding stipulations specific to the GJFO that were analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS have been incorporated into the Proposed RMP (Alternative B) of the Final EIS. Statewide stipulations (denoted with titles in all capital letters; see Appendix B) will be applied to all surface-disturbing activities (and occupancy) associated with land use authorizations, permits, and leases issued on BLM-administered lands, just as GJFO stipulations. Because the statewide stipulations cover the same resources as the stipulations presented and analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS, there would be no additional or different impacts. Buffers for the statewide stipulation HYDROLOGY RIVER NSO CO is slightly different from its counterpart that was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS (NSO-1: Major River Corridors). The different buffer distance was considered within the range of alternatives. A 1,312-foot buffer for HYDROLOGY RIVER NSO CO is less than the buffer for NSO-1: Major River Corridors that was considered in Alternative B. All statewide stipulations in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS were within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS. Lease Notice (LN) CO-56, Air Quality, was added to the Proposed RMP/Final EIS to inform operators of analysis and mitigation requirements that would be required on a case-by-case basis.
- Stipulation Controlled Surface Use (CSU)-1, Major River Corridors, was omitted because best management practices (BMPs), standard operating procedures (SOPs), No Surface Occupancy (NSO)-1, NSO-2, NSO-4, and CSU-3 all would provide sufficient protection to major river corridors, thereby making CSU-1 redundant. Omission of CSU-1 was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D.
- Stipulation CSU-2, Hydrologic Features/Riparian, was omitted because NSO-2 for riparian communities would protect these areas, and CSU-3 would protect dry washes. CSU-2 was not included in Alternative A and omission of this restriction was analyzed under this alternative in the Draft RMP/EIS.

- A portion of the Palisade municipal watershed would be closed to livestock grazing per public comment on the Draft RMP/EIS. This action was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative C.
- Stipulation NSO-8 was renamed "Slumping Soils" instead of "Fragile Soils" to clarify that the NSO stipulation only applies to slump areas; not all fragile soils would be managed with NSO stipulations.
- Stipulation NSO-10, Steep Slopes Greater Than or Equal to 40 Percent, was omitted because NSO-9, Slumping Soils; CSU -5, Fragile Soils; and CSU-6, Mapped Mancos Shale and Saline Soils, are the least restrictive alternative that still adequately protects the resource (soils on steep slopes). Omission of NSO-10 was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative A, while NSO-9, CSU-5, and CSU-6 were analyzed under Alternative B.
- Stipulation CSU-7, Natural Slopes, was omitted because other NSO and CSU stipulations would protect saline soils, Mancos shale soils, steep slopes, fragile soils, and sensitive soils within the slope range identified, thereby making CSU-7 redundant. Omission of CSU-7 analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D.
- The Bangs and North Fruita Desert Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) would be closed to wilding permits. The total number of acres available for wilding permits in the Proposed RMP is within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS. This action is analyzed in Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences.
- Stipulation Timing Limitation (TL)-1 was renamed "Salmonid and Native, Non-Salmonid Fishes" instead of "Sport and Native Fish" to clarify the type of fish covered under the timing limitation. Stipulation TL-1 was rewritten to provide management consistent with neighboring field offices and partners. The renamed stipulation is within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- CSU-10, Wildlife Habitat, was rephrased to "…within high-value *essential* wildlife habitat", instead of "*crucial* wildlife habitat."
- Glade Park Wildlife Emphasis Area was reclassified as *limited to designated routes* for motorized and mechanized travel. In the Draft RMP/EIS Preferred Alternative, it was classified partially *limited to designated routes* and partially *closed* to motorized and mechanized travel. Managing this area as *limited to designated routes* was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D.
- Within the Rapid Creek Wildlife Emphasis Area, areas within big game winter range may be closed to foot, horse, motorized, or mechanized travel from December 1 to May 1. The aforementioned travel restrictions were analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative C.

- The Roan and Carr Creeks Wildlife Emphasis Area was omitted because the area is proposed to be managed as the Roan and Carr Creeks ACEC, which would provide adequate protection. Omission of the Roan and Carr Creeks Wildlife Emphasis Area was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative C. A CSU stipulation would apply within the ACEC and would be the least restrictive measure needed to protect the relevant and important values of the ACEC.
- The South Shale Ridge Wildlife Emphasis Area was renamed "Winter Flats Wildlife Emphasis Area."
- The goal for Visual Resources was reworded to capture the entire decision area and specifically address scenic vistas and undisturbed views.
- The following areas were reclassified as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II: South Shale Ridge ACEC; a portion of the Grand Valley OHV SRMA (along the face of the Bookcliffs); North Fruita Desert SRMA; Palisade Rim SRMA. South Shale Ridge ACEC area was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative C. The other three SRMA classifications fall within the broader range of VRM classifications in the GJFO planning area analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- A 300-acre portion of the Dolores River Riparian ACEC along Highway 141 was changed to VRM Class III to allow for development, as necessary, of critical infrastructure to remote areas that would not conflict with the ACEC's scenic values. This portion of the ACEC already has existing ROW development along Highway 141. This change falls within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- New objectives and a list of priorities have been identified for the Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) program. This addition clarifies the BLM's responsibility to follow BAR guidance.
- In response to public comments, the Bangs lands with wilderness characteristics unit (19,600 acres) was added to list of areas managed to protect wilderness characteristics. Managing the Bangs unit for wilderness characteristics was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative C.
- The West Creek (adjacent) lands with wilderness characteristics unit (20 acres) was omitted because this area overlaps with the Palisade ACEC, which provides enough protection to ensure that the wilderness characteristics are adequately protected.
- The Bangs lands with wilderness characteristics unit would allow special recreation permits (SRPs) for Class I and II competitive events, consistent with management of the overlapping Bangs

SRMA. Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST) would be used to limit impacts on wilderness characteristics.

- The Bangs lands with wilderness characteristics unit would be managed as *limited to designated routes* for motorized and mechanized travel (including over snow motorized travel), instead of being *closed* to motorized and mechanized travel. Managing this area as *limited to designated routes* for motorized and mechanized travel was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D and would provide sufficient protection of resource objectives in the lands with wilderness characteristics unit.
- The Maverick lands with wilderness characteristics unit would be managed as *limited to designated routes* for motorized and mechanized travel, instead of being *closed* to mechanized travel (except for the Pickett Trail). Managing this area as *limited to designated routes* for motorized and mechanized travel was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D. Noncommercial Christmas tree cutting would be allowed. MIST would be used to limit wildfire suppression impacts on wilderness characteristics.
- The Unaweep lands with wilderness characteristics unit would allow administrative access to range ponds and would allow for the placement of range improvements in locations that meet the naturalness and setting of the area. Unauthorized routes that affect naturalness would be restored. MIST would be used to limit wildfire suppression impacts on wilderness characteristics. This is within the range of alternatives and range of impacts analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS: travel and access in this area in the Draft RMP/EIS ranged from Closed (Alternatives B and C) to Open (Alternative A).
- The Unaweep lands with wilderness characteristics unit would be managed as *limited to designated routes* for motorized and mechanized travel, instead of being *closed* to motorized and mechanized travel. Managing this area as *limited to designated routes* for motorized and mechanized travel was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D and would provide sufficient protection of resource objectives in the lands with wilderness characteristics unit.
- An exception was added to areas managed as *closed* to Christmas tree cutting if tree removal supports the objectives of the areas listed. Douglas Pass was removed from the list of closed areas. Allowing Christmas tree cutting on Douglas Pass was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative A.
- In the Forestry section, an erroneous management prescription for tamarisk, nonnative elms, and Russian olive material was corrected

to match the Vegetation section and corresponding analysis in Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences.

- The total acres available for livestock grazing were increased to include cooperatively managed allotments (a total increase of 3,800 acres).
- The Charlesworth and Fetters grazing allotments were added to the list of allotments closed to livestock use. Closing these allotments to grazing was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative C.
- In open allotments, the areas managed as *closed* to livestock use were revised to include *ungrazed* paired plots or *designated no grazing areas as defined in the study objectives* within Badger Wash, the *developed* campground in the North Fruita Desert, and the eastern portion of the Palisade municipal watershed in the High Sensitivity portion of the watershed. Closing these areas to grazing was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative C.
- Management actions providing guidance for allotments managed by other BLM field offices were added.
- In limited precipitation areas, an action stating that the change in the grazing use period could be phased in over a 3-year period was added.
- The Grand Valley OHV and Palisade Rim SRMAs were added because of public comments and were analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D. Boundaries for the Bangs SRMA were adjusted due to public comment and analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative A. Boundaries for the Dolores River Canyon SRMA were adjusted due to public comment and were analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternatives B and D. Boundaries for the North Fruita Desert SRMA were adjusted due to public comments and were analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative B.
- The Dolores River Canyon SRMA was changed from ROW Exclusion to ROW Avoidance because the objectives of the SRMA could be met under ROW Avoidance management and it would allow for limited future development consistent with SRMA objectives. This falls within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- Boundaries for the Barrel Springs Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA) expanded from those in the Draft RMP/EIS because of public comments and the impacts of which were analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternatives B and D. Boundaries for the Horse Mountain ERMA were expanded because of public comments; the Draft RMP/EIS analyzed similar objectives as the 34 and C Road ERMA under Alternatives B and D, and as the Grand

Mesa Slopes Special Management Area RMP amendment (BLM 1995b) under Alternative A. Boundaries for the Gateway ERMA were adjusted due to public comments and were analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative B. The North Desert ERMA was added due to public comment and was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative A.

- Areas managed as *open* to motorized use was revised to include The Grand Valley OHV SRMA, including Skinny Ridge, 18 Road Open Area, and Horse Mountain ERMA (Recreation Management Zone [RMZ] 2). These areas were analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D. The areas managed as *open* to motorized use are in the same geographic areas as analyzed under Alternative B in the Draft RMP/EIS, but the boundaries have been revised to better accommodate current and projected use patterns.
- An exception was added to the Grand Valley OHV SRMA, noting that the area would be managed as a ROW avoidance area except for areas in delineated ROW corridors. This falls within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS, and specifically the management of the 27-1/4 Road Open Area as ROW avoidance under Alternative B.
- The following areas were added to the list of areas managed as *closed* to motorized travel: a portion of the Palisade ACEC, a portion of the Rough Canyon ACEC, Bangs SRMA (RMZs 1 and 3), Palisade Rim SRMA, and the Gunnison River Bluffs ERMA. The Roan and Carr Creek ACEC was removed from the list of areas managed as *closed* to motorized use and added to areas managed as *limited to designated routes* because relevant and important values of the ACEC can be protected through route designations. A full closure is not necessary because there are very few routes in the area, there is not a high amount of current or forecasted use, and there is very little public access. The Sieber Canyon, Snyder Flats, and Renegade Point Critical Habitat and Research Areas were removed from the list of areas managed as *closed* to motorized use and added to areas managed as *limited to designated routes*. There is currently no public access, but if public access is gained in the future, management as *limited to designated routes* would be desired. Analysis of the revised travel management decisions was added to Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, Alternative B. These changes fall within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- The following areas were added to the list of areas with seasonal travel limitations for motorized and mechanized travel from December 1 to May 1: big game winter range, Coal Canyon portion of Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range, a portion of the North Fruita Desert SRMA, and a portion of the Barrel Springs ERMA.

New language was added to the management action noting that seasonal limitation periods may be reduced based on coordination with CPW. These fall within the range of actions analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.

- Areas managed as *open* to mechanized use was revised to include The Grand Valley OHV SRMA, 18 Road Open Area, and Horse Mountain ERMA (RMZ 2). These areas were analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D. The areas managed as *open* to motorized use are in the same geographic areas as analyzed under Alternative B in the Draft RMP/EIS, but the boundaries have been revised to better accommodate current and projected use patterns.
- The following areas were added to the list of areas managed as *closed* to mechanized travel: a portion of Rough Canyon ACEC, a portion of Rapid Creek Wildlife Emphasis Area, and a portion of Bangs SRMA (RMZ 3 and 4). The Roan and Carr Creek ACEC was removed from the list of areas managed as *closed* to mechanized use and added to areas managed as *limited to designated routes* because there is very little public access in this area and impacts from travel can be minimized through proper route designations. Analysis of the revised travel management decisions was added to Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, Alternative B. These actions fall within the range analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- The Mica Mine and Rough Canyon Trails were added to the list of areas managed as *closed* to equestrian travel. Additional analysis was added to Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, Alternative B.
- The Gunnison River Bluffs ERMA was added to the list of areas managed as *limited* to equestrian and foot travel. Palisade Rims ERMA and North Fruita Desert SRMA (RMZ 1) were removed from the list of areas managed as *limited* to equestrian and foot travel and added to the list of areas managed as *open* to cross-country travel because limiting these modes of travel to designated routes was determined to not be necessary to minimize impacts; there is a relatively low level of foot and equestrian use in these areas and no compelling resource concerns meriting limitations on these two types of travel. These actions fall within the range analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS (specifically, Alternative D).
- Pyramid Rock ACEC was reclassified as *closed* to foot travel. Closing Pyramid Rock ACEC to foot travel was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative C.
- Bangs SRMA (RMZ 4) was added to the list of areas managed as *closed* to over-snow motorized travel. Lynx habitat within a Lynx Analysis Unit was removed from the list. An exception was added for the Tabeguache Trail in the Bangs lands with wilderness

characteristics unit, thereby allowing over-snow motorized travel in the area. These management prescriptions fall within the range of alternatives; additional analysis was added to Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, Alternative B.

- A new management action was added to limit the expansion of consistent snow compaction within lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) habitat unless it serves to consolidate use and improve lynx habitat. This action is consistent with adjacent US Forest Service management of lynx habitat. These management prescriptions fall within the range of alternatives; additional analysis was added to Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, Alternative B.
- Route designations for Zone L (outside of the open area) would be developed through cooperation with key stakeholders that utilizes screening measures identified in Appendix M specific to this area within 5 years of approving the Travel Management Plan.
- The Bangs SRMA (RMZs 3 and 4) was added to the list of areas managed as ROW exclusion. These management prescriptions fall within the range of alternatives; additional analysis was added to Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, Alternative B.
- The following SRMAs were added to the list of areas managed as ROW avoidance: Bangs (RMZs 1 and 2), Grand Valley OHV, and Palisade Rim. These management prescriptions fall within the range of alternatives; additional analysis was added to Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, Alternative B.
- All proposed solar energy zones have been omitted because they would be managed better as solar emphasis areas due to the Mancos shale ROW avoidance area that overlaps with them. Not carrying forward any solar energy zones was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternatives A and C.
- A clarification was added stating that applications for both small scale (less than 20 megawatts) and large scale (greater than 20 megawatts) should be encouraged within renewable energy emphasis areas.
- The requirement during development of the 2 Road solar emphasis area for special mitigation to ensure compatibility with Prairie Canyon Wildlife Emphasis Area was omitted. Omission of this requirement was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D.
- The proposed new Dolores River utility corridor was removed from Alternative B because cultural resource surveys have not been conducted. Placement of facilities may still be allowed, but the area would not be considered an official corridor.

- Management of 2920 permits was revised so that the BLM can allow for low impact film permitting in ROW exclusion areas.
- The number of tracts identified for cooperative management was reduced from 22 (5,600 acres) to 20 (5,200 acres). Language was revised to clarify that tracts not in the process of being transferred or do not have a cooperative management agreement in place within 10 years of signing the ROD for this RMP *may* (rather than would) become available for disposal.
- The criterion "Lands adjacent to NCAs" was added to list of criteria considered when acquiring lands.
- The Grand Junction Regional Airport expansion withdrawal was omitted from the list of areas withdrawn for mineral entry because it expired in January 2014 and was not extended.
- Pyramid Rock ACEC was added to the list of areas managed as unacceptable for further consideration of coal leasing and development. This was considered in Alternative C of the Draft RMP/EIS.
- Palisade Rim SRMA was added to the list of areas where leasing is prohibited. Analysis of the revised minerals and energy decisions was added to Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, Alternative B. This falls within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- The Shale Ridges and Canyons Master Leasing Plan was added to the Energy and Minerals section in Chapter 2. The MLP section specifies stipulations and Conditions of Approval (COAs) that would be analyzed at the development stage and may be applied consistent with environmental analysis and existing lease rights. The MLP was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative B.
- There are still 13 ACECs proposed for designation, but the total acres of ACECs increased from 106,000 in the Draft RMP/EIS to 123,400 acres in the Proposed RMP. The Indian Creek ACEC increased by 600 acres to include boundaries that are tied to geographic features and thus more easily identifiable on the ground; the Roan and Carr Creeks ACEC increased by 17,900 acres to encompass additional Greater Sage-Grouse habitat; and the Mt. Garfield ACEC was reduced by 900 acres to follow contour lines and remove a sediment pond whose operation was inconsistent with the ACEC designation. The revised acreage is within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- LN-4 was renamed "Threatened and Endangered Species" instead of "The Colorado Hookless Cactus" and rewritten to make the lease notice applicable to more species.

- Stipulation TL-6, Ferruginous Hawk Nests, was revised to increase the human encroachment buffer from within 0.25-mile to within 0.5-mile of an active ferruginous hawk nest. This change was made to comply with CPW's *Recommended Buffer Zones and Seasonal Restrictions for Colorado Raptors* (CPW 2008).
- Stipulation TL-13, Golden Eagle Nest Sites, was revised to increase the human encroachment buffer from within 0.25-mile to within 0.5-mile of an active golden eagle nests and associated alternate nests. This change was made to comply with CPW CPW's *Recommended Buffer Zones and Seasonal Restrictions for Colorado Raptors* (CPW 2008).
- The Roan and Carr Creek ACEC was added to the list of areas to manage for the benefit sage-grouse habitat. This action was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative C.
- The long-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia wislizenii*) was added to NSO-26, Canyon Treefrog, Midget Faded Rattlesnake, Northern Leopard Frog, Great Basin Spadefoot, Boreal Toad, and to the list of key species to identify important areas for, per public comment on the Draft RMP/EIS.
- Management prescriptions in Lynx Analysis Units were revised to allow for over-snow motorized travel and limit the expansion of consistent snow compaction unless it serves to consolidate use and improve lynx habitat. This revision is within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- Stipulation NSO-29, Kit Fox Dens, was replaced with Alternative D CSU-22, Kit Fox Dens, to provide consistent management across land management boundaries while providing adequate protection for the species.
- Stipulation NSO-30, Occupied Prairie Dog Towns (no buffer), was revised to only apply to the Prairie Canyon Wildlife Emphasis Area. All other occupied prairie dog towns would be covered by CSU-23, Occupied Prairie Dog Towns, and TL-19, Occupied Prairie Dog Towns because these are the least restrictive means necessary to protect prairie dog towns. Both the CSU and NSO were analyzed for the entire decision area in Alternatives D and B, respectively.
- Stipulation TL-1 was renamed "Salmonid and Native, Non-Salmonid Fishes" instead of "Sport and Native Fish" and edited to include additional species such as speckled dace and mountain whitefish.
- The Palisade Rims ERMA was changed to an SRMA, which was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D. This would be better managed as an SRMA because public comment indicated that specific recreation outcomes should be protected.

- The Gunnison River Bluffs ERMA was changed from *limited to designated routes* for motorized use to *closed* to motorized use because the ERMA is being managed to support nonmotorized uses. This designation fits within the range of alternatives of total acres *closed* to motorized use that was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- The three WSAs were each given a unique management objective. This addition provides clarification for the objectives that would guide the management of the lands underlying the WSA if it is released by Congress.
- If released by Congress, the portion of the Little Book Cliffs WSA that lies outside the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range (LBCWHR) would not be managed to protect wilderness characteristics. This portion of the WSA, if released, would be managed as *limited to designated routes* for motorized and mechanized travel, as VRM Class III, and as ROW Avoidance. Not managing the portion outside the LBCWHR for wilderness characteristics was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D.
- If released by Congress, the Demaree Canyon WSA would not be managed to protect wilderness characteristics. The Proposed RMP would manage a portion of this area as VRM Class III and omit NSO-41, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, in favor of NSO-29, Kit Fox Dens, and CSU-10, Wildlife Habitat. The addition of these NSO and CSU stipulations would provide adequate protection for sensitive resource values while still allowing for development of oil and gas. Not managing the Demaree Canyon WSA area for wilderness characteristics was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D.
- The length of the Dolores River found suitable for inclusion in the NWSRS was reduced to 10.38 miles. In its comments, the State of Colorado expressed significant concern about having a suitable segment on the Dolores River located at the Utah-Colorado border. If this river segment at the state boundary were to be designated into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, the designation would include a federal reserved water right. The federal reserved water right would entail certain flow rate requirements to maintain the outstandingly remarkable values identified by the BLM. The State of Colorado expressed concern that the federal reserved water right requirements at the state boundary could conflict with the state's water obligation deliveries to downstream states pursuant to the Colorado River Compact, and could conflict with the state's ability to fully develop its water entitlement under the compact. The BLM concluded that this potential conflict with state plans and objectives was significant

enough to warrant a change from "suitable" to "not suitable", thereby reducing the number of suitable river miles along the Dolores river. To maintain the river-related values identified for the state boundary segment, the BLM intends to manage this segment under an Area of Critical Environmental Concern designation and under Special Recreation Management Area designation. The BLM has crafted the ACEC and SRMA designations to have similar management objectives as the management standards that are associated with a "suitable" determination. The ACEC was included in Alternative C of the Draft RMP/EIS and the SRMA was included in Alternative D. The BLM determined that the Dolores River segment adjacent to the Sewemup Mesa Wilderness Study Area is suitable because a "suitable" provides for optimal management of the ORVs. The BLM believes that the strict land management standards associated with a suitability determination, combined with the proposed state-based instream flow water right to support flow-dependent values, would assure long-term maintenance of the ORVs. To support this long-term partnership approach, BLM's suitable determination includes the following finding: If the Colorado water court system decrees an instream flow water right for the lower Dolores River in the locations, flow rates, and timing appropriated by the CWCB at its March 2014 board meeting, and if the instream flow right is vigorously enforced by the CWCB, the BLM does not believe it would be necessary to quantify, assert, or adjudicate a federal reserved water right if this segment is ultimately designated into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system. This revision is within the range of alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS.

- Stipulation NSO-45, Old Spanish National Historic Trail, was revised so that it applies to 50 meters on either side of the center line of the trail. This distance was determined to be adequate to protect the trail and was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative D.
- The Old Spanish Trail would be managed as VRM Class III because VRM Class IV was determined to be inconsistent with policy and guidance for management of national trails. This was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative C.
- A national trail management corridor of 100 meters is being established in the proposed plan for the Old Spanish Trail that was not defined in the draft plan. The trail corridor would match the defined buffer in the draft plan for ROW avoidance, NSO, and VRM Class III. Under this revision no new restrictions are being added to the corridor that were not analyzed in the draft plan. A national comprehensive trail plan is also being developed, independently of

this RMP revision, for the Old Spanish Trail, which may provide additional direction for trail management.

- The BLM would not petition the Secretary of Interior to designate the Tabeguache Trail as a National Recreation Trail. The trail is also not being carried forward in the Dominguez-Escalante NCA RMP/EIS because it has sections that are built for sedans, which does not meet the trail criteria. This was analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS under Alternative A.

1.12.2 Changes to the Affected Environment (Chapter 3)

Chapter 3 of the Draft RMP/EIS was revised as follows:

- Section 3.2.1, Air, was updated with additional information about air quality monitoring stations in the planning area and revised air quality standards.
- Section 3.2.5, Water Resources, was updated to clarify that oil and gas operators are subject to water allocation laws and protection measures at the state and federal level.
- Section 3.2.5, Water Resources, was updated to explain the role of fresh and recycled water during the drilling process.
- Section 3.6.2, Public Health and Safety, was updated to discuss potential risks from spills and releases during transport of natural gas, condensate, and produced water, as well as the potential risks from hydraulic fracturing, during oil and gas development.
- Table 3-8, Water Bodies on Colorado's 2012 Section 303(d) List of Water-Quality-limited Segments Requiring Total Maximum Daily Loads or the Monitoring and Evaluation List within the Planning Area, was updated with the 2012 303(d) list data.
- Section 3.2.7, Fish and Wildlife, now includes updated mule deer and elk population information.
- Section 3.2.8, Special Status Species, includes new information on Parachute penstemon, kit fox, white-tailed prairie dogs, and cutthroat trout populations in the planning area.
- Section 3.2.8, Special Status Species, includes new information on Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Greater Sage-Grouse, and western yellow-billed cuckoo's status and populations in the planning area.
- Section 3.2.13, Visual Resources, was updated with new information on the Town of Palisade's support for conservation easements.
- Section 3.3.3, Energy and Minerals, was updated with new information on historic coal mines.

- Section 3.3.3, Energy and Minerals, was updated to include a description of existing resources for the MLP.
- Section 3.3.5, Recreation and Visitor Services, was updated with new information on paragliding and hang gliding.

1.12.3 Changes to the Environmental Consequences (Chapter 4)

Chapter 4 of the Draft RMP/EIS was revised as follows:

- Analyses of Alternatives A, C, and D were revised to clarify decisions that were already in the Draft RMP/EIS or to correct errors.
- Section 4.1.1, Analytical Assumptions, was updated to include an improved explanation of the well predictions for each alternative.
- Section 4.1.1, Analytical Assumptions, was updated to describe the inclusion of the BLM Colorado's statewide stipulations for fluid minerals leasing.
- Section 4.2.2, Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions, was updated to include one additional reasonably foreseeable future project.
- Analysis of Alternative B, the Proposed RMP, was updated throughout the chapter based on changes to Alternative B, the Proposed RMP, in Chapter 2.
- Analysis of Alternative B, the Proposed RMP, was revised to more clearly delineate the analysis of the Shale Ridges and Canyons MLP.
- Various resource and resource use sections were updated to add analysis of new ROWs in areas managed as VRM Class I or II.
- Section 4.3.1, Air and Climate Resources, Near-Field Air Quality Modeling Analysis, was updated to incorporate by reference the near-field modeling analyses completed for two oil and gas development projects in the planning area.
- Section 4.3.1, Air and Climate Resources, was updated to include analysis of the high scenario results from the CARMMS modeling study.
- Section 4.3.3, Water Resources, Methods of Analysis, was updated to include an additional assumption regarding ephemeral systems.
- Section 4.3.3, Water Resources, Effects Common to All Alternatives, was updated to include additional impacts on water resources from fluid minerals development, including potential impacts of chemicals used during oil and gas development.
- Section 4.3.5, Fish and Wildlife, Effects Common to All Alternatives, All Fish and Wildlife Habitats, was updated to reflect assumptions

about the risk of bighorn sheep exposure to domestic sheep. It also was updated with information about the effects of mineral activities on mule deer.

- Section 4.3.6, Special Status Species, Alternative B, Forest and Woodland Habitats and Species, was updated with research about the effects of over-snow motorized travel and snow compaction on special status species.
- Section 4.3.8, Cultural Resources, Methods of Analysis, was updated to include information about the general effects of cultural resource inventory and mitigation.
- Section 4.4.3, Recreation and Visitor Services, Cumulative, was updated to include the effects of a designated route system for motorized users in Alternatives B and D.
- Section 4.6.2, Public Health and Safety, Effects Common to All Alternatives, was updated to include additional impacts of hydraulic fracturing.

1.12.4 Changes to the Appendices

The appendices have been revised as follows:

- Appendix B – New text was added to reflect new statewide stipulations for the State of Colorado.
- Appendix C (WSR Suitability Report) – New text was added to explain the protections given to nonsuitable stream segments and to describe the revised mileage of the Dolores River that was found suitable for inclusion in the NWSRS.
- Appendix D (ACEC Report) – Additional species and plant communities have been added to several ACECs per public comments.
- Appendix F (Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Inventory) – Per public comments, the BLM revisited the lands with wilderness characteristics inventory.
- Appendix G (CARPP) – The Air Resources Management Plan (ARMP) was replaced with the Comprehensive Air Resources Protection Protocol (CARPP)
- Appendix J (Grazing) – Grazing acreages and animal unit months (AUMs) have been updated according to the changes in the Proposed RMP, Chapter 2.
- Appendix K (SRPs) – The SRP appendix was updated to match the SRP appendix for the Dominguez-Escalante NCA.

- Appendix L (Recreation) – The recreation appendix was updated according to the changes in the Proposed RMP in Chapter 2.
- Appendix M (Travel Management Plan) – The Travel Management Plan was updated with revised route designations and an updated monitoring framework.
- Appendix O (Air Emissions Inventory) – The air emissions inventory was updated with new information and to reflect the Proposed RMP.

1.12.5 Changes to Figures

- Chapter 2 figures have been updated to display the Proposed RMP.
- Figure 3-20, Airport Withdrawal, from the Draft RMP/EIS was removed because this withdrawal expired in January 2014.
- Figure 3-21, Master Leasing Plan Surface Management and Split Estate, was added.
- Figure 3-22, Master Leasing Plan Oil and Gas Leases, was added.
- Figure 4-1, Master Leasing Plan Oil and Gas Potential in Alternative B, was added.
- Figure 4-2, Master Leasing Plan No Surface Occupancy in Alternative B, was added.
- Figure 4-3, Master Leasing Plan Controlled Surface Use in Alternative B, was added.
- Figure 4-4, Master Leasing Plan Timing Limitations in Alternative B, was added.
- Figure 4-5, Master Leasing Plan ACECs and Wildlife Emphasis Areas in Alternative B, was added.
- Figure 4-6, Master Leasing Plan Recreation Management Areas in Alternative B, was added.
- Figure 4-7, Master Leasing Plan VRM Classes in Alternative B, was added.

1.13 MASTER LEASING PLAN

Subsequent to the start of the RMP revision process, the BLM issued guidance regarding Master Leasing Plans (MLPs) to address oil and gas leasing in areas with resource values of concern. The BLM received nominations for one MLP in the planning area. BLM guidance requires land use plan revisions to analyze MLP proposals.

In August 2010, the Wilderness Society and the Center for Native Ecosystems submitted recommendations that the BLM prepare a Shale Ridges and Canyons MLP. This proposal encompasses 908,600 acres, including 640,700 acres of BLM-

administered surface land and 700,900 acres of federal mineral estate (see **Figure 3-21**, Surface Management and Split Estate). The externally recommended MLP is within the GJFO boundary and overlaps with most of the northern half of the RMP planning area.

The MLP concept, introduced in May 2010 via the Washington Office's Oil and Gas Leasing Reform IM 2010-117, promotes a proactive approach to planning for oil and gas development. Generally, the BLM uses RMPs to make oil and gas planning decisions, such as areas managed as closed to leasing, open to leasing, or open to leasing with major or moderate constraints (lease stipulations) based on known resource values and reasonably foreseeable oil and gas development scenarios. However, this policy acknowledged that additional planning and analysis may be necessary in some areas prior to new oil and gas leasing because of changing circumstances, updated policies, and new information.

To determine whether or not circumstances warrant additional planning and analysis, Instruction Memorandum (IM) 2010-117 lists numerous criteria to be considered. Specifically, the BLM must prepare an MLP when all four of the following criteria are met:

- A substantial portion of the area to be analyzed in the MLP is not currently leased.
- There is a majority federal mineral interest.
- The oil and gas industry has expressed a specific interest in leasing, and there is a moderate or high potential for oil and gas confirmed by the discovery of oil and gas in the general area.
- Additional analysis or information is needed to address likely resource or cumulative impacts if oil and gas development were to occur where there are:
  - multiple-use or natural/cultural resource conflicts
  - impacts on air quality
  - impacts on the resources or values of any unit of the NPS, national wildlife refuge, or National Forest wilderness area, as determined after consultation or coordination with the NPS, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, or the US Forest Service
  - impacts on other specially designated areas

The BLM has the discretion to complete an MLP for areas that do not meet the MLP criteria. For example, even though a substantial portion of an area is already leased or lacks a majority federal mineral interest, additional analysis of measures to resolve potential resource conflicts may benefit future leasing decisions.

The MLP process entails analyzing likely development scenarios and varying levels of protective design features and mitigation measures in a defined area with greater detail than a traditional RMP allocation analysis but at a less site-specific level than a development plan that has been fully defined by an operator.

1.13.1 MLP Nominated Areas Criteria Analysis

Criterion #1: A substantial portion of the area to be analyzed in the MLP is not currently leased.

The externally recommended Shale Ridges and Canyons MLP area does not meet this criterion. There are 648,900 acres currently open to leasing within the externally recommended MLP area. As shown in **Figure 3-22**, Oil and Gas Leases, 482,200 of those acres (74 percent) are currently leased for oil and gas development.

Criterion #2: There is a majority federal mineral interest.

The externally recommended Shale Ridges and Canyons MLP area meets this criterion. The GJFO has jurisdiction over 640,700 surface acres (71 percent of the externally recommended MLP area), and 700,900 acres of federal mineral estate (77 percent of the externally recommended MLP area).

Criterion #3: The oil and gas industry has expressed a specific interest in leasing, and there is a moderate or high potential for oil and gas confirmed by the discovery of oil and gas in the general area.

The externally recommended Shale Ridges and Canyons MLP area meets this criterion. Approximately 686,300 acres (98 percent) of the federal mineral estate within the externally recommended MLP area is considered to have development potential for oil and gas (see **Figure 4-1**, Oil and Gas Potential). Of that area, 211,000 acres of federal mineral estate (32 percent) is unleased and would be subject to the stipulations proposed in the RMP/EIS and discussed below.

There are 400 producing federal wells within the externally recommended MLP boundary. Industry continues to express interest in leasing within the externally recommended MLP area.

Criterion #4: Additional analysis or information is needed to address likely resource or cumulative impacts if oil and gas development were to occur where there are multiple use or natural/cultural resource conflicts; impacts on air quality; impacts on the resources or values of any unit of the NPS; or impacts on other specially designated areas.

The externally recommended Shale Ridges and Canyons MLP meets this criterion. The external MLP proposal focused primarily on concerns regarding fish and wildlife, special status species, recreation, Citizen Wilderness Proposals, ACECs, and Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs). According to IM 2010-117, other important national and local resource issues that should be considered when developing an

MLP include air quality; SRMAs; nearby state, tribal, or other federal agency lands; cultural resources; paleontological resources; visual resources; watershed conditions, including steep slopes and fragile soils; municipal watersheds; public health and safety; and the ability to achieve interim and final reclamation standards.

1.13.2 Potential Resource Conflicts

The external proposal identified a series of potential resource conflicts, including land ownership, recreation and tourism, Greater Sage-Grouse, aridlands burrowing mammals, communities, big game and wide-ranging mammals, raptors, fish, rare plants, and citizen wilderness proposals. All of those resources and uses are present in the MLP analysis area and are fully addressed in Chapter 4.

The proposal for the Shale Ridges and Canyons Master Leasing Plan Recommendation was included as Appendix P in the Draft RMP EIS. Appendix P was removed from the Proposed RMP/Final EIS and analysis of the proposed MLP was completed under the Fluid Minerals section within Chapters 2 and 3, and in each resource program section in Chapter 4. The BLM further evaluated the proposed MLP and determined that it should be analyzed under the MLP concept, despite not meeting the four MLP criteria. This determination was made due to the potential for development in unleased areas, important resource values in the MLP, and in response to public comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS. The MLP, which is included in Alternative B, the Proposed RMP, describes proposed management that would guide the leasing of federal minerals in the MLP analysis area and provides tools to mitigate impacts from oil and gas leasing and development, especially where conflicts with other resources may occur.