

**Addendum to Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Report on the Application of the Relevance and Importance
Criteria**

**For Grand Junction Field Office Resource Management Plan
Revision**

September 2011

Prepared by:
United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Grand Junction Field Office



Introduction: Since the completion of the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Report on the Application of the Relevance and Importance Criteria in January 2010, additional information came to the attention of the BLM. Recent fish sampling data prompted BLM staff to propose BLM lands in Plateau Creek as a possible ACEC. This addendum to the ACEC report, examines whether the proposed Plateau Creek ACEC meets both the relevance and importance criteria. (see attached map)

Background/Description: The roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*), bluehead sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and flannelmouth sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*) are fish species endemic to the Colorado River basin and appear on Colorado BLM's sensitive species list. The three species inhabit large rivers and streams within the Colorado River watershed, and move into tributaries to spawn during the annual snowmelt period from March through June. The three species have seen significant reductions in their distribution and abundance in many parts of the Colorado River watershed, but select streams within Colorado provide some of the best remaining habitat and support stable populations.

BLM Colorado is a signatory to the Range-Wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy, which is designed to prevent the need to list these three species under the Endangered Species Act. Under that agreement, BLM is committed to implementing conservation actions, including habitat protection and enhancement, that will assist in stabilizing or increasing populations. Pursuant to the agreement, BLM Colorado in cooperation with Colorado Parks & Wildlife, has implemented an extensive inventory effort to determine the location and status of remaining populations.

Other than the Gunnison River, Plateau Creek is one of the largest tributaries to the Colorado River within the planning area. Lands owned and managed by the BLM are located close to the confluence of the creek with the Colorado River. Fishery surveys have confirmed the presence of all three species in Plateau Creek, both during the spring spawning season, as well as the fall, which indicates that the stream provides important year-round habitat..

Relevance Criteria:

Plateau Creek meets the ACEC relevance criteria because it contains confirmed habitat for fish species that appear on Colorado BLM's sensitive species list. Specifically, the creek contains sensitive species for which BLM has committed to taking proactive conservation actions to prevent a listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Importance Criteria:

Plateau Creek meets the ACEC importance criteria because it provides some of the best habitat for these three species on BLM lands with Colorado. Data supporting this conclusion include:

- Fishery surveys substantiate that the Plateau Creek fish community is comprised almost entirely of native fish species, which is unusual for major tributaries to the Colorado River.
- Plateau Creek has no major obstacles to fish passage between the Colorado River and the large amount of potential habitat within the Plateau Creek watershed. Many other tributaries to the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers that could serve as spawning habitat for the three species are blocked by diversion dams or stream reaches that are dried up by diversions.
- Plateau Creek provides many miles of the types of habitat preferred by the three species, based upon the mix of pools/riffles/runs, gradient, substrate, temperature, and water quality. Other

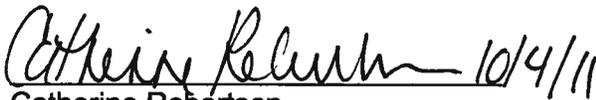
major tributaries to the Colorado River and Gunnison River typically have much more limited habitat because of gradient and substrate issues.

- Because of the large watershed size, Plateau Creek has very reliable base flow rates, which allows the creek to provide year-round habitat. Many other large tributaries to the Colorado River and Gunnison have sufficient flow to provide spawning habitat during snowmelt runoff, but base flows in late summer and fall are too low to provide year-round habitat. In addition, Plateau Creek already has flow protection, in the form of an instream flow water right held by the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

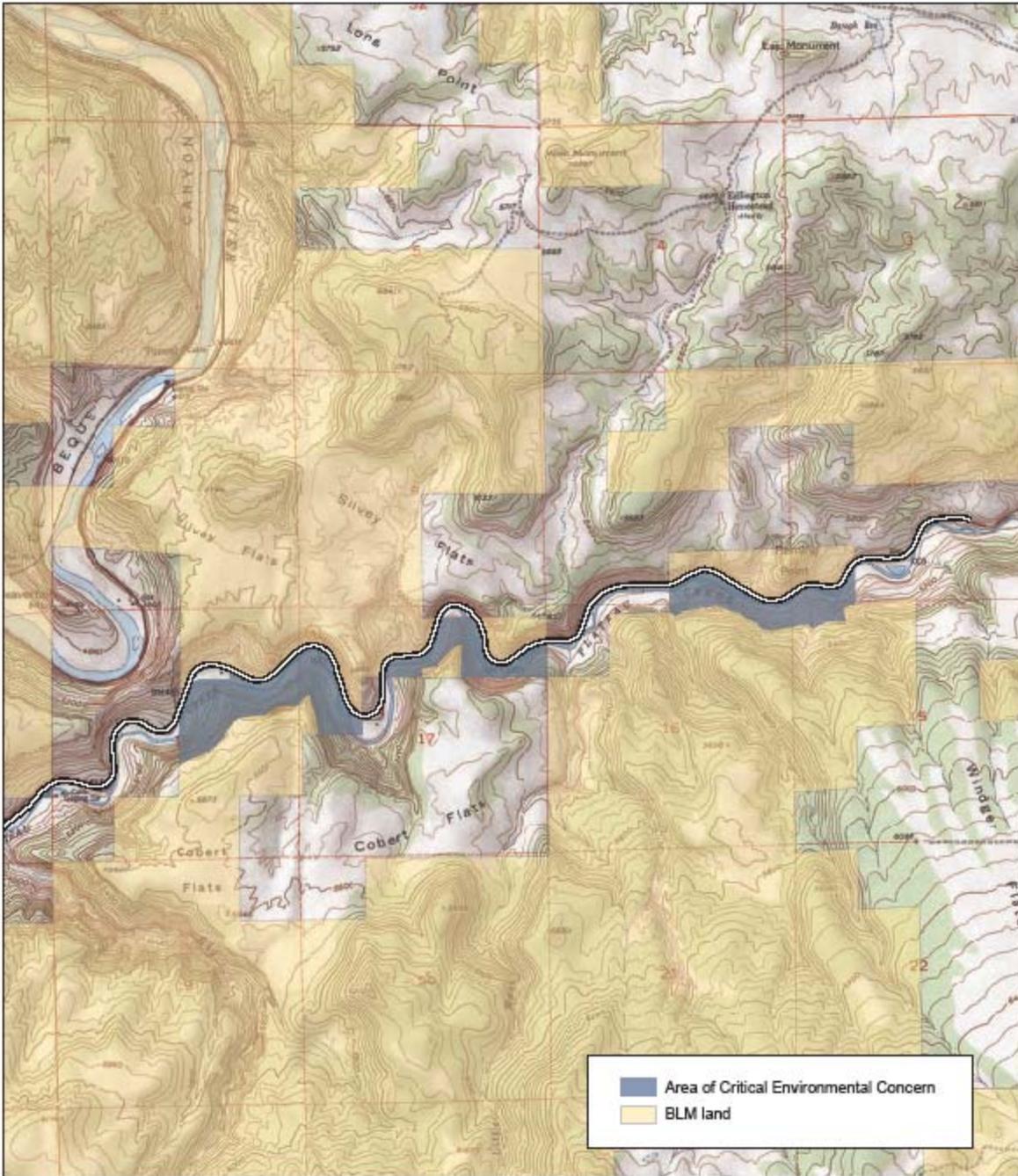
Findings:

The proposed Plateau Creek ACEC has more than locally significant qualities because the creek represents one of the few major tributaries to the Gunnison River or Colorado River that is almost exclusively an intact native fishery containing prime habitat for 3 BLM sensitive species (meets Relevance Criterion 2 and Importance Criteria 1 and 2). The ACEC would support BLM efforts to improve habitat within the stream corridor and implement the Range-Wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy (meets Importance Criterion 3). Habitat improvement efforts may include eradication of invasive riparian species including tamarisk, Russian olive, and Chinese elm, and may include efforts to improve adjacent upland habitat conditions. Finally, designation of ACEC would assist BLM's efforts to educate the public about the existence and importance of these species in the watershed, which may lead to cooperative efforts to protect and enhance habitat throughout the Plateau Creek watershed.

Reviewed By:

 10/4/11

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Source: BLM 2010a

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This project was developed through digital means and may be updated without notice. Map produced by Grand Junction Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, Grand Junction, CO.

Draft Plateau Creek ACEC



BLM Grand Junction Field Office Resource Management Plan

Table 2 (continued)
Relevance and Importance Criteria Evaluation for Existing and Proposed ACECs

Name of ACEC Existing or Proposed	Values Assessed	Relevance Criteria <i>see Section II for Relevance Criterion</i>	Importance Criteria <i>see Section II for Importance Criterion</i>	Carried Forward for Analysis?	Comments	1987 RMP Acres	Proposed Acres¹	Acres Carried Forward¹
Plateau Creek <i>Proposed</i>	Fish	2	1, 2, 3	Yes	Meets Relevance and Importance Criteria for BLM sensitive fish species. Protection would help implement implement the Range-Wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy to avoid federal listing under Endangered Species Act.	NA	223.3	223.3