

## Colorado National Monument Interface

B-130-12

**Location:** This FMU is located along the East boundary of Colorado National Monument and [isolated tracts of BLM administered land along the COLM boundary and BLM land to south along Little Park Road and scattered parcels of BLM in Glade Park]. The total area is 78,953 acres encompassing 1,415 acres of National Park Service land and 14,636 acres of BLM land 61,941 acres of private and 961 acres of state land. While each agency will maintain jurisdiction over their properties, fire management strategies will be similar.

**Characteristics:** This FMU transitions into the wildland-urban interface area of the Redlands, Little Park and Glade Park. Within the monument the area extends from the top of the pre-cambrian bench [a distinct geologic landmark] at an elevation of 5,200 ft. down to the monument boundary at an elevation of 4,800 ft.

The infrastructure and social characteristic of this FMU is affected by the neighboring urban and public developments. Private property with high value homes extend right up to the monument boundary and a fences that serve as a *de facto* boundary [the fences are not always exactly on the boundary line separating private and public lands.] The sights and sounds of human activity are very obvious in this unit. There are \_ developed trails in this unit and several social trails. Hiking, climbing and horseback riding and on BLM land, mountain biking are popular visitor uses. Public infrastructure includes \_ developed trailheads, telephone, power and water and sewer lines and Mud Spring Camp Ground. COLM maintains an entrance station and maintenance facility at the East (Grand Junction) Entrance. The east end of the historic Rim Rock Drive begins in this FMU and extends through the other FMUs within the monument. The 2 miles of Rim Rock Drive in this FMU are a part of an important commuter/access corridor for residents of the Glade Park community.

Soils in these lower elevations to the north of the Monument are influenced by redbed sandstone and shale, aeolian materials, and by Morrison shales. They are moderately deep to deep, clayey or silty in the substratum, and generally alkaline and saline. The dominant use of this FMU is hiking, mountain biking, and visual front country for the Colorado National Monument.

The dominant vegetation at the lower elevations is native grasses and salt bush intermixed with some pockets of invading cheatgrass. In the monument the lower elevations were heavily grazed by a managed, introduced bison herd from the 1920's until 1983. Scattered stands of sage and greasewood can be found on the bench and in the more shaded and moist areas. Piñon-juniper dominate the steeper slopes. There is a remnant stand of about 1/2 acre of manzanita at mid-slope about 400 feet below the Liberty Cap formation. On private lands the vegetation may vary from native vegetation (grasses, shrubs, and piñon-juniper) to sub-urban landscaping including manicured and irrigated lawns and shrubs and in some cases exotic species such as Russian olive and tamarisk.

Several cultural and paleontological (paleo) resources have been identified throughout this unit and many others are likely to be discovered as opportunities arise to conduct more complete surveys. Cultural artifacts include some rock art panels and many dispersed lithic scatters. Within the monument, one site has been classified as eligible for National Register. (Also refer to Devils Kitchen and Serpents Trail above). Some

fossils have been found in this unit, but until a systematic survey can be conducted, the extent and significance of these resources is not yet known.

A variety of wildlife uses this area or migrates across it to access water, food and shelter. Rodents, skunks, raccoons, deer, lizards and snakes are common. Bobcats, mountain lions, coyotes, bear and ringtails are spotted on occasion. Several species of birds are associated with this habitat.

No federally listed threatened or endangered species or critical habitats have been identified as residing in this FMU. Peregrine falcons are frequently seen hunting over this area, but they nest at higher elevations on steep rock ledges.

The air shed within the monument is classified as Class 2 and meets the National and State Air Quality standards. Water quality from the few seeps, springs and intermittent streams in this unit meets standards.

The desert shrub community is found in this unit. The area is dominated by the salt desert community with a mix of Utah juniper, greasewood, four-winged saltbush, rubber rabbitbrush and sagebrush. A large portion of this area has a moderate to high composition of cheatgrass.

The following cultural resource classes are found within this FMU: CR-2 Moderate Value/ Moderate Risk, mostly known from surveys in the east unit.

Fuels and Fire Behavior: The natural fuels are pinon-juniper. There is a significant amount of exotic species that grow due to cultivation and irrigation.

Fire History: The majority of fires in this area are human caused. The unit borders some high density housing adjacent to the Colorado National Monument.

Fire Regime/Condition Class: – Fire Regimes II and V apply to this FMU. The primary condition Class is 2, meaning that fire regimes that have been moderately altered from their historical range (by grazing and fire suppression). The risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate.

### **Values at Risk:**

Aquatic Habitat - All wet areas, along with the springs, seeps, and ponds in this unit provide aquatic habitat for various species.

The primary values at risk are private residences and property and public infrastructure. Cultural resources at risk include National Register structures and sites, BLM Mud Springs Campground, rock art panels and scattered lithics. Native vegetation is at risk of being replaced by cheatgrass dependent upon the frequency and intensity of fires and that ability to mitigate impacts with rehabilitation efforts.

Desert Shrubland – While much of it is mixed with juniper and some pinyon pines, the shrub component is vital to visual values and the wildlife present. These include gray fox, Gambel's quail, northern mockingbird, and black-throated sparrow among several others. Large wildfires would cause severe impacts to these resources.

Juniper – The Juniper stands in the desert should be protected to provide wildlife habitat and visual relief.

Cultural Resources- The east area has had minimal previous survey but all surveyed areas have a high density of Archaeological and Historic Resources that are eligible or potentially eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Sites at risk in all three categories, **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(C)**, have been recorded (see Chapter 3.1.1) and unrecorded properties are likely to exist. The greatest risk is from surface disturbing suppression activities anywhere in the FMU which may best be mitigated by avoidance of known properties, and during post fire evaluation and ESR project work.

Communities at Risk: The Redlands, section of Grand Junction, Little Park and Glade Park has been identified as communities at risk.