

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

---

**Categorical Exclusion  
for  
Epic Rides Grand Junction Off-Road  
Mountain Bike Race**

---

Grand Junction Field Office  
2815 H Road  
Grand Junction, Colorado 81506

DOI-BLM-CO-130-2014-0012-CX

**July 2014**



### LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area, 6<sup>th</sup> PM, T12S, R100W

### APPLICANT:

Mountain Bike America, LLC DbA Epic Rides, Todd Sadow

### INTRODUCTION:

In October of 2012, the BLM received an application from Mountain Bike America, LLC DbA Epic Rides requesting issuance of a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) authorizing a three day mountain bike ride/race that would be held in the Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) in September 2013. A CX (DOI-BLM-CO-130-2012-008-CX) was completed and an SRP was issued for the 2013 event. On 11/08/2013 Epic Rides submitted an application to conduct the event again on Labor Day weekend in 2014.

For the 2013 proposal a 30-day public comment period was provided from 11/19/2012 to 1/19/2013. A total of 15 written comments were received. Six of those responses were in support of the event as proposed, five supported the event in general but suggested modifications to the proposal, and four were opposed to the project as proposed. Public notification of the 2014 proposal was made via the BLM web site for the Grand Junction Field Office. No public comments were received for the 2014 proposal.

This Categorical Exclusion considers whether to issue an SRP for this proposed event. The BLM issues SRPs to achieve recreation and other resource management objectives. SRPs are issued for commercial, competitive, and certain organized group activities on BLM public lands to enhance the public's opportunity for recreation experiences on BLM lands. These permits include conditions of use (stipulations) that ensure that the permitted recreation use meets BLM's goals of providing opportunities for recreation experiences, and ensure that the use is consistent with other resource management objectives, for example wildlife, range, endangered species, cultural resources, etc. SRPs also ensure that the public receives a fair-value return for commercial activities that take place on BLM public lands by charging fees for permitted activities.

The proposed event would provide an opportunity for mountain bikers of various abilities to participate and/or compete in an organized ride/race that exposes participants and spectators to the unique trails and landscapes of the Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area. By utilizing a marked and marshaled course on the area's designated trail network, impacts to other users and resources would be minimized. Thorough monitoring of the event would provide valuable information for evaluation of similar event proposals in the future.

### DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:

The BLM is proposing to authorize a three day mountain bike ride/race designed for a variety of skill levels using designated routes within the Bangs Canyon SRMA in September 2014. According to the proponent, the event would target 900 participants in 2014, with the intent to incrementally increase the number of participants to 2,000 within four years. This CX considers only the 2014 event proposal.

Staging, parking, and the start/finish of the race would occur in downtown Grand Junction. Participants would travel from downtown to Monument Road and enter the Lunch Loops Trail System at the Tabeguache Trailhead.

Three routes are proposed: 15 mile route for beginners on Friday, 30 mile route for intermediates, and 40 mile route for advanced riders on Saturday. A pro race would occur on Sunday using the 40 mile route. Aid stations would provide communications and food, water and medical first aid to event participants. Aid stations would be located at Little Park Trailhead (TH) and at the intersection of Magellan and Butter Knife Loop Trail. The route would be marked by pin flags, coroplast signage, sponsor banners and volunteer trail marshals would also be present. The course map is included below. The complete SRP application is also available upon request.

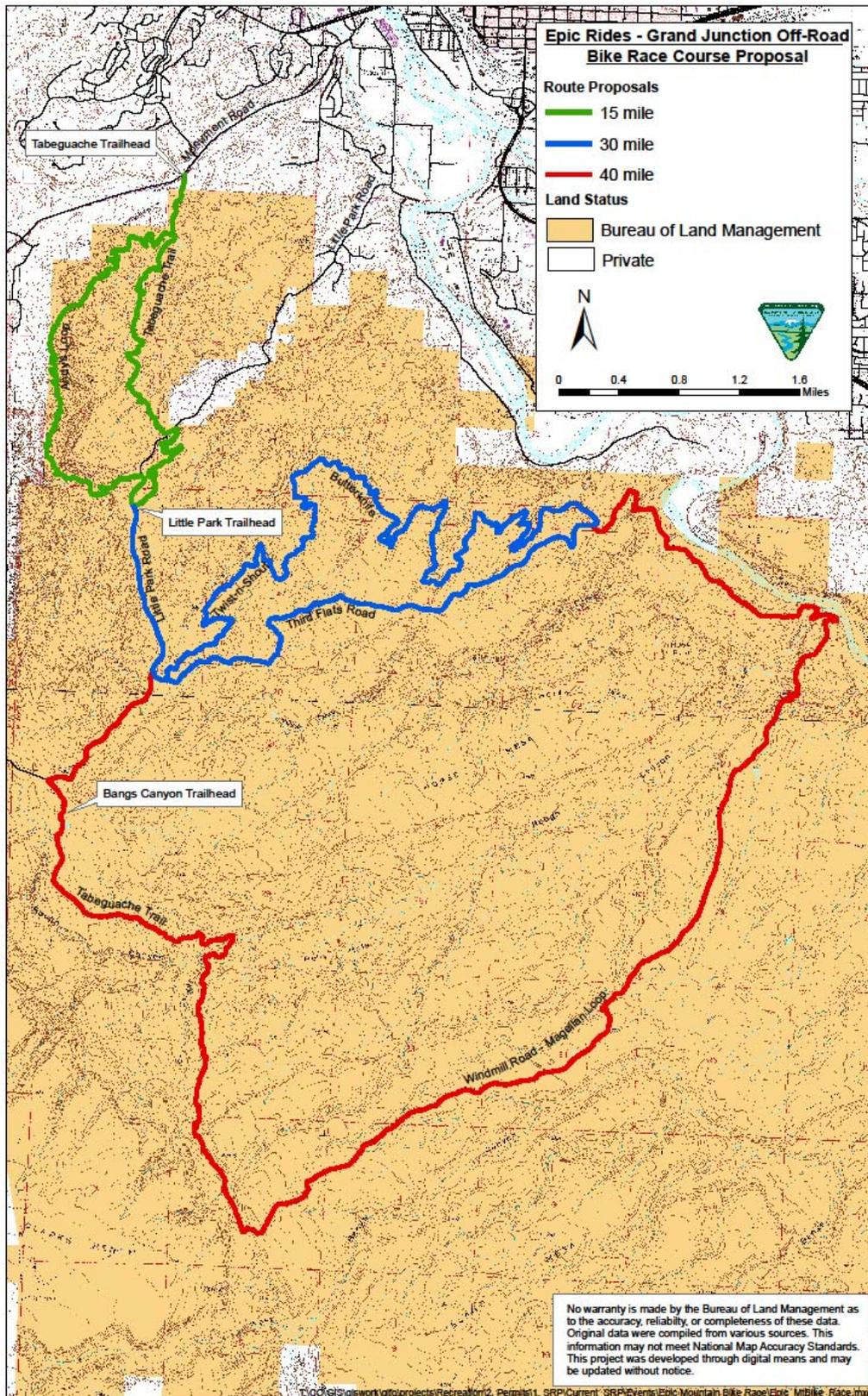
A minimum of one paramedic and EMT would be available each day of the event. One portable toilet would be located at Little Park TH. Trail marshals would be located throughout the course (see map in operations plan). Communications would be conducted with radios and cell phones. A safety plan would be implemented in conjunction with Grand Junction Fire Department. After the event, trail and resource rehabilitation would be conducted by event staff, if necessary.

The proponent has requested temporary closures of race route trails during the event, as well as use of city and county roads. The proponent has secured a commitment from the City of Grand Junction and Mesa County for use of city and county-administered routes and law enforcement support. The proponent would be required to post pre-event notices at local bike shops and other appropriate business locations, as well as at BLM/City trailheads notifying the public about event times and course locations. The proponent would also be responsible for posting race marshals along the race routes to inform and re-direct other trail users while the event is in progress. At this time, the BLM does not propose a full legal temporary closure, but would instead require the proponent to provide public notice alerting other trail users who might not want to recreate in the middle of a race. Marshals could not prohibit public use of the trails, but would encourage the use of alternative routes. During the race, marshals would direct vehicular and recreational traffic to promote public safety.

A final operations plan, including detailed safety, communications, monitoring and staging plans would be submitted by the proponent prior to issuance of the SRP and annual operating authorization.

The applicant has been informed that cost recovery could be implemented for the administration of this permit.

The permit stipulations that were included for the 2013 event are included in Attachment 1 at the end of this document. An updated version of those stipulations would be included in any permit authorized for the proposed 2014 event. Stipulation updates would be based on monitoring reports and recommendations from the 2013 event.



PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:

The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3) the following plan:

Name of Plan: Grand Junction Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: January, 1987

Decision Number/Page: 2-20, 2-34

Decision Language: To ensure the continued availability of outdoor recreational opportunities which the public seeks and which are not readily available from other public or private entities.

To protect resources, meet legal requirements for visitor health and safety, and mitigate resource user conflicts.

Designate and manage approximately 40,000 acres in the Bang's Canyon area as an intensive recreation management area... to maintain semi-primitive motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, scenic and natural values, and activities such as horseback riding, hiking, and trail oriented off-road vehicle use.

Name of Plan: Bangs Canyon Management Plan

Date Approved: August 1999

Decision Number/Page: II. Management Objectives, page 5

Decision Language: 1. Provide semi-primitive motorized, mechanized, non-motorized recreation opportunities, scenic and natural values, and activities such as horseback riding, hiking, trail running, mountain bike riding and trail oriented OHVs (motorcycles, ATVs and jeeps).

Name of Plan: Bangs Canyon Plan Implementation (CO-130-2004-018-EA)

Date Approved: April 2006

Decision Number/Page: Page 5, number 16

Decision Language: Special Recreation Permit (SRP) applications will be considered pursuant to SRP policy and evaluated against user conflict, maintenance of trail condition/integrity, and ability to help meet BLM's resource and social objectives.

## CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW:

The proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under (516 DM 11.9) H-1790-1, Appendix 4, Number: H. Recreation Management (1).

## EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

There are no extraordinary circumstances having effects, which may significantly affect the environment. I considered the following resource conditions in determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action warranted further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS (516 DM 2, Appendix 2):

**1. Have significant adverse effects on public health and safety.**

The proposed action is not expected to impact public health and safety because the event proponent's operation and safety plan specifies that law enforcement and EMS resources, as well as course marshals will be employed along the course to address potential public health and safety issues.

**2. Have adverse effects on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands, floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.**

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Previous cultural resource inventories have occurred for 42% of the trails located along the race course, surveyed in the following reports: ME.LM.NR491, ME.LM.R107, ME.LM.R194, MC.LM.R321, ME.LM.R529, ME.LM.R659, ME.LM.R662, ME.LM.R674, ME.LM.R759, ME.LM.NR338, ME.LM.NR434, ME.LM.R139, ME.LM.R140, ME.LM.R265, ME.LM.R452, ME.LM.R480, ME.LM.R483, ME.LM.R648, and ME.LM.R848. These surveys have revealed thirteen cultural sites (5ME323, 5ME4206, 5ME4208, 5ME4212, 5ME4278, 5ME11922, 5ME12984, 5ME13009, 5ME14287, 5ME17567, 5ME17569, 5ME18324, and 5ME19697) located close to or bisected by the trails.

Of those sites, 5ME323, 5ME4278, 5ME4278, 5ME12984, and 5ME14287 are determined needs data for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). One site, 5ME13009 has been determined officially eligible for listing on the NRHP. The remaining eight sites: 5ME4206, 5ME4208, 5ME4212, 5ME11922, 5ME17567, 5ME17569, 5ME18324, and 5ME19697 are not eligible for the NRHP. The BLM Grand Junction Field Office has developed a Memorandum of Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office to phase the remaining needed survey over the course of the next four years. It is highly likely that additional survey will reveal additional cultural resources that may be impacted by the race if protections are not in place. Monitoring and appropriate mitigation of features exposed in the trails used for this race would result in minimal impacts to cultural resources. Before the race

occurs, features that are being impacted at 5ME13009 would be mitigated, potentially through data recovery.

Although the race would take place entirely on designated trails, the proposed route is in an area of high cultural resource sensitivity, and as such, the proponent would be required to mitigate possible effects to cultural resources from the race. This could include measures to minimize off-trail traffic, such as instructing racers not to pass on single track trail segments, identifying and limiting spectator areas, fencing sites and/or installing monitors or marshals at sensitive locations. The BLM authorized officer would provide technical and procedural guidelines to assist the proponent in conducting protective measures at sensitive cultural resources. Strict adherence to the confidentiality of information concerning the nature and location of archeological resources would be required of the proponent and all of their subcontractors, employees and volunteers (Archaeological Resource Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 470hh).

**SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS:** The portion of the course using the Magellan Loop along the Windmill Road and Tabeguache Trail is adjacent to the Bangs Canyon and Bangs West wilderness characteristics inventory units that were inventoried in 2011. The Bangs Canyon unit was identified as having wilderness characteristics and the West Bangs unit was determined not to possess wilderness characteristics. The race would not occur within the Bangs Canyon unit, only along its boundary and racers would likely be widely dispersed on this, the most remote, portion of the course. Any impacts to wilderness characteristics would be short term social setting impacts.

**DRINKING WATER AQUIFERS, WETLANDS, FLOODPLAINS:** The proposed action would have no direct effect to drinking water aquifers. Elevated erosion rates from and adjacent to designated routes could occur given the volume of use and potential for trail widening. However, these impacts would be reduced by utilizing trail monitors (specifically on single track routes) and post-race trail maintenance. Viewing areas for spectators need to be clearly defined and appropriately sited to avoid resource impacts. Likewise, additional portable toilets may be necessary in viewing areas and at aid stations.

**MIGRATORY BIRDS:** The proposed action would not impact migratory bird nesting primarily due to the timing of the event in September. Most migratory bird species have completed nesting, and young have fledged by July in the low elevation habitats where the event is being held. The two species of goldfinch in the area are the major exception, but since no vegetation would be disturbed or cleared, nests would not be affected. In addition, these species are most likely nesting much closer to water sources during this late summer time period.

**3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.**

The event uses roads and trails that have been designated for mountain bicycle use in the Bangs Canyon Management Plan. Therefore, the environmental effects are not

likely to be controversial.

**4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.**

Mountain bicycle races have been permitted in the Bangs Canyon SRMA on numerous occasions in the past and pose no unique or unknown risks. Mountain biking is a type of activity for which these trails are designated.

**5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.**

This decision is like one of many that have previously been made and will continue to be made by BLM responsible officials regarding issuance of Special Recreation Permits on public lands. The decision is within the scope of the Resource Management Plan and is not expected to establish a precedent for future actions. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The permit would be issued for one year only, allowing assessment to determine the appropriateness of issuing permits in subsequent years.

**6. Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.**

This is a stand-alone project. There are no projects with significant environmental impacts known to BLM that would result directly or indirectly from implementation of this project.

**7. Have adverse effects on properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places.**

Thirteen cultural sites (5ME323, 5ME4206, 5ME4208, 5ME4212, 5ME4278, 5ME11922, 5ME12984, 5ME13009, 5ME14287, 5ME17567, 5ME17569, 5ME18324, and 5ME19697) located close to or bisected by the trails. Of those sites, 5ME323, 5ME4278, 5ME4278, 5ME12984, and 5ME14287 are determined needs data for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). One site, 5ME13009 has been determined officially eligible for listing on the NRHP. The remaining eight sites: 5ME4206, 5ME4208, 5ME4212, 5ME11922, 5ME17567, 5ME17569, 5ME18324, and 5ME19697 are not eligible for the NRHP. The BLM Grand Junction Field Office has developed a Memorandum of Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office to phase the remaining needed survey over the course of the next four years. It is highly likely that additional survey will reveal additional cultural resources that may be impacted by the race if protections are not in place. Monitoring and appropriate mitigation of features exposed in the trails used for this race would result in minimal impacts to cultural resources. Before the race occurs, features that are being impacted at 5ME13009 would be mitigated, potentially through data recovery.

**8. Have adverse effects on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species.**

Habitat exists that supports the threatened Colorado Hookless Cactus. The area has been partially surveyed for this species. The proposed route lies on existing trails and is not expected to increase impacts to the cactus, at anticipated 2014 participation levels. However, since the event is a race, the possibility exists that riders may try to pass each other, which could be an issue for cactus near single-track trails. Portions of the race route within potential cactus habitat will be surveyed for the Colorado hookless cactus in 2014, and if found, barriers and/or monitoring personnel would be in place for the race to prevent destruction of the cactus, and appropriate consultation will take place with USFWS.

**9. Have the potential to violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.**

This proposal complies with other Federal, State, or local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

**10. Have the potential for a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.**

The minority and low-income populations of the county are small relative to state-wide averages and such populations are dispersed throughout the county. Therefore, no minority or low-income populations would suffer disproportionately high and adverse effects as a result of the Proposed Action.

**11. Restrict access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.**

The Bangs Canyon area has been identified as a cultural landscape by an Indian tribe that consults with the BLM – Grand Junction Field Office and the cultural resources located during the field inventories suggest that the project area holds special significance for Native Americans for traditional or religious purposes. It is possible that the temporary trail closures could temporarily alter or limit any access for tribal members if there were traditional uses that are not known to the agency.

**12. Significantly, contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.**

This project is designed to minimize disturbance to avoid new infestation of noxious weeds. The field office weed crew can pre-treat one small section of the proposed route for Russian knapweed prior to the race to mitigate the threat of weed seed transport.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Title</u></b>	<b><u>Area of Responsibility</u></b>
Natalie Clark	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns
Heidi Plank	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife, Fisheries, Special Status Species
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Hydrology
Sparky Taber	Weed Mgmt. Specialist	Weed Management
Chris Pipkin	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Access/Transportation, Visual Resources, Special Designations
Anna Lincoln	Ecologist	Special Status Species (Plants)

**NAME OF PREPARER:** Chris Pipkin

**NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:** Christina Stark

**DATE:** 7/2/14

**UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
GRAND JUNCTION FIELD OFFICE**

**DECISION DOCUMENT**

**EPIC RIDES GRAND JUNCTION OFF-ROAD MOUNTAIN BIKE RACE  
DOI-BLM-CO-130-2014-0012-CX**

**DECISION:**

I have reviewed this document and have decided to implement the Epic Rides Mountain Bike Race project described above in the proposed action. This project is categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS under (516 DM 11.9) H-1790-1, Appendix 4, Number: H (1). Recreation Management (1), which says "Issuance of Special Recreation Permits for day use or overnight use up to 14 consecutive nights; that impacts no more than 3 staging area acres; and/or for recreational travel along roads, trails, or in areas authorized in a land use plan."

**RATIONALE:**

This action is listed in the National Environmental Policy Act Handbook as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 12 criteria listed above and have determined that no extraordinary circumstances exist.

This event will provide an opportunity for mountain bikers of various abilities to participate and/or compete in an organized ride/race that exposes participants and spectators to the unique trails and landscapes of the Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area. By utilizing a marked and marshaled course on the area's designated trail network, impacts to other users and resources should be minimal. Plans for thorough monitoring of the event will provide valuable information for evaluation of similar event proposals in the future.



Field Manager  
Grand Junction Field Office

7-3-14

Date

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Stipulations

**Table 1– Potentially Impacted Resources (From NEPA notification document)**

Resources	Not Present On Location	No Impact	Potentially Impacted	Mitigation Necessary?	BLM Evaluator Initial & Date	Comments
<b>PHYSICAL RESOURCES</b>						
Air and Climate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	ND 6/16/14	
Water (surface & subsurface, floodplains)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	ND 6/16/14	See above
Soils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	ND 6/16/14	See above
Geological/Mineral Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	DSG 2/10/14	
<b>BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES</b>						
Special Status Plants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	ARL 6/17/14	Need onsite monitor during race, requesting hours to cover monitoring of race activities.
Special Status Wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	HLP 6/16/14	No impact anticipated at proposed time of year
Migratory Birds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	HLP 6/16/14	No impact anticipated at proposed time of year
Other Important Wildlife Habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	HLP 6/16/14	No impact anticipated at proposed time of year
Vegetation, Forestry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	JRD 6/24/14	No impact anticipated if participants follow the stipulations.
Invasive, Non-native Species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	MT 3/21/14	Route surveyed and treated for weeds prior to 2013 race.
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CS 5/12/14	Aid Station #2 should remain in its proposed location, away from the Gunnison River
<b>HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENV.</b>						
Cultural or Historical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	NFC 6/10/14	Mitigation to protect sites in the trail corridors is necessary..
Paleontological	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	DSG 2/10/14	

**Table 1– Potentially Impacted Resources (From NEPA notification document)**

Resources	Not Present On Location	No Impact	Potentially Impacted	Mitigation Necessary?	BLM Evaluator Initial & Date	Comments
Tribal& American Indian Religious Concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NFC 6/10/14	Mitigation likely due to high probability of sites along and in the trails.
Visual Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 5/29/14	
Social/Economic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 5/29/14	
Transportation and Access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 5/29/14	See comments above
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	AK 2/10/14	
<b>LAND RESOURCES</b>						
Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 5/29/14	See comments above
Special Designations (ACEC, SMAs, WSR)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 5/29/14	Portion of Tabeguache trail crosses Rough Canyon ACEC
Wilderness & Wilderness Characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 5/29/14	Bangs Canyon LWC unit is adjacent to Windmill Road
Range Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	JRD 6/24/14	No impact anticipated at proposed time of year
Wild Horse and Burros	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	JRD 6/24/14	
Land Tenure, ROW, Other Uses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	RBL 6/16/14	
Fire/Fuels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	JP 6/27/14	