

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

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area
Special Recreation Permit Program
DOI-BLM-CO-134-2013-0005-EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §1508.27, I have determined that issuance of Special Recreation Permits (SRP) in the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area as proposed in the Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA), and with the use of the identified design features will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is therefore not required.

BACKGROUND

Special Recreation Permits are important as a mechanism to facilitate meeting recreation objectives in the Resource Management Plan. Outfitters and event promoters provide a critical service connecting the public to recreation opportunities. The McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (MCNCA) does not currently have a programmatic SRP environmental assessment (EA). Most Bureau of Land Management (BLM) permitted SRPs are Categorical Exclusions from documentation in an EA or EIS, however this categorical exclusion cannot be used in “Special Areas” including NCAs. This EA serves to analyze the impacts of authorizing SRPs in the MCNCA and will prevent the need to write an EA for each permit which will expedite the SRP process and reduce the amount of time, burden, and expense required for applicants, existing permittees, and BLM staff.

INTENSITY

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from issuing SRPs within the MCNCA relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). With regard to each:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The recreation permit program would have some short term adverse impacts at a minor level, to soils and vegetation, these effects are not significant and the long term effects to soils, vegetation, recreation, and wetlands and riparian habitat would be beneficial. The impacts that do occur are the result of recreation activities that were contemplated in the EIS for the McInnis Canyons NCA RMP (2004).

2. *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*

The proposed action is not expected to impact public health and safety.

3. *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The proposed action would not significantly impact the unique characteristics of the historical or cultural resources in the NCA. There are no significant impacts to parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas within the project area.

4. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The proposed action is expected to improve the quality of the human environment by improving the experience of the participant. The effects are relatively well understood by the academic and practicing communities.

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

Recreation has a long history in the region and poses no unique or unknown risks.

6. *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

This decision is like one of many that have previously been made and that will continue to be made by the BLM responsible officials regarding recreation 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.

7. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

There are no significant cumulative effects on the environment, either when combined with the effects created by past and concurrent projects, or when combined with the effects from natural changes taking place in the environment or from reasonably foreseeable future projects.

8. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

Cultural inventories have been conducted in portions of the NCA to establish a baseline for potential impacts from recreation. Potential impacts are mitigated when identified. No adverse impacts have been identified for the proposed action. Some projects may require additional cultural resources inventory. In those cases BLM will consult with the State Historic Preservation Office to ensure that properties eligible for the National Historic Register are not adversely affected

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

No impacts were brought forward that would indicate any adverse impacts to endangered or threatened species or its habitats. A No Effect determination was made. Individual SRPs could impact threatened or endangered species or critical habitat. In those cases BLM will consult with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure the proposed action will not jeopardize the continued existence of the species or adversely modify designated critical habitat.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

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

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On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: 1) the authorization of the Proposed Action will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the “Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision,” for the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area and Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness (*September 2004*) ; (2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Resource Management Plans; and (3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This finding is based on my consideration of the CEQ’s criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA.

Manager
McInnis Canyons NCA

Date

