

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

**Environmental Assessment
for the North Fruita Desert SMA Trails – Part 2**

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

DOI-BLM-CO-130-2012-0038-EA

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND:

In early 2012, six trail proposals were brought forward for analysis in NEPA document DOI-BLM-CO-130 2012-0013-EA. Decisions regarding three of the trails initially proposed in that document were eventually deferred due to the need for additional analysis. Those three deferred proposals are now being brought forward for analysis and a decision in this document. This EA has been prepared by the BLM to analyze the proposed addition of 15.5 miles of new singletrack trails in the North Fruita Desert Special Management Area (SMA). This SMA designation was established through a planning process that culminated in 2004. Several of the management prescriptions in that plan have yet to be implemented. During the SMA planning process the NFD was identified as having many singletrack trail opportunities for recreational users. A bicycle emphasis area was designated for targeted management of mountain biking opportunities. In addition to a designated trail network, the bicycle emphasis area includes a developed campground with 35 sites, used primarily by mountain bikers. In areas outside of the bicycle emphasis area, management is focused on a multiple-use motorized trail system. One of the trails identified conceptually in the 2004 NFD SMA Plan (Trail F in this document) was illegally constructed sometime in 2009, and subsequently closed by the BLM when it was discovered in 2010. A redesigned alignment of this route is included for analysis in this document.

In the spring of 2011 a working group was formed to develop a strategy for continued implementation of trail development actions identified in the 2004 NFD SMA plan. The working group consisted of representatives from the City of Fruita, the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association (COPMOBA), Responsible Recreation Foundation (RRF), Motorcycle Trail Riders Association (MTRA), Fruita business owners and the BLM. This group identified additional trail construction in the NFD as a way to meet increasing demand for trail-based recreation opportunities in the area, along with the associated economic benefits to the community.

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER:

DOI-BLM-CO-130 2012-0038-EA

PROJECT NAME:

North Fruita Desert Trails Part 2

PLANNING UNIT:

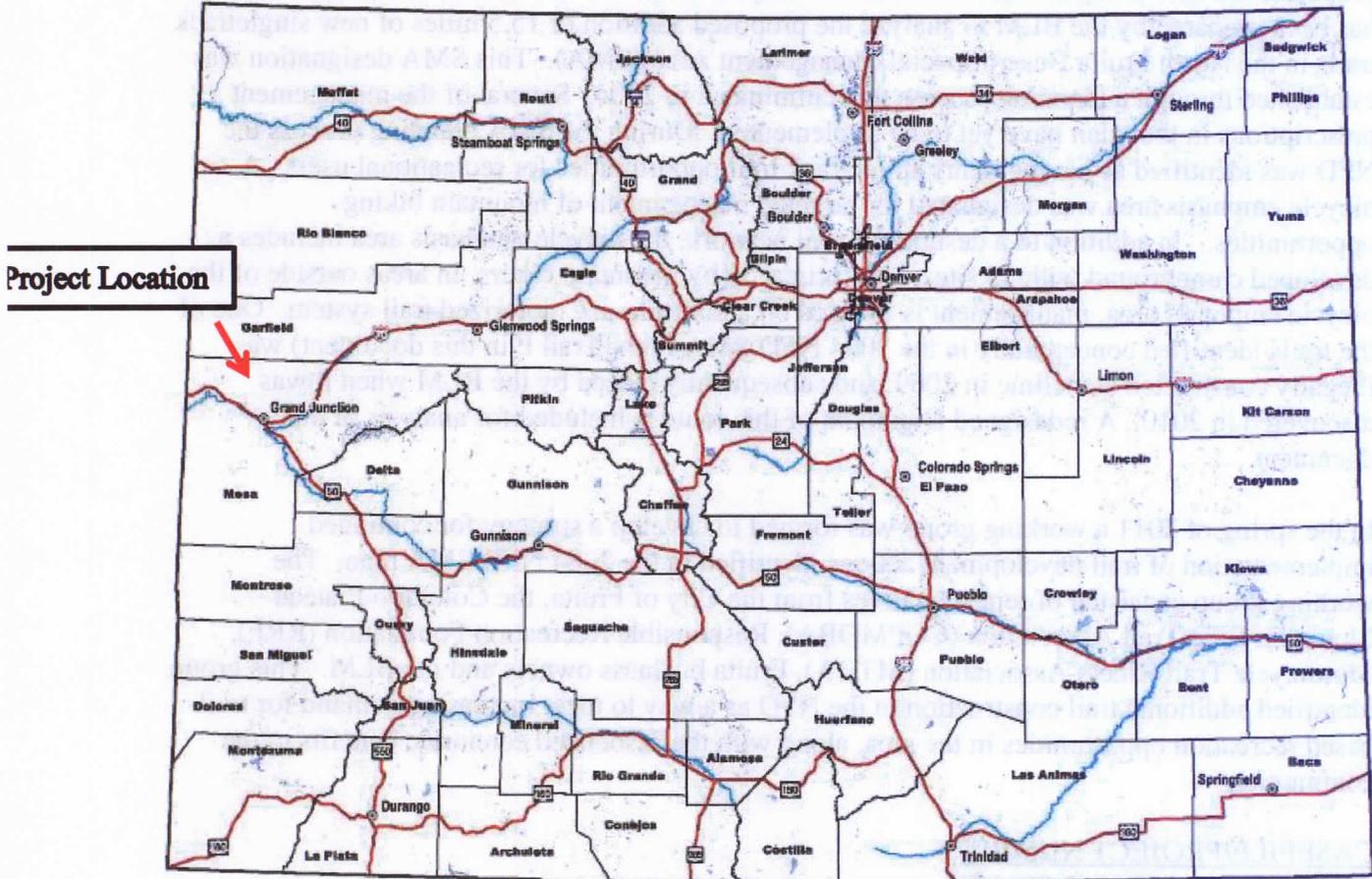
BLM, CO, Grand Junction Field Office, North Fruita Desert SMA

1.2 PROJECT LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION

The North Fruita Desert SMA is located approximately 12 miles north of Fruita, Colorado. A map identifying the locations of each of the three proposed trails is included below in section 2.2.1, Proposed Action. Digital map documents and associated shapefiles are located at:

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

6th PM T8S, R.102W, Sections 13, 14, 24, 36
6th PM T8S, R.101W, Sections 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 29, 30, 31
6th PM T9S, R.102W, Section 1
6th PM T9S, R.101W, Section 6



1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide one new mountain bike trail, and two new multiple-use (motorized and non-motorized) singletrack opportunities in the NFD SMA. The need for this project is to address public demand for additional recreation opportunities that were first identified during the North Fruita Desert SMA planning process, and subsequently in trail development requests from recreation user groups and the community of Fruita. The need for the project is established by BLM's responsibility under FLMPA to respond to requests for construction of recreational trails across BLM-managed lands. The proposed action is consistent with and supports the objectives of the North Fruita Desert Management Plan.

1.4 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW

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

Name of Plan:

GRAND JUNCTION Resource Management Plan 1987

Decision Language and Page Number:

Pages 1-20

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.

Name of Plan:

North Fruita Desert Management Area Plan 2004

Decision Language and Page Number:

Page 47

Additional trails throughout the planning area will be considered by the BLM, after the implementation of the actions described in this plan, subject to the agency's environmental analysis process and consistency with this plan.

In January 1997, the Colorado State Office of the BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health and amended all RMPs in the State. Standards describe the conditions needed to sustain public land health and apply to all uses of public lands.

Standard 1: Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes.

Standard 2: Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods.

Standard 3: Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential.

Standard 4: Special status, threatened and endangered species (federal and state), and other plants and animals officially designated by the BLM, and their habitats are maintained or enhanced by sustaining healthy, native plant and animal communities.

Standard 5: The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado.

Because standards exist for each of these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in Chapter 3 of this document.

1.5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1.5.1 Scoping: NEPA regulations (40 CFR §1500-1508) require that the BLM use a scoping process to identify potential significant issues in preparation for impact analysis. The principal goals of scoping are to allow public participation to identify issues, concerns, and potential impacts that require detailed analysis.

Persons/Public/Agencies Consulted: One of these trails (Trail F) was identified conceptually, and made available for public comment during the North Fruita Desert Special Management Area planning process beginning in 2000. Early in 2011 three planning meetings were conducted in the community of Fruita, and on-site to discuss the need for trail development, and to identify what kind of future trail system was preferred. These meetings were open to the public and comments were discussed among a working group of stakeholders. Participants included representatives from COPMOBA, the City of Fruita, Fruita businesses and the BLM. Based on input from these meetings, the working group recommended the trail proposals described in this document and in NEPA document DOI-BLM-CO-130 2012-0013-EA. In general, the group expressed a desire for a variety of new trail opportunities in the NFD. There were no concerns expressed by this group about the three trails proposed in this document.

Internal scoping included discussions with the GJFO interdisciplinary team and staff from Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The potential need for a stormwater management plan was identified to address water quality and soil resource requirements. The need for a plant survey along the proposed alignment of Trail B was identified and has since been completed. A seasonal closure to protect wintering big game was recommended for Trails E and F. A raptor survey was recommended for sections of Trail F running along the edge of the Book Cliffs. Scoping also included posting this project on the Grand Junction Field Office NEPA website. No comments were received via this mechanism.

A fluid mineral lease is planned for development at the east end of Trail F. This information was unknown during the time when the previous document, DOI-BLM-CO-130 2012 0013-EA was written. The alignment of Trail F was changed to avoid the drilling pad. An onsite visit to the proposed well pad with the interdisciplinary team and the developers was conducted May 24, 2012. Accommodation of the trail across or around the pad was discussed at that time and an alternate trail alignment was identified around the south side of the proposed well pad.

1.6 DECISION TO BE MADE

The BLM will decide whether to implement the proposed North Fruita Trails project based on the analysis contained in this Environmental Assessment (EA). This EA has been prepared by the BLM to analyze the proposed addition of 15.5 miles of new singletrack trails in the North Fruita Desert Special Management Area (SMA). In early 2012, six trail proposals were brought forward for analysis in NEPA document DOI-BLM-CO-130-2012-0013-EA. Decisions regarding three of the trails initially proposed in that document were eventually deferred due to the need for additional analysis. Those three deferred proposals were brought forward and analyzed in this document.

This EA will analyze the construction and use of 15.5 miles of new singletrack trails. The BLM may choose to: a) construct the three trails as proposed; b) construct a select set of the proposed trails, with modifications based on the analysis in this document; or c) not implement the project at this time.

CHAPTER 2 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information on the Proposed Action and Alternatives. Alternatives considered but not analyzed in detail are also discussed.

2.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL

2.2.1 Proposed Action

The BLM Grand Junction Field Office, City of Fruita, and COPMOBA have proposed the construction of three new trail segments within the North Fruita Desert SMA (see Table 2.2 and the attached maps below.) One of the trails that is being proposed at this time is located within the Bicycle Emphasis Area (Trail B). The other two trails are located outside of the bicycle emphasis area, and are multiple-use singletrack trails (Trail E and F) and would be open to motorcyclists, bicyclists, equestrians and hikers. Trails E and F would be closed seasonally from December 1 to April 30 to protect wintering big game. The closures would be implemented using gates, fences and informational/regulatory signage at each of the four access points for these two trails.

All of the trails would be constructed using a combination of hand tools (pick mattocks, McCleods, shovels, rakes) and motorized trail-building equipment (walk-behind trail machine, mini-excavator). Tread width for these trails would vary from 18 inches to 24 inches, and the short-term corridor disturbance (during construction) would be up to 48 inches. All spills of fuel and lubricants used during construction of the trails will be promptly reported to the BLM. Any contaminated soil will be promptly removed and either disposed of or treated, as determined appropriate by the BLM.

All trails would be designed and constructed using best management practices described in the GJFO Trail Design Criteria (BLM 2004) and IMBA's "Trail Solutions" (IMBA 2004.) The proposed construction timeframe for these trails would be summer and fall of 2012, within the constraints of any timing limitations for resource protection identified in the analyses of this document. Construction of Trail B would be cooperatively funded and coordinated by the BLM GJFO, City of Fruita, and COPMOBA. Trail E would be constructed by volunteers and/or youth corps crews. Trail F would be constructed by the Western Colorado Conservation Corps, funded by a Colorado Off Highway Vehicle Grant.

Trail crossings at Big Salt Wash and Coal Gulch (Trail E) would be created perpendicular to the creeks or in areas with natural armoring or bank protections. Creek crossing locations would be placed away from sensitive riparian vegetation such as cottonwoods where possible. Creek crossings would be monitored to ensure that trails do not migrate out of the approved footprint and to ensure that new crossings are not created. If excessive erosion is found to be occurring at

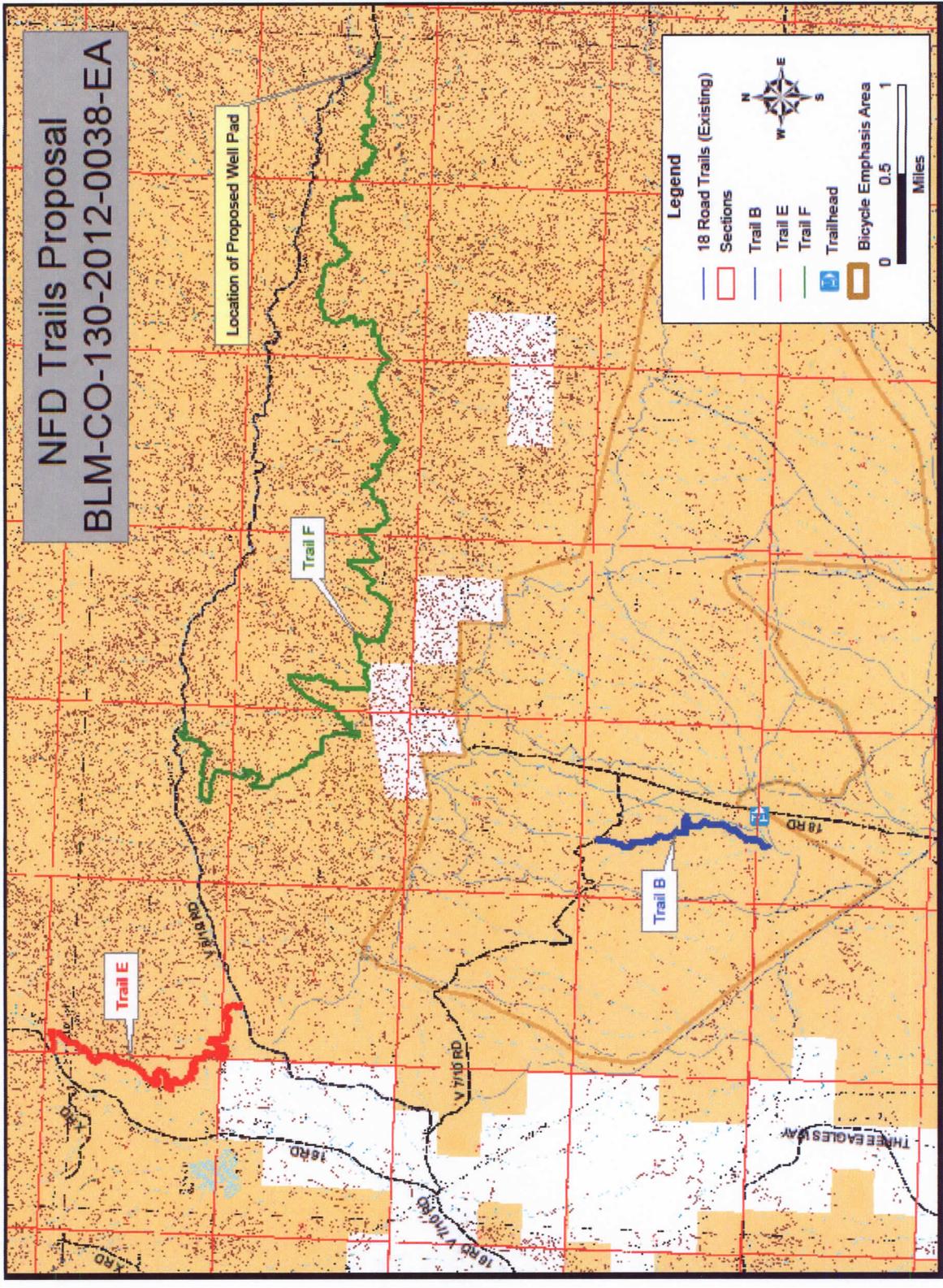
the two creek crossings then they may be armored or relocated as necessary to protect the riparian zone. Recreation parking/staging at the ends of Trail E would be discouraged and “No Parking” signs would be installed if parked vehicles begin to impede traffic or cause resource damage.

All of the proposed trails would be signed using BLM signing standards to identify trail names, allowable uses, intersection numbers and directional arrows. The BLM would coordinate with Mesa County regarding the installation of speed limit signs and safety warning signs for mixed use traffic on 16 Road, V.7 Road and V.8 Road.

Table 2.2 North Fruita Desert Trail Proposals

Trail Name	Applicant	Proposed Action	Construction Mileage
Trail B (Eat at Joes)	City of Fruita/ COPMOBA	Construction	1.0
Trail E (Coal Gulch to 16 Rd)	Internal	Construction	2.5
Trail F (Backside)	Internal	Construction	12
Total			15.5

NFD Trails Proposal
BLM-CO-130-2012-0038-EA



T:\CO\GIS\giswork\projects\Recreation\1. Planning - Project Files\North Fruita Desert\NEPA\EA-2012-0038 - Trails B_E_F\FNFD Trails Proposal B_E_F.mxd



2.2.3 No Action Alternative

In this alternative, the development of the North Fruita Desert Trails would not occur. Recreationists would continue to use the existing travel system.

CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action and presents comparative analyses of the direct, indirect and cumulative effects on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the actions under the Proposed Action and other alternatives analyzed.

This EA draws upon information compiled in the Grand Junction Resource Area RMP (BLM 1987) and the North Fruita Desert SMA Plan (BLM 2004).

3.1.1 Elements Not Affected

The following elements, identified as not being present or not affected will not be brought forward for additional analysis:

Resource	Rationale
ACEC	There are no ACECs present in the immediate vicinity of the proposed trails.
Farmlands	There are no farmlands of unique value within the proposed action vicinity.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	There are no eligible Wild and Scenic River segments in the immediate vicinity of the proposed trails.
Wilderness	There are no Wilderness areas, WSAs or lands with wilderness characteristics in the immediate vicinity of the proposed trails.
Geology	This project will not impact any unique geologic resources.
Air Quality	Given the nature of the proposed action and the limited degree of surface, no substantial impacts to air quality are anticipated.
Land Status/Realty Authorizations	The northern portion of Trail E is located near an existing natural gas pipeline (right-of-way grant COC-50897). Given the nature of the proposed action, no conflicts or impacts to the ROW are anticipated.

3.1.1 Past, Present, Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

NEPA requires federal agencies to consider the cumulative effects of proposals under their review. Cumulative effects are defined in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations 40 CFR §1508.7 as "...the impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency...or person undertakes such other actions." The CEQ states that the "cumulative effects analyses should be conducted on the scale of human communities, landscapes, watersheds, or airsheds" using the concept of "project impact zone" or more simply put, the area that might be affected by the proposed action. The area that may be affected by this project includes the 5th code watershed that contains the project area. To assess past, present and

reasonably foreseeable actions that may occur within the affected area a review of GJFO NEPA log and our field office GIS data was completed. The following list includes all past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions known to the BLM that may occur within the affected area:

Past Actions:

- North Fruita Desert SMA PLAN - 2004
- North Fruita Trail Proposal CO-130-2011-0027-DNA
- 18 RD Campground Proposal CO-130-2009-0059
- North Fruita Desert Trails CO-130-2012-013-EA

Present Actions:

The developed campground in the Bicycle Emphasis Area currently contains 35 campsites that are currently free of charge and are typically filled to capacity on weekends from March through May and from September through November. A proposal to begin charging fees for overnight camping (\$10 per night) has received initial approval and is scheduled to be implemented starting in September 2012. Current management allows for camping to occur at undeveloped campsites outside of the Bicycle Emphasis Area. During the peak use season described above there are typically 30-40 “overflow” camps at these undeveloped campsites.

Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

A Resource Management Plan revision for the GJFO is currently in internal review and will be released as a draft to the public in the fall of 2012 with a tentative release date of late 2013 or early 2014. The RMP revision has the potential to change land use allocations in the North Fruita Desert. Expansion of the developed campground and limiting overnight use to designated, undeveloped sites may be necessary to mitigate increased use and provide for resource protection. Analysis of three trails totaling 15.5 miles is currently under review in the North Fruita Desert. Internal scoping indicated that these trails needed additional biological studies that are currently ongoing. This list of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions was considered when analyzing cumulative effects in sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 below. They include oil and gas development, grazing, ROWs, etc.

3.2 PHYSICAL RESOURCES

3.2.3 Mineral Resources

Current Conditions:

The proposed trail system would utilize these existing county roads. The Coal Gulch Road (V.8 Rd) services 16 active natural gas well locations. The county route 16 Road services 28 active or proposed natural gas well locations north of the Coal Gulch Road turn off. There are three pending well development proposals for locations using both 16 and V.8 Roads for access.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: There would be no direct effects to mineral resources if the proposed trails are not constructed. Indirect impacts would be related to transportation and access issues for energy industry workers. Those impacts are described in section 3.4.8, Transportation/Access.

Cumulative Effects:

Over time, more trails may be created by recreational users without the approval and design of BLM planners, as is the case with portions of the proposed action (Trail F.) If unplanned recreational trail use increases in the area there would be a general increased chance of conflicts between users due to a lack of planning insight. Conflicts with energy industry workers could reduce working environment safety and cause minor inconveniences.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: There would be no direct effects to mineral resources from the proposed action. Indirect impacts would be related to transportation and access issues for energy industry workers. Those impacts are described in more detail in section 3.4.8, Transportation/Access. Impacts would occur primarily related to construction of proposed routes E and F due to potential traffic conflicts between motorcyclists and bicyclists and motor vehicles on county routes V.7, V.8 and 16 Roads. Conflicts with energy industry workers could reduce working environment safety and cause minor inconveniences. Potential collisions with users and vehicles could occur.

Cumulative Effects:

Anticipated increases in energy development and recreational use in the area would continue to increase the potential for conflicts between road and trail users.

3.2.4 Soils (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Current Conditions:

Soils in the desert area, north of the Highline Canal, west to the state line, and to the Bookcliffs, are developing in and from shales and sandstones of the Mancos and Mesa Verde Formations. They are generally alkaline, and some have a high salt content. Surface textures range from sandy loam to silty clay; substratum textures vary from loamy sand to silty clay or clay. Weathered shale or sandstone bedrock is at depths from less than 12 inches to many feet below the surface. Exposures of shale and sandstone bedrock are common. The area is dissected by many gullies, with runoff-producing events carrying sediment into the gully system. Depending on the intensity and duration of convective storm events or from particularly heavy and rapid snowmelt, sediment from upland erosion can enter major drainage networks such as Big Salt Wash and eventually reach the Colorado River. Erosion of exposed geologic material on steep slopes is a major contributor of sediment. There is no indication of excessive soil erosion in the area as a whole. There are, of course, small areas scattered throughout the desert with indicators of erosion that is taking place at greater rates than the soils resource can sustain. In these areas, lack of soil cover (vegetation, litter, cryptogamic crust, inorganics) is a factor, as are recreation and historic livestock uses. The main factor limiting increases in ground cover and the vigor of existing plants is the lack of precipitation, a high evaporation rate, and saline/alkali conditions in many of the soils. The Mancos Shale (and its marine sediments) is the primary factor.

Finding for Public Land Health Standard 1 (Soils):

The proposed travel facilities cross areas which are meeting land health standard 1 as well as areas which are not. Areas not meeting standard 1 are confined to swales and drainage bottoms. These areas lack desirable perennial vegetation necessary to stabilize soils and experience higher than normal rates of erosion.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the no-action alternative, no new trail construction would be authorized. Recreational usage in the area would continue to grow as Grand Valley communities expand and the demand for recreational opportunities close to these urban areas increases. No direct impacts to soil resources are anticipated to occur under the no-action alternative. However, indirect impacts could occur as a result of increased use of existing travel facilities and development of unauthorized routes which may not be properly designed, constructed, or maintained. Under these circumstances soil resources could be degraded as increased surface disturbance would elevate erosion potential.

Finding for Public Land Health Standard 1 (Soils):

No change from current conditions would be anticipated under the No-action alternative. Areas meeting land health standard 1 would continue to do so. Areas currently not meeting land health standard 1 would also continue to not meet standards in the absence of intense reclamation efforts and favorable weather conditions.

Cumulative Effects:

Under the No-action alternative, BLM would not develop additional travel facilities in this area. However, demand for recreational activities is anticipated to increase in this area. As a result, un-authorized routes could continue to be developed in the area. It is unlikely these un-authorized routes would be constructed to BLM standards for sustainability and would likely cause accelerated erosion over time.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Implementation of the proposed action will result in expansion of travel facilities in the 18 road area open to mechanized travel. New surface disturbance associated with the proposed action is anticipated to be less than 5 acres based on typical trail construction widths less than 24 inches. Direct effects of the proposed action would be increased erosion potential from the project area during construction and maintenance activities as soils will be stripped of stabilizing vegetation, woody debris, and rock. Decreased soil stabilization increases erosion potential which also elevates potential alteration of natural drainage patterns with formation/enhancement of rills, pedestals and gullies. Changes in natural drainage patterns alters the hydrologic function of watersheds as degraded upland conditions reduced residence time of rainfall through soils and vegetation increasing frequency, magnitude, and intensity of sheet-flow events. Sheet flow events can be very damaging to soil resources as the landscape is stripped of valuable topsoil essential to sustaining a desirable vegetative community necessary to stabilize soils. However, degradation of soil resources resulting from the proposed action will be affectively mitigated through implementation of BMPs associated with BLM recreation facilities construction/maintenance standards. Likewise, the BLM has obtained a "Rainfall Erosivity Waiver" from the State which dictates appropriate periods for small construction projects (less than 5 acres) in lieu of CDPS Stormwater Permitting to limit erosion and reduce erosion potential during specific seasons. Indirect impacts to soil resources could occur with increased recreational use of the trail system. Increased use in these areas could cause trail damage and may result in more off trail use as recreationists drawn to the area expand camp sites, explore the area on foot, or illegally construct new routes. Increased surface disturbance would result as would erosion potential.

Finding for Public Land Health Standard 1 (Soils):

No change from current conditions would be anticipated with implementation of the proposed action. Areas meeting land health standard 1 would continue to do so. Areas currently not meeting land health standard 1 would also continue to not meet standards in the absence of intense reclamation efforts and favorable weather conditions.

Cumulative Effects:

Increased surface disturbance in the project area will increase erosion potential which may result in increased erosion and sedimentation to Big Salt Wash over time. However, because new routes will be constructed to BLM standards and would also be maintained to those standards, it is not anticipated that these impacts would modify current finding for Public Land Health Standard 1.

3.2.5 Water (surface and groundwater, floodplains) (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Current conditions:

The proposed project area is located within water quality stream segments 13a and 13e of the Lower Colorado River Basin. Stream Segment 13a is defined as “all tributaries to the Colorado River including wetlands, from a point immediately below the confluence or Roan Creek to the Colorado-Utah border except for the specific listings in Segments 13b through 19”. The primary drainages within stream segment 13a affected by the proposed action is Big Salt Wash. Big Salt Wash flows south to the Colorado River. Upper reaches of Big Salt Wash are perennial whereas lower reaches are intermittent to ephemeral in nature. The proposed action will be situated downgradient of all perennial reaches in Big Salt Wash.

Stream segment 13e of the Lower Colorado River Basin is defined as “All tributaries to the Colorado River, from Lewis Wash to the West Salt Creek drainage, from an elevation of 5,200 feet to the Government Highline Canal, excluding the mainstem of Big Salt Wash, East Salt Creek and West Salt Creek”. The primary drainage affected in stream segment 13e is Dry Gulch which is an ephemeral tributary to Big Salt Wash.

Table 1 identifies stream classifications and water quality standards for Lower Colorado Basin stream segment 13a and 13e as outlined in CDPHE, Regulation No. 37.

Stream Segment	Classification ^s	Numeric Standards					
		Physical and Biological	Inorganic (mg/l)		Metals (µg/l)		
COLCLC13a	Use Protected Aq Life Warm 2 Recreation P Agriculture	T=TVS(WS-IV) °C D.O.= 5.0 mg/l pH = 6.5-9.0 E.Coli=205/100ml	CN(ac)=0.2 NO2=10 NO3=100	B=0.75	As(ch)=100(Trec) Be(ch)=100(Trec) Cd(ch)=10(Trec) CrIII(ch)=100(Trec)	CrVI(ch)=100(Trec) Cu(ch)=200(Trec) Pb(ch)=100(Trec) Mn(ch)=200(Trec)	Ni(ch)=200(Trec) Se(ch)=20(Trec) Zn(ch)=2000(Trec)
COLCLC13e	Use Protected Aq Life Warm 2 Recreation P Agriculture	T=TVS (WS-IV)°C D.O.=5.0 mg/l pH=6.5-9.0 E.coli=205/100 ml	NO2=10 NO3=10 0	B=0.75 CN(ac)=0.2	As(ch)=100 (Trec) Be(ch)=100(Trec) Cd(ch)=10 (Trec) CrIII(ch)=100 (Trec) CrVI(ch)=100 (Trec)	Cu(ch)=200(Trec) Pb(ch)=100(Trec) Mn(ch)=200(Trec) Ni(ch)=200(Trec)	Se(ch)=20 (Trec) Zn(ch)=2000 (Trec)

The CDPHE —Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report-2010 update to the 2008 305(b) Report was reviewed to determine the current status of assessment and determination of water quality within the project area. The Colorado Integrated Reporting Category (IR) value assigned to the assessment units in the —Status of Water Quality in Colorado – 2010 document was: Segment 13a IR=2 and segment 13e was not assessed in the 2010 305(b) report as this segment was newly created in 2011. In Colorado, the majority of the assessed surface water bodies fall into IR Categories 1, 2, and 3. Colorado has elected to place segments where not all uses have been assessed in IR Category 2. In some cases, a complete assessment of all uses cannot be completed do to the lack of data, but the data that is available indicates that at least some of the uses that were assessed are fully supporting. IR Category 5 indicates that available data and/or information indicate that at least one classified use is not being supported or is threatened, and a TMDL is needed. Segments must be placed in Category 5 when, based on existing and readily available data and/or information, technology-based effluent limitations required by the Clean Water Act (CWA), more stringent effluent limitations, and other pollution control requirements are not sufficient to implement an applicable water quality standard and a TMDL is needed. This category constitutes the Section 303(d) list of waters impaired by a pollutant (CDPHE. 20010b).

The 2010 CDPHE-WQCC Regulation No. 93 Section 303d List of Impaired Waters and Monitoring and Evaluation List, was reviewed to determine if Lower Colorado River stream segments 13a and 13e were listed. Neither stream segment was identified on the 303(d) or Monitoring and Evaluation list (CDPHE. 2010a) indicating both segments meet State water quality standards.

Much of the upland watershed north of the Colorado River is situated on soils derived from Mancos shale. Mancos shale soils have naturally high concentrations of selenium and salts. Excessive erosion and irrigation of Mancos shale soils has been documented to be a major contributor to water quality degradation in other parts of the field office. Most recently BLM collected water quality samples in Salt Creek downstream of I-70 (10-12-2010) and in Big Salt Wash approximately 1 mile upstream from Coal Gulch (6/22/2011). Results indicate Se levels in Salt Creek to be 9.0 µg/L which is above chronic levels (4.6 µg/L). Selenium levels in Big Salt Wash were measured at 1.5 µg/L. Studies conducted by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the National Irrigation Water Quality Program (NIWQP) indicated primary source areas for selenium in the Colorado River near the Colorado/Utah State line to be the eastern side of the Uncompahgre Valley, and the western one-half of the Grand Valley, where extensive irrigation is located on Mancos Shales (Gunnison Basin Selenium Task Force, 2009). These findings support the notion that irrigation between the project area and the Colorado River are the primary factor influencing selenium concentrations in surface water (not BLM actions).

Of additional concern within the project area are contributions of sediment and salinity to the Colorado River system resulting from accelerated soil erosion in upland watersheds. The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act (Public Law 93-320) was enacted in June 1974. The Act was amended in 1984 by Public Law 98-569. Public Law 98-569 includes directing the BLM to develop a comprehensive program for minimizing salt contributions from lands under its management. Colorado's Grand Valley is recognized as the largest non-point source of salinity in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Big Salt Wash is a tributary to the Colorado River.

Finding on Standard 5: Stream segments 13a and 13e of the Lower Colorado River Basin currently meet water quality standards (CDPHE. 2010a).

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the no-action alternative, no new trail construction would be authorized. Recreational usage in the area would continue to grow as Grand Valley communities expand and the demand for recreational opportunities close to these urban areas increases. No direct impacts to water resources are anticipated to occur under the no-action alternative. However, indirect impacts could occur as a result of increased use of existing travel facilities and development of unauthorized routes which may not be properly designed, constructed, or maintained. Under these circumstances water quality could be degraded as increased surface disturbance would elevate erosion and sedimentation potential.

Finding on Standard 5: Stream segments 13a and 13e of the Lower Colorado River Basin currently meet water quality standards (CDPHE. 2010a). Implementation of the No-Action alternative would not likely result any change to this determination.

Cumulative Effects:

Under the No-action alternative, BLM would not develop additional travel facilities in this area. However, demand for recreational activities is anticipated to increase in this area. As a result, unauthorized routes would continue to be developed in the area. It is unlikely these unauthorized routes would be constructed to BLM standards for sustainability and would likely cause accelerated erosion over time.

Proposed Action

Short term direct impacts to water quality could occur as a result of construction activities. These direct impacts may include increased erosion and downstream sedimentation to water courses. Mineral properties of eroded soils can elevate surface water contaminants to levels exceeding numeric standards if left un-mitigated. Salt, selenium, and sediment yield are dependent upon storm period, landform type, and the soluble mineral content of the geologic formation. However, potential erosion and sedimentation resulting from construction activities will be sufficiently mitigated through implementation of BMPs associated with BLM construction, design, and maintenance standards for travel facilities. New construction will be located primarily in upland settings in locations identified as meeting criteria for recreational facility sustainability. Furthermore, maintenance of existing designated facilities will reduce the erosion potential from the project area by restoring natural drainage patterns in upland environments and limiting recreational activities to sustainable areas. Additionally, the BLM has obtained a "Rainfall Erosivity Waiver" from the State which dictates appropriate periods for small construction projects (less than 5 acres) in lieu of CDPS Stormwater Permitting to limit erosion and reduce erosion potential during specific seasons. As part of this waiver, the BLM agrees to develop and implement stormwater BMPs as needed to protect water quality.

Finding on Standard 5: Stream segment 13a and 13e of the Lower Colorado River Basin currently meet water quality standards (CDPHE. 2010a). Implementation of the proposed action with mitigation is not anticipated to alter this finding.

Cumulative Effects:

Increased surface disturbance in the project area will increase erosion potential which may result in increased erosion and sedimentation to Big Salt Wash over time. It is not anticipated that these impacts would result in any modification to the current finding for Public Land Health Standard 5.

Protective/Mitigation Measures:

1. Ensure proper drainage from and adjacent to all recreation facilities by implementing standard BLM design, construction, and maintenance plans for the project area.
2. Include adequate signage at and around parking areas and trailheads to effectively communicate rules and regulations regarding cross country travel in the planning area.
3. Continue to enforce rules and regulations governing travel management within the watershed.
4. Barricade unauthorized routes within the watershed.
5. BLM will be required to obtain a stormwater discharge permit from the State if the project's R-factor would be greater than 5 or the disturbance exceeds 5 acres.
6. Any additional trail construction in the North Fruita Desert will require a stormwater discharge permit and a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.
7. Dredge or filling of drainages would not be authorized.

3.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

3.3.1 Invasive, Non-native Species

Current Conditions:

The North Fruita Desert area was inventoried by BLM crews in the early 2000s. While the area has relatively few state-listed noxious weeds (A or B list species), there are a number of C list species which occur in varying degrees depending on the site. C list species include cheatgrass, Russian thistle (tumbleweed) tumble mustard etc. These species are listed as C-list species by Colorado because of their abundance state-wide, and the limited chances of wide-spread control. The quantity and vigor of these species is often tied to the timing and amount of precipitation—wetter years tend to yield more, dry years less.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Weed species are opportunistic plants, and are typically associated with any kind of disturbance, regardless of source. If the trails are not constructed, there is a decreased chance of additional weeds.

Cumulative Effects: As with short and long term effects, the less disturbance over time, the fewer chances of most weeds becoming established in new areas.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The proposed action will add to the trail network of NFD, and as such, add to a network of roads and trails that provide entryways for weeds into the wildlands. Bicycles (to a lesser degree) and motor vehicles (to a greater degree) are both vectors of weed spread. However, the addition of trails that will be routinely maintained as part of a known system (the NFD Plan) are not expected to impact weed management to a large degree either in

the short or long terms. The BLM recreation and weed programs, as well as the public, can co-labor in inventorying these trails for new weeds, and responding in a quick manner to new infestations.

Cumulative Effects: Each new road and trail that is added to the field office automatically becomes part of a weed inventory effort. As roads and trails become decommissioned through travel management, a manageable balance from a weed perspective is possible into the future.

3.3.2 Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Current conditions:

Current federally listed threatened, endangered, or candidate species are not known to inhabit the North Fruita Desert SRMA. Nine Colorado BLM Sensitive species do, could, or have inhabited the general area in recent decades. because of the presence of appropriate habitat. (Table below).

BLM Sensitive Species

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Scientific Name</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Trail Proximity</i>	Distance
Great Basin Spadefoot toad	Spea intermontana	BLM - S	Trail B	2470'
Peregrine Falcon*	Falco peregrinus	BLM - S	Trails E and F	> ½ mi. buffer
White-tailed Prairie Dog	Cynomys leucurus	BLM - S	- Trail B	4000'
Burrowing Owl (BLM, 2008)	Athene cunicularia	BLM - S	- Trail B	' 4500' (> 150' buffer)
Ferruginous Hawk (BLM, 1985)	Buteo regalis	BLM - S	Trail B	1800' (CDOW buffer ½ mi.)
Longnose Leopard Lizard	Gambelia wislizenii	BLM-S	Unknown	No records in NFD SMA
Midget-faded Rattlesnake	Crotalus viridis concolor	BLM-S	Unknown	"
Townsend's Big-eared Bat	Corynorhinus townsendii	BLM-S	Unknown	"
Kit Fox	Vulpes macrotis	BLM-S	Unknown	"
Grand Junction Suncup	Cammissonia eastwoodiae	BLM - S	Trail B	4.5 mi.
Grand Buckwheat	Eriogonum contortum	BLM - S	Trail B	2 mi.

*Trails E and F are within Peregrine Potential Nesting Habitat, but beyond CDOW active nest buffers. The distance given in the table is the distance from a known but inactive nest site.

Land Health status in the proposal area varies from “not meeting” to “meeting” land health standards. Areas that meet land health have a higher likelihood of having sensitive species present, provided the habitats specific to a species are present. Trail B, Eat at Joe’s, is the only one of the three proposals that is within an area currently meeting Land Health Standards.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: No action would not cause direct impacts to BLM Sensitive Species. No trails would be built, no ground would be disturbed. Indirect effects could arise from heavier use of existing trails near important wildlife and plant locations, or even illegal off-trail use, use of wildlife or livestock trails, or off-trail short-cutting. If trail users perceive more crowding on existing trails, they could move to other areas currently receiving less use, which could cause impacts to species listed above beyond the project area.

Cumulative Effects: The “No action” alternative would not alter effects already taking place or that would occur without additional trail development. Past actions, including recreation, pipeline and powerline construction, road building and use, grazing, and mining have contributed in various degrees to changing the landscape and the species present. For example, it appears that development and use of the Zippity-Do-Da Trail on a ridge where Ferruginous Hawks nested in 1985 likely has precluded hawks from nesting on that ridge in recent years and will continue to do so as trail use continues. Future foreseeable actions include the proposed action, and further development of recreation trails, though no trail plans other than the proposed action are proposed.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Direct and indirect impacts will be addressed for each trail.

All Trails:

Midget-faded Rattlesnake: Could be present in the vicinity of any of the proposed trails. Snakes crossing a trail, or warming themselves could be injured or killed by passing mountain bikers. No indirect impacts to snakes, such as destruction of den sites or decline of prey species would occur.

Peregrine Falcon: No active nests are known within several miles of the proposed trails. Two inactive nests sites are known, both within a mile or less from the trails, but both are at least 2/3 of a mile from any trail, beyond the CPW recommended buffer of 1/2 mile.

Trail B:

Grand Junction Suncup: The nearest known location is 4.5 miles from the proposed trail. A survey conducted in late April did not find the plant, though drought conditions made discovery of the species unlikely in 2012.

Grand Buckwheat: The nearest known location is two miles from the proposed trail. A survey conducted in late April did not find the plant. Growth of this plant is likely less affected by drought than the Suncup.

Great Basin Spadefoot Toad: Impacts unlikely, the nearest known site is 2,470 feet east on the other side of 18 Road.

Long-nosed Leopard Lizard: could occur on or near Trail B in the desert south of the Bookcliffs. Lizards crossing or warming themselves in a trail could also be subject to or death if run over, but their speed and alertness would minimize the chances of this taking place. Indirect effects on lizard prey or hiding cover is unlikely.

Ferruginous Hawk: Development and use of the existing Zippity-Do-Da Trail, west of Trail B on a ridge where Ferruginous Hawks nested in 1985 likely has precluded hawks from nesting on that ridge in recent years. No past or present Ferruginous Hawk nesting sites are known within 7 miles of Trail B.

Burrowing Owl: Recent known nest sites (2008) are known about one mile west of Trail B, well beyond the 150' nesting season buffer recommended by Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

White-tailed Prairie Dog: The nearest active or inactive prairie dog colony is an active town 4000' west of the trail. Trail construction and use would not affect this disturbance tolerant mammal.

Kit Fox: The nearest CPW mapped kit fox range is over 7 miles west of the proposed trail. No impact expected.

Trails E and F: These trails are located behind (north of) the Bookcliffs and are outside of the Bicycle Emphasis Area but still within the North Fruita Desert SMA. There are no known occurrences of T, E, or BLM Sensitive species. Possible sensitive species located in the Bookcliffs include Midget-faded Rattlesnake, Peregrine Falcon and Townsend's Big-eared Bat. The snake and the falcon were addressed in the "All Trails" section.

Townsend's Big-eared Bat: Natural caves for this species are limited or non-existent in the project area. These bats do use abandoned mines, the nearest five miles northwest of the northern end of Trail E near Colorado Highway 139, along East Salt Creek upstream from Munger Creek.

Cumulative Effects:

Past actions, including recreation, pipeline and powerline construction, road building and use, grazing and mining have contributed in various degrees to changing the landscape and the species present. For example, it appears that development and use of the Zippity-Do-Da Trail on a ridge where Ferruginous Hawks nested in 1985 likely has precluded hawks from nesting on

that ridge in recent years and will continue to do so as trail use continues. Development of Trail B will not impact Ferruginous more than the current situation.

Cumulative effects are not anticipated for the other sensitive species in the project area or general vicinity. Land Health Standard 4 will be maintained.

3.3.3 Vegetation (grasslands, forest management) (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Current conditions:

Proposed Trail B is located in Salt Desert Shrub vegetation type with shadscale, Gardner's saltbush, mat saltbush, fourwing saltbush, greasewood, spiny hopsage, and bud sagebrush being the main shrubs. The understory of these shrubs include: Indian ricegrass, galleta grass, sand dropseed, bottlebrush squirreltail, poa and needle-and-thread grass. Proposed Trail F is located in pinyon-juniper vegetation type with the main vegetation being pinyon trees, juniper trees, patches of gambles oakbrush, snowberry, serviceberry, and sagebrush with an understory of grasses similar to those found in the Salt Desert Shrub vegetation type. Trail E winds through both of these vegetation types.

Portions of proposed trails B and E are not meeting Land Health Standard 3 mainly due to lack of perennial grasses and invasion of cheatgrass. The area involving proposed Trail F is meeting Land health Standard 3.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects:

Recreationists would continue to use self-made trails and new areas without consideration for possible erosion and vegetation impacts. Self-made trails in steep areas and areas vulnerable to erosion would cause increased erosion. Increased erosion would degrade rangeland conditions and create opportunity for invasive and noxious plants that would negatively affect native vegetation in the area.

Cumulative Effects:

There would be less opportunity to improve rangeland conditions and meet Land Health Standard 3 under the No Action alternative as in the past, present and in the future there has been and would be minimal control of bicycle and motorcycle use that due to concentrations and crowded conditions, self-made trails and use of new areas would continue that would also be used by livestock. Concentrated recreation and livestock use combined with other possible impacts such as oil and gas exploration would have the potential cumulative effect of increased erosion and rangeland degradation.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects:

Construction of the trails would allow recreation use on an additional 15.5 miles of trails. This would allow for better distribution of recreationists and decrease the use in the currently crowded areas being used. The proposed trails are designed to reduce erosion impacts and would reduce the use on self-made trails that did not consider erosion impacts. The proposed trails would remove vegetation 24 inches wide and about 15.5 miles long combining the length of all the trails. This equates to approximately 3.75 acres of disturbance over a very large area that would

be less than 1% disturbance. Due to the relative small area of disturbance and the trails designed to be built with consideration of erosion control, negative impacts are not expected and due to a better distribution of recreationists and less concentrated use, the potential for meeting Land Health Standard 3 is increased.

Cumulative Effects:

Cumulative effects would have less negative impacts to rangeland conditions than the No Action alternative allowing a better chance for rangeland conditions to improve and meet Land Health Standard 3 over the entire area the trails encompass.

3.3.4 Wetlands & Riparian Zones (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Current conditions:

Riparian and wetland zones located within the project area include Big Salt Wash, Coal Gulch, and a number of springs. Coal Gulch Creek is located to the north of the proposed trails.

Riparian habitat in the project area is limited due to the xeric conditions and intermittent nature of the two creeks. Highly saline and erosive soils along with water diversion of natural flow also limit the potential of these creeks to fully support robust riparian habitat. Mature cottonwoods and willows are generally sparse along the creeks. Rio Grande cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides* Bartram ex Marsh. Var. *wislizeni*), coyote willow (*Salix exigua*), sumac (*Rhus trilobata*), sedge (*Carex spp*), Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*), lance leaf cottonwood, horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*), tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*), and willow baccharis (*Baccharis salicina*) were observed during a recent PFC assessment conducted in the summer of 2011 on a reach of Big Salt Wash to the north of the project area. The potential extent of the riparian habitat was also found to be limited in some locations due to a channel type with steep banks.

Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems:

Both Coal Gulch Creek and Big Salt Wash were assessed in 1993 for Proper Functioning condition (PFC) and found to be Functioning at Risk (FAR). These assessments were completed based upon review of aerial photography and professional judgment. Riparian systems are determined to be meeting PFC when they have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects:

Under the No Action alternative the proposed trails would not be constructed. User created trails that would cross Coal Gulch Creek or Big Salt Wash may be created, but are not foreseen. There would be no new direct or indirect effects to riparian and wetland zones under this alternative.

Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems:

Riparian systems in the project area would continue to be FAR under the No Action alternative. The condition of these systems would not change under this alternative.

Cumulative Effects:

Cumulative effects from the No Action alternative may result if unauthorized trails are constructed through or adjacent to riparian habitat. Growing population and demands for recreation in and near Grand Junction increase the likelihood of new trails being created.

Recreation users are often drawn to water and riparian areas for shade and rest. Careful design and consideration of trail placement helps to reduce unplanned impacts on riparian habitat.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects:

The riparian zone along both creeks would be crossed by both trails. No special design or armoring has been proposed either of the crossings. Designing the crossings at 90 degree angles to the creeks would reduce impacts to the banks and vegetation along the creeks. Monitoring the crossings for damage and stabilizing banks and limiting the width of the crossing would reduce impacts to the riparian habitat. If crossing widths are kept to the proposed 18 to 24 width then impacts from direct removal of plants would not be measurable. Prohibiting staging areas at the crossings would protect soil and vegetation from compaction and trampling.

Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems:

Land Health Standard 2 would not be affected by this alternative as long as recreation use within the riparian zone is discouraged.

Cumulative Effects:

There would be no cumulative effects on riparian zones from the proposed action. There are 2 crossings through riparian habitat under the proposed action. These crossings would be limited to only the designated trails. Direct vegetation removal and trampling would be limited to the proposed trail footprint.

3.3.5 Wildlife (includes fish, aquatic and terrestrial) (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Current conditions:

Land Health status in the proposal area varies from “not meeting” to “meeting” land health standards. Areas that meet land health have a higher likelihood of having native and other desirable species present, provided the habitats specific to a species are present. Trails E and F are within areas not currently meeting biotic Land Health Standards.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects:

“No Action” would not cause any direct impacts to wildlife. No trails would be built, no ground would be disturbed. Indirect effects could arise from heavier use of existing trails near important wildlife locations, or even illegal off-trail use, use of wildlife or livestock trails, or off-trail short-cutting. If trail users perceive more crowding on existing trails, they could move to other areas currently receiving less use, which could cause impacts to species listed above beyond the project area.

Cumulative Effects:

No action would not alter effects already taking place or that would occur without additional trail development. Past actions, including recreation, pipeline and powerline construction, road building and use, grazing and mining have contributed in various degrees to changing the landscape and the species present. Due to the high levels of spring, early summer and fall recreation activity, larger species of birds and mammals are likely scarcer than in the past due to high human use during critical life cycle seasons (for example, late winter range use (March & April) for mule deer, or raptors that nest on the ground or in pinyon and juniper woodland

(March-July). Future foreseeable actions include the proposed action, and further development of recreation trails within the SRMA. Land Health Standard 3 could be negatively affected if unplanned, illegal trail use proliferates.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects:

Elk and Mule Deer:

Trail B is within an area mapped as “winter range” by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and will not affect mule deer winter range to a greater extent than already experienced, as the proposed trail is close to existing trails that are also within winter range. . Areas within winter range are not closed to winter uses.

Trails E and F are entirely or partially within severe winter range, critical winter range, and winter concentration areas. Current policy in the Grand Junction Field Office is to close roads and trails in these areas beginning December 1 through April 30 to reduce human impacts on wintering deer and elk. Currently at least three roads in the East Salt Creek area of the Bookcliffs are gated from Dec. 1 – April 30; Coal Gulch Road is not since it is a county road that Mesa County has not chosen to close. Applying the Dec. 1 – April 30 closure to Trails E and F will prevent additional impact to wintering deer and elk and maintain consistency with closures already in effect in East Salt Creek.

Migratory Birds: Trail work is proposed for the spring and summer months, so there may be an effect on nesting migratory birds to the extent that trees and shrubs with active nests could be destroyed, and ground nests could be disturbed by trampling and ground disturbance.

Cumulative Effects: Past actions, including recreation, pipeline and powerline construction, road building and use, grazing and mining have contributed in various degrees to changing the landscape and the species present. Due to the high levels of spring, early summer and fall recreation activity, larger species of birds and mammals are likely scarcer than in the past due to high human use during critical life cycle seasons (for example, late winter range use (March & April) for mule deer, or raptors that nest on the ground or in pinyon and juniper woodland (March-July). Future foreseeable actions include the proposed action, and further development of recreation trails within the SRMA, though no trail plans other than the proposed action are proposed. Development of planned, well-built trails with seasonal closures will help to maintain Land Health Standard 3.

Protective/Mitigation Measures:

None recommended at this time

3.4 HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

3.4.1 Cultural Resources

Current Conditions:

A records search of the general project area, and Class III inventory was completed by the BLM archaeologists of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) as defined in the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); IFs were recorded within the APE for Trail B (CRIR 1012-11), Trail E (CRIR 1012-04) and Trail F (CRIR 1012-03).

Conditions of the existing cultural environment are incorporated by this reference but the following briefly summarizes cultural resources in the APE. NFD trails south of the Bookcliffs escarpment have been surveyed by numerous previous Class III inventory, large block surveys were associated with proposed coal development. This environment has lower potential for significant cultural resources and most sites are associated with historic grazing and mining, with prehistoric and historic isolated finds (IFs) scattered at a low density. Cultural Resource density and site type changes in the foothills north of the Bookcliffs escarpment with more open camp and Ute sites recorded by previous survey. Isolated finds represent both prehistoric and historic activity in the area. Prehistoric isolates represent either loss or discard. Historic isolates represent trash from activities in the area related to grazing management, mining, or woodcutting. Isolates are determined in the field to not represent activities that will provide additional information and are considered not eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The project inventory and evaluation is in compliance with the NHPA, the Colorado State Protocol Agreement, and other federal law, regulation, policy, and guidelines regarding cultural resources.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The trail system would not be expanded and areas that are not currently frequented by recreation activity would not increase.

Cumulative Effects: None

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: There would be no direct impacts to cultural resources from the construction of the trail. Indirect impacts would be negligible and would be associated to increased access which can lead to unauthorized activity including collection of artifacts. This can damage the integrity of previously unrecorded sites.

Cumulative Effects: This expands recreation use and the indirect impacts that occur where people currently do not access frequently.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: The BLM project lead shall ensure that all persons in the area who are associated with this project shall be informed that any person who, without a permit, injures, destroys, excavates, appropriates or removes any historic or prehistoric ruin, artifact, object of antiquity, Native American remains, Native American cultural item, or archaeological resources on public lands is subject to arrest and penalty of law (16 USC 433, 16 USC 470, 18 USC 641, 18 USC 1170, and 18 USC 1361). 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 (Archaeological Resource Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 470hh)

Inadvertent Discovery: The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) [16 USC 470s., 36 CFR 800.13], as amended, requires that if newly discovered historic or archaeological materials or other cultural resources are identified during the Proposed Action implementation, work in that area must stop and the BLM Authorized Officer (AO) must be notified immediately. Within five working days the AO will determine the actions that will likely have to be completed before the site can be used (assuming in place preservation is not necessary).

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) [25 USC 3001 et seq., 43 CFR 10.4] requires that if inadvertent discovery of Native American Human Remains or Objects of Cultural Patrimony occurs, any activity must cease in the area of discovery, a reasonable effort made to protect the item(s) discovered, and immediate notice be made to the BLM Authorized Officer, as well as the appropriate Native American group(s) (IV.C.2). Notice may be followed by a 30-day delay (NAGPRA Section 3(d)).

The BLM may relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and delays associated with this process, as long as the new area has been appropriately inventoried and has no resource concerns, and the exposed materials are recorded and stabilized. The BLM shall be responsible for mitigation costs. The BLM authorized officer will provide technical and procedural guidelines for relocation and/or to conduct mitigation in consultation with the SHPO. Upon verification from the BLM authorized officer that the required mitigation has been completed, the BLM will be allowed to resume construction.

3.4.2 Paleontological Resources

Current Conditions:

The surface geology is composed of Quaternary age sediments and Upper Cretaceous age Mancos Shale. Neither of these geologic units has a high potential for yielding scientifically significant fossils, and there are no recorded vertebrate fossil sites near the proposed trail alignments.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: None.

Cumulative Effects: None.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Possible direct impacts to unknown paleontological resources could occur during trail construction, or new discoveries could be made. Possible indirect impacts from trail construction and use could include discovery of new paleontological resources, and theft or vandalism of currently unknown fossils.

Cumulative Effects: The potential direct and indirect impacts could add to impacts that are already occurring from the surrounding, existing trail system.

Protective/Mitigation Measures:

The BLM project lead will inform all of the trail builders that collection of vertebrate fossil resources is not allowed without a BLM issued permit. The trail builders will also be instructed to halt construction in an area if vertebrate fossil resources are discovered and immediately notify the BLM project lead. The BLM project lead will notify the BLM paleontology coordinator, who will examine the site to determine the appropriate action.

3.4.3 Tribal and Native American Religious Concerns

Current Conditions:

American Indian religious concerns are legislatively considered under several acts and Executive Orders, namely the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (PL 95-341), the Native American Graves Environmental Assessment Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (PL 101-601), and Executive Order 13007 (1996; Indian Sacred Sites). In summary, these require, in concert with other provisions such as those found in the NHPA and ARPA, that the federal government carefully and proactively take into consideration traditional and religious Native American culture and life and ensure, to the degree possible, that access to sacred sites, the treatment of human remains, the possession of sacred items, the conduct of traditional religious practices, and the preservation of important cultural properties are considered and not unduly infringed upon. In some cases, these concerns are directly related to “historic properties” and “archaeological resources”. In some cases elements of the landscape without archaeological or other human material remains may be involved. Identification of these concerns is normally completed during the land use planning efforts, reference to existing studies, or via direct consultation. There is no known evidence that suggests the project area holds special significance for Native Americans, or is actively used to maintain any traditional practices. The project would not alter or limit any access if there were traditional uses that are not known to the agency. No additional Native American Indian consultation was conducted for the proposed project.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Ute have a generalized concept of spiritual significance that is not easily transferred to Western models or definitions. As such the BLM recognizes that the Ute have identified sites that are of concern because of their association with Ute occupation of the area as part of their traditional lands. No traditional cultural properties, unique natural resources, or properties of a type previously identified as being of interest to local tribes, were identified during the cultural resources inventory of the project area.

Cumulative Effects: none

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: same as the No Action. The prehistoric isolated finds do not represent a type of artifact that has been identified during consultation that would require any further consideration or consultation.

Cumulative Effects: In some consultations with our office the Ute have identified that access to areas is important to them and trails may open up areas that they would not otherwise be able to

access. Typically equestrian access is preferred over hiking and often elders have difficulty getting to areas that were traditionally used.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: If new information is provided or discovered additional or edited terms and conditions for mitigation may have to be negotiated or enforced,

3.4.4 Visual Resources

Current Conditions:

The proposed project area lies north of Fruita along the northern edge of the Grand Valley where it meets the Bookcliffs (in the northeastern portion of the Colorado Plateaus physiographic province.) The proposed trails span two Visual Resource Inventory Scenic Quality Rating Units: SQRU 15 – VRI Class III, Scenic Quality C, Sensitivity High, Foreground/Middle-ground Distance Zone; and SQRU 16 – VRI Class II, Scenic Quality B, Sensitivity High, Foreground/Middle-ground Distance Zone.

The landscape is characterized by low, rolling hills with sparse low-growing grasses and shrubs, sloping gradually to patchy juniper stands along the base of the Bookcliffs. The steep eroded slopes and vertical cliffs of the Bookcliffs rise abruptly in the middle of the project area. The lower elevations of the project area along with the south aspect of the Bookcliffs are largely horizontal in form, smooth to medium in texture, and characterized by light tan and grey colors punctuated by the medium to dark greens of the scattered juniper stands. The higher elevations along the north aspect of the Bookcliffs are more heavily vegetated with pinyon and juniper creating a more uniform color and texture. Built elements in the project area include: a trailhead with post and cable barricaded gravel parking lot, kiosk/gazebo, and CXT vault toilet; a campground including access roads, parking spaces and barriers, signs, picnic tables, fire grates, and four CXT vault toilets; scattered residences, outbuildings and fences along 16 Road; livestock corrals and water tanks; oil and gas well pads and infrastructure along the Coal Gulch Road; and a network of roads and singletrack trails throughout the area.

The area is used primarily by recreationists using the campground and trail system, as well as ranchers, nearby residents, and oil and gas operation workers. These users would constitute the casual observer.

As per the 1987 GJFO RMP, the proposed trails lie within undesignated VRM areas. It has been the general practice of the GJFO to manage undesignated areas using VRM Class III objectives which allow moderate levels of change to the landscape and where management activities may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Change should repeat the basic elements found in the natural landscape.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The proposed 15.5 miles of trails would not be built and would not introduce new visual contrast to the area.

Cumulative Effects: Ongoing energy development, along with anticipated increases in recreational use in the area will likely introduce new visual contrast to the landscape. Potential changes to land use allocations through the RMP revision could either increase or decrease visual impacts to the area, depending on the alternative selected.

The implementation of a fee system, and potential expansion of the campground, would result in additional developments that would increase visual contrast in the project area. It could also increase the likelihood of undesignated social trails that do not meet BLM design criteria, thereby increasing visual impacts.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Construction of the proposed trails would remove vegetation and expose soil, introducing weak to moderate contrast to the landscape. By adhering to BLM and IMBA trail design criteria the trails would follow the curvilinear patterns of the landscape, consequently reducing visual contrast. The proposed trails would primarily be visible only to trail users, and only for short distances. The motion and colors introduced to the landscape by trail users would likely create more visual contrast than the physical presence of the trails themselves.

Key observation points for Trail B would be from the North Fruita Desert Trailhead looking northwest, and from the proposed trail's intersection with V.7 Road looking south. From both of these observation points, the trail and trail users would likely only be visible for short distances.

Key observation points for Trail E would be from 16 Road and V.8 Road (Coal Gulch Road.) In most instances, the portions of the trail visible from these roads would be along the base of hillsides, rather than mid-slope, thereby minimizing the visual contrast of the trail itself. Where the trail climbs/descends between the valley bottom and the bench (in one location along 16 Road and one location along V.8 Road) the trail would be more visible to the casual observer. Trail users would be readily visible along the lower portions of this trail. Higher portions of the trail are better screened by vegetation.

Much of Trail F is in higher elevation, more heavily vegetated terrain that provides visual screening of the trail. The remote location of the trail also limits its exposure to casual observers other than trail users. The western portion of this route (Trail F) as shown on the map utilizes an existing road that climbs from Coal Gulch to the edge of the Bookcliffs. Portions of that route are currently visible from the Coal Gulch Road. The only new visual contrast resulting from this portion of the route would be from increased recreational use of the route.

The level of change to the characteristic landscape created by the proposed trails would be low to moderate. The trails would meet the VRM Class III objectives described above.

Cumulative Effects: Ongoing energy development, along with anticipated increases in recreational use in the area will likely introduce new visual contrast to the landscape in addition to the contrast created by the proposed action. Potential changes to land use allocations through the RMP revision could either increase or decrease visual impacts to the area, depending on the alternative selected. The impacts to visual resources from the proposed action (described above) would be added to any additional developments prescribed in the new RMP. The proposed trails could impact changes to VRM classifications for the project area which will likely result from the RMP revision.

Direct and Indirect Effects: If these trails are built, it would expand the types of trails in NFD, and the larger loop possibilities for NFD. This would attract more visitation from the local and international communities. Socially this would give the outdoor recreationalists more options for utilizing exercise and the environment to gain a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

Cumulative Effects: If these trails are built along with the expanded campground, this could increase the visitation for the NFD. Although the new trails would disperse some of the crowding, the campground could attract more participants from outside the valley.

3.4.8 Transportation/Access

Current Conditions:

Primary access to the project area is from Fruita via 16 Road or 18 Road, and along V.7 Road, which connects 16 Road and 18 Road, and V.8 Road (Coal Gulch Road), which provides access to Coal Gulch. All of these roads are managed and maintained by Mesa County. The BLM manages approximately 25 miles of designated non-motorized trails within the bicycle emphasis area, along with over 200 miles of routes open to motorcycles within the NFD SMA. The Edge Loop is a designated mountain bike route that traverses the Bicycle Emphasis Area to the south and currently utilizes V.8 Road through Coal Gulch on the north to create a long-distance route for bicyclists. The Coal Gulch section is also currently utilized by OHV users for long-distance riding opportunities incorporating designated OHV routes in the SMA outside of the Bicycle Emphasis Area. These designated loops require recreational traffic and other vehicle traffic to travel together on the same route through Coal Gulch and southeast to Ross Ridge.

Based on BLM traffic counter data from 18 Road, an estimated 67,500 people traveled 18 Road within the SMA in 2011. In addition to access for recreation these routes provide access to local residents, range permittees and oil and gas operators. This mixes recreation traffic with utility traffic, occasionally creating safety issues, and in several locations has resulted in the development of social trails as recreationists seek safer and more desirable recreation routes.

Approximate daily traffic by oil and gas personnel on 16 Road is eight trucks per day. During times of well/road construction, drilling, maintenance or surface reclamation work, traffic on these roads increases substantially, but on a short term basis. Increased activity typically occurs in the spring, summer and fall months coinciding with the high use times for the proposed trails. This increase is characterized by both heavier volume and larger sizes of vehicles ranging from pickup trucks to drilling rigs. Currently, active development, construction and drilling are ongoing on private land that is accessed through the terminal north end of 16 Road. This current activity level is supported by very heavy traffic including passenger vehicles, semi-tractor trailers, excavation equipment and drill rigs.

On V.8 road, vehicle average estimated speeds range between 10 and 30 mph due to short turning radii and road surface conditions. On 16 Road, where vehicle traffic is currently heavy, average estimated speeds range between 25-35 mph. There is a potential for speeds above 35 mph on 16 Road because of few curves and a wider running surface. No posted speed limit signs occur in area of interest for either 16 or V.8 Roads. Colorado law states "If hazardous conditions exist on a roadway, Colorado drivers must slow to a reasonable and prudent speed, although this may require driving at a speed below the posted limit." and designates roads "Narrow, winding mountain highways, or blind curves" at 20 miles per hour speed limit.

The implementation of a fee system, and potential expansion of the campground, would result in additional developments that would increase visual contrast in the project area. It could also increase the likelihood of undesignated social trails that do not meet BLM design criteria, thereby increasing visual impacts.

3.4.5 Social\Economic\Environmental Justice

Current Conditions:

There are approximately 25 miles of designated non-motorized trails within the bicycle emphasis area, along with over 200 miles of routes open to motorcycles within the NFD SMA. This proposal would add approximately one mile of mountain bike riding opportunities along with 14.5 miles of multiple-use singletrack trail opportunities. The Campground has 35 campsites, and is often filled to capacity during the spring and fall months. The NFD mountain bike trail system is a well-known and popular destination for mountain bikers from throughout Colorado and Utah, and also receives significant visitation from national and international mountain bike enthusiasts. The area's motorized trail system provides close-to-home riding opportunities for local OHV users. Annual visitation to the project area is estimated at approximately 60,000. The estimated population in Fruita for 2010 was 10,316, and is projected to increase 11% in five years.

The Cities of Fruita and Grand Junction benefit from having these outdoor recreational opportunities close to their communities. Many businesses rely on the outside income generated by tourism.

The requirements for environmental justice review were established by Executive Order 12898 (February 11, 1994). That order declared that each federal agency is to identify "disproportionately high and adverse human health or environment effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low income populations."

According to Census 2010, the only minority population of note in the impact area is the Hispanic community of Mesa County. Persons describing themselves as Hispanic or Latino represented 13.3 percent of the population, considerably less than the Colorado state figure for the same group (20.7 percent). Blacks, American Indians, Asians and Pacific Islanders each accounted for around 1 percent of the population, below the comparable state figure in all cases. The census counted 11.8 percent of the Mesa County population as living in families with incomes below the poverty line, compared to 12.6 percent for the entire state.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: If these trails are not built, the North Fruita Desert's current trail system would continue to be used. The increasing population would continue to impact the current trail system, and crowding could become an issue in the future.

Cumulative Effects: If the campground expansion is completed in the next few years, this could bring more recreationalists onto the current trail system. This could have a cumulative effect on crowding.

Proposed Action

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: In this alternative, no new trail construction would be authorized, and the current trail system would continue to be utilized although use of some trails (like Trail F) would likely continue because they are existing unauthorized routes. Recreational use in the area would continue to grow as Grand Valley communities expand, and the demand for recreational opportunities close to these urban areas increases. Without the addition of the proposed trails to disperse recreation use, expected increases in visitation would contribute to higher volumes of traffic on the existing road and trail network, compounding the safety and social trailing impacts described above. Continued use of unauthorized existing routes would likely be reduced if signage and barriers were placed to discourage it.

Cumulative Effects: Potential changes to land use allocations through the RMP revision could result in either increased or decreased traffic, and changes to the type of traffic on the road and trail network in the NFD, depending on the alternative selected. The No Action alternative would not address congestion relief, traffic safety concerns, or social trailing concerns.

The potential expansion of the campground would likely increase use of the existing trail system, thereby increasing congestion on the trails, and on the roads accessing those trails. The trails in this proposal would not be available to help absorb anticipated increases in visitation.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The addition of the proposed trails to the NFD trail network would likely attract additional recreational use of the area, resulting in increased traffic on 18 Road, 16 Road, V.7 Road and V.8 Road. Congestion on the trail network would likely be reduced due to use being dispersed over new trails. These routes would also provide new access opportunities for mountain bikers and motorcyclists.

Potential collisions between recreationists and other vehicle traffic could occur. The proposed routes E and F are most likely to experience user conflicts between motorcyclists and bicyclists and motor vehicles. These potential conflicts would occur where recreational loop opportunities overlap V.8 and 16 Roads. The proposed trails, however, would provide alternatives to riding on these roads in Coal Gulch and along Big Salt Wash, likely reducing recreational traffic on approximately two miles of 16 Road, and six miles of V.8 Road for riders riding the Edge Loop and other OHV loop routes that utilize Coal Gulch. Conversely, the new trails could increase recreational traffic on those sections of roads if riders choose to make loop rides using the new trails in combination with 16 Road and V.8 Road.

Trail B: This route would likely disperse bicycle traffic in the Bicycle Emphasis Area by providing an alternative to Kessel Run or Zippity-do-da. There would be a slightly increased potential for collisions with other vehicles on V.7 Road where riders would cross from Joe's Ridge to Trail B.

Trail E: This trail would allow recreational traffic (primarily motorcycle and bicycle) traveling between the Mitchell Road and Coal Gulch to bypass approximately 4 ½ miles of travel on 16 Road, V.7 Road and V.8 Road, thereby reducing potential conflicts with other vehicles on those

routes. Traffic would increase on 16 Road, V.7 Road and V.8 Road if users of Trail B choose to make a short loop utilizing those roads.

Trail F: There is limited sight distance on V.8 Road through Coal Gulch to the eastern terminus of Trail F, where this section of the road is in a deep and narrow valley bottom. Implementing Trail F would provide an alternative to V.8 Road for motorcycle and bicycle traffic through the most sinuous and conflict-prone section of Coal Gulch. If trail users utilize the new trail and V.8 road as a loop, there could be the potential for collisions with other vehicles.

Cumulative Effects: Anticipated increases in energy development and recreational use in the area would continue to increase the potential for conflicts between road and trail users. The Proposed Action would help address some current transportation and access issues, and could provide a model for addressing future transportation planning issues identified in the RMP revision. Potential changes to land use allocations through the RMP revision could result in either increased or decreased traffic, and changes to the type of traffic on the road and trail network in the NFD, depending on the alternative selected.

The potential expansion of the campground would likely increase use of the existing trail system, thereby increasing congestion on the trails, and on the roads accessing those trails. The trails in this proposal would help address those impacts as described under the effects from the proposed action.

3.4.9 Wastes, Hazardous or Solid

Current Conditions: Hazardous and solid wastes are not a part of the natural environment but could be introduced to the environment as a result of the proposed action. This could be in the form of spilled fuel and lubricants utilized by the trail construction machinery and solid wastes (trash) left by trail users.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: There would be no impacts.

Cumulative Effects: None

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The use of mechanized trail construction machinery could result in spills of fuel and lubricants. Amounts of these materials would be small and spills would likely contaminate small areas. Safeguards are included in the Proposed Action which would minimize these impacts. With prompt reporting and cleanup (see Mitigation Measures), impacts would be minimal and short-term. With proper mitigation, impacts would be limited to small amounts of contaminated soil. Public use of the trails could result in trash and litter left behind.

Cumulative Effects: There should be no cumulative effects.

3.5 LAND RESOURCES

3.5.2 Recreation

Current Conditions:

There are approximately 25 miles of designated non-motorized trails within the bicycle emphasis area. Outside the bicycle emphasis area there are over 200 miles of OHV routes within the NFD SMA. The bicycle trails are accessed primarily from the North Fruita Desert Trailhead (gravel parking lot, two vault toilets, information kiosk, gazebo) at the southern edge of the bicycle emphasis area on 18 Road, and the North Fruita Desert Campground which contains 35 developed campsites (picnic tables, fire grates, four vault toilets.) Social trails are prevalent between campsites and toilets, and between campsites and nearby trails. The OHV trails are accessed from 16 Road, 18 Road and 21 Road. OHV use occurs primarily on the network of routes located south of the bicycle emphasis area, including a 400 acre open OHV area. There are also designated motorized routes that create loops to the west and north of the bicycle emphasis area.

The NFD mountain bike trail system is a well-known and popular destination for mountain bikers from throughout Colorado and Utah, and also receives significant visitation from national and international mountain bike enthusiasts. Motorized recreation use is less intensive than mountain bike use in the area, and most participants are from the local area. Annual visitation to the project area is estimated at approximately 60,000, with the most intensive use occurring between March and May, and from September through November. During these busy seasons, the developed campsites, as well as overflow campsites, are filled to capacity nearly every weekend. Visitation is projected to continue to increase.

Much of the NFD trail system consists of routes that were originally utility routes (power line and pipeline roads), cow trails, and user-created social trails. The creation of new undesignated, and often unsustainable, routes continues to be a problem in the area as recreationists seek to make new connections between trails, and from campsites to trails.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects:

In this alternative, no new trails would be constructed and the current trail system would continue to be utilized. Increasing recreational use would increase congestion on the existing trail network, impacting visitor's recreational experiences. Identified user demand for additional trail opportunities would remain unmet, and would likely result in continued impacts from social trail use, and creation of new social trails.

Cumulative Effects: The potential expansion of the campground would likely increase use of the existing trail system, increasing congestion and impacting visitor's recreational experiences. The trails in this proposal would not be available to help absorb anticipated increases in visitation. Potential changes to land use allocations through the RMP revision could result in either an increased or decreased emphasis on recreation management in the NFD.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The proposed action would implement actions first identified in the 2004 North Fruita Desert Plan, and reinforced during recent community collaboration efforts. In

general, the addition of these trails to the NFD trail system would help achieve recreation management objectives for increased quantity and quality of trails and trail experiences in the NFD. The addition of new trails would disperse use and help relieve congestion on the trails.

The proposed trails would also add variety to the types of trail experiences available in the NFD. The proposed trails would increase trail system connectivity and would create new loop riding opportunities. Trail B would provide directional downhill trail riding opportunities and “flow” features that are increasingly popular among riders. Trail B would add technical trail features that increase trail difficulty and enhance the recreational experience for highly skilled riders. Trails E and F would provide singletrack alternatives to riding on V.7, V.8 and 16 Roads for motorcyclists and bicyclists seeking longer distance riding opportunities through the northern portion of the SMA.

Expansion of the trail system would likely increase the popularity of the trail system. The resulting increase in visitation would increase maintenance needs and costs for the trailhead, campground facilities and trails.

Cumulative Effects:

Potential changes in land use allocations in the RMP revision could either increase or decrease recreational use in the NFD, depending on which alternative is selected, but mechanized use, motorized use, and camping are likely to continue to increase. The proposed trails would likely contribute to that increased use by attracting recreationists seeking new opportunities, but they would also help disperse that increased traffic. The campground fee system planned for implementation in 2012 would increase funding available for maintenance and upgrades of the campground and its associated facilities and trails. New management direction from the revised RMP could also result in further expansion of the trail system and camping opportunities with impacts similar to those described above.

3.5.6 Range Management

Current conditions:

The proposed trails would occur in the Little Salt, Garr Mesa and Coal Gulch allotments. These allotments are currently permitted by the BLM for livestock grazing with the following grazing schedules:

Little Salt Allotment:

479 Cattle	12/01 to 05/31	95%*PL	2,722 *AUMs
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Garr Mesa Allotment:

110 Cattle	11/23 to 04/30	61%PL	351 AUMs
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Coal Gulch Allotment:

75 Cattle	06/01 to 10/01	100%PL	303 AUMs
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*PL is Public Land.

*AUM (Animal Unit Month) is the amount of forage on BLM Land for the sustenance of a cow/calf pair, or equivalent, for one month.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects:

Both cattle and recreationists use the existing trails with highest use occurring for both in the spring. In general, there are few conflicts but some harassment occurs to the cattle from people on the trails and by the stock ponds where cattle water and tend to hang out. There is resentment by the recreationist when they need to avoid cow pies on the trails or avoiding close contact with the cattle.

Cumulative Effects:

Cumulative effects combined with both recreation and livestock creates the possibility of increased erosion on the existing trails and degradation of rangeland conditions which would require stricter guidelines for both recreation and livestock use to maintain or improve rangeland conditions.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects:

Having additional trails designated and constructed for bicycle and motorcycle use would better distribute recreation activities to help decrease the potential for conflicts between livestock and recreationists and decrease the current impacts to the existing trails. The proposed and existing trails would still be used by both recreationists and cattle but the recreationists would have more areas to choose from to avoid concentrations of cattle and/or people.

Cumulative Effects:

Less cumulative effects from cattle and recreationists would occur under the proposed action than No Action alternative as planning for the proposed trails considered erosion potential and would be constructed to minimize potential erosion impacts. Also, the proposed trails would better distribute recreation use helping to decrease impacts that are currently occurring in the crowded areas used by both recreationists and cattle.

NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY
Alan Larson	Fire Ecologist	Fire Ecology, Forest Management
Mark Taber	Rangeland Management Specialist	Wildlife Specialist, Range Management Specialist, Non-Native Species
Neil Dorsch	Hydrologist	Soils, Air Quality, Water Quality, Hydrology, Water Rights
Colin Ewing	Environmental Coordinator	Environmental Justice, Parks & Trails, Farmland, Environmental Coordinator
Ann Lincoln	Ecologist	Land Health Assessment, Range Ecology, Special Status Plant Species
Mark Hunt	Wildlife Biologist	T&E Specialist, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Terrestrial & Aquatic Wildlife

CHAPTER 4 - CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

4.1 LIST OF PREPARERS AND PARTICIPANTS

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW

NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY
Christina Stark	Riparian Coordinator/Project Manager	Riparian and Wetlands
Catherine Ventling	Natural Resource Specialist	Surface Management and Permitting for Oil & Gas
Aline LaForge	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns
Chris Pipkin	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access, Transportation, Recreation, VRM, Wilderness, ACECs
Scott Clarke	Range Management Specialist	Vegetation, Range
Jacob Martin	Range Management Specialist	Range, Forestry
Jim Dollerschell	Range Management Specialist	Range, Wild Horse & Burro Act
David Scott Gerwe	Geologist	Minerals, Geology, Paleontology
Alan Kraus	Hazardous Materials Specialist	Hazardous Materials
Robin Lacy	Realty Specialist	Land Tenure/Status, Realty Authorizations
Heidi Plank	Wildlife Biologist	T&E Species, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Terrestrial & Aquatic Wildlife
Anna Lincoln	Ecologist	Land Health Assessment, Range Ecology, Special Status Plant Species
Collin Ewing	Environmental Coordinator	Environmental Justice, Prime & Unique Farmlands, Environmental Coordinator
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Soils, Air Quality, Water Quality, Hydrology, Water Rights
Mark Taber	Range Management Specialist	Weed Coordinator, Invasive, Non-Native Species
Lathan Johnson	Fire Ecologist Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Ecology, Fuels Management

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
GRAND JUNCTION FIELD OFFICE
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

North Fruita Desert SMA Trails – Part 2
DOI-BLM-CO-130-2012-0038-EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

BACKGROUND

This EA has been prepared by the BLM to analyze the proposed addition of 15.5 miles of new singletrack trails in the North Fruita Desert Special Management Area (SMA). In early 2012, six trail proposals were brought forward for analysis in NEPA document DOI-BLM-CO-130-2012-0013-EA. Decisions regarding three of the trails initially proposed in that document were eventually deferred due to the need for additional analysis. Those three deferred proposals were brought forward and analyzed in this document.

In the spring of 2011 a working group was formed to develop a strategy for continued implementation of trail development actions identified in the 2004 NFD SMA plan. The working group consisted of representatives from the City of Fruita, the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association (COPMOBA), Responsible Recreation Foundation (RRF), Motorcycle Trail Riders Association (MTRA), Fruita business owners and the BLM. This group identified additional trail construction in the NFD as a way to meet increasing demand for trail-based recreation opportunities in the area, along with the associated economic benefits to the community.

The EA was made available for a 30-day public review on March 15, 2012. No public comments were received.

Intensity

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the North Fruita Desert SMA Trails Proposal relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

This project may have minor short term impacts to soils, vegetation, and wildlife; however these impacts are not significant. This project will have a long term net benefit for recreation.

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.

There are no significant impacts to riparian vegetation, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers within the project area. The project has been modified to avoid impacts to cultural and historic resources. There are no municipal water supplies in the project area.

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

The environmental effects are not likely to be controversial.

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

Trail construction 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 will continue to be made by BLM responsible officials regarding trail construction 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.

There would be no adverse impacts to the above resources. The project has been modified to avoid impacts to cultural and historic resources.

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 are expected to endangered or threatened species or their designated critical habitats.

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.

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

DECISION RECORD
North Fork Ditch SMA Trails - Part 2
DOI-BLM-CO-130-2010-003-EA

DECISION: It is my decision to authorize the construction of Trails B (but at loss), E (Coal
Outhouse Road) and F (Backside). This decision is contingent on meeting all mitigation
measures and monitoring requirements listed below. The EA was made available for a 30-day
public review on March 12, 2012. No public comments were received. This office completed an
Environmental Assessment and reached a Finding of No Significant Impact.

RATIONALE: Trail B is located within the Bicycle Emphasis area and will provide additional
riding opportunities for mountain bike users of the area. Trails E and F would provide
and create opportunities for a mountain, bicyclist, equestrian and hiker. These trails will
create long distance, technical riding experiences for users of the North Fork Ditch SMA.
Trails E and F would be closed seasonally from December 1 to April 30 to protect wintering big
game. The closures would be implemented using gates, fences and informational/educational
signage at each of the four access points for these two trails. Based on the information in the
EA, a ROW has been reached.

MITIGATION MEASURES/MONITORING

Cultural Resource stipulations

1. The BLM project lead shall ensure that all persons in the area who are associated with
this project shall be informed that any person who, without a permit, injures, destroys,
excavates, removes or removes any historic or prehistoric ruin, artifact, object of
antiquity, Native American remains, Native American cultural item, or archaeological
resource on public lands is subject to arrest and penalty of law (16 USC 433, 18 USC
470, 18 USC 641, 18 USC 1170, and 18 USC 1361). Strict adherence to the
confidentiality of information concerning the nature and location of archaeological
resources would be required of the proponent and all of their subcontractors
(Archaeological Resource Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 4301b).
2. **Prevention Easement:** The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (16 USC 470a,
50 CFR 800.13) is amended, requires that if newly discovered historic or archaeological
materials or other cultural resources are identified during the Proposed Action
implementation, work in that area must stop and the BLM Authorized Officer (AO) must
be notified immediately. Within five working days the AO will determine the actions
that will likely have to be completed before the site can be used (assuming in place
preservation is not necessary).

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

**DECISION RECORD
North Fruita Desert SMA Trails – Part 2
DOI-BLM-CO-130-2010-0038-EA**

DECISION: It is my decision to authorize the construction of Trails B (Eat at Joes), E (Coal Gulch to 16 Road) and F (Backside). This decision is contingent on meeting all mitigation measures and monitoring requirements listed below. The EA was made available for a 30-day public review on March 15, 2012. No public comments were received. This office completed an Environmental Assessment and reached a Finding of No Significant Impact.

RATIONALE: Trail B is located within the Bicycle Emphasis area and will provide additional riding opportunities for mountain bike users of the area. Trails E and F would be multiple-use and create opportunities for motorcyclists, bicyclists, equestrian and hikers. These trails will create long distance, technical riding experiences for users of the North Fruita Desert SMA. Trails E and F would be closed seasonally from December 1 to April 30 to protect wintering big game. The closures would be implemented using gates, fences and informational/regulatory signage at each of the four access points for these two trails. Based on the information in the EA, a FONSI has been reached.

MITIGATION MEASURES\MONITORING:

Cultural Resource Stipulations

1. The BLM project lead shall ensure that all persons in the area who are associated with this project shall be informed that any person who, without a permit, injures, destroys, excavates, appropriates or removes any historic or prehistoric ruin, artifact, object of antiquity, Native American remains, Native American cultural item, or archaeological resources on public lands is subject to arrest and penalty of law (16 USC 433, 16 USC 470, 18 USC 641, 18 USC 1170, and 18 USC 1361). 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 (Archaeological Resource Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 470hh)
2. Inadvertent Discovery: The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) [16 USC 470s., 36 CFR 800.13], as amended, requires that if newly discovered historic or archaeological materials or other cultural resources are identified during the Proposed Action implementation, work in that area must stop and the BLM Authorized Officer (AO) must be notified immediately. Within five working days the AO will determine the actions that will likely have to be completed before the site can be used (assuming in place preservation is not necessary).

3. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) [25 USC 3001 et seq., 43 CFR 10.4] requires that if inadvertent discovery of Native American Human Remains or Objects of Cultural Patrimony occurs, any activity must cease in the area of discovery, a reasonable effort made to protect the item(s) discovered, and immediate notice be made to the BLM Authorized Officer, as well as the appropriate Native American group(s) (IV.C.2). Notice may be followed by a 30-day delay (NAGPRA Section 3(d)).
4. The BLM may relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and delays associated with this process, as long as the new area has been appropriately inventoried and has no resource concerns, and the exposed materials are recorded and stabilized. The BLM shall be responsible for mitigation costs. The BLM authorized officer will provide technical and procedural guidelines for relocation and/or to conduct mitigation in consultation with the SHPO. Upon verification from the BLM authorized officer that the required mitigation has been completed, the BLM will be allowed to resume construction. Ensure proper drainage from and adjacent to all recreation facilities by implementing standard BLM design, construction, and maintenance plans for the project area.
5. Include adequate signage at and around parking areas and trailheads to effectively communicate rules and regulations regarding cross country travel in the planning area.
6. Continue to enforce rules and regulations governing travel management within the watershed.
7. Barricade unauthorized routes within the watershed.
8. BLM will be required to obtain a stormwater discharge permit from the State if the project's R-factor would be greater than 5 or the disturbance exceeds 5 acres.
9. Any additional trail construction in the North Fruita Desert will require a stormwater discharge permit and a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.
10. Trail crossings should be monitored to ensure that trails do not migrate out of the approved footprint and to ensure that new crossings are not created. If excessive erosion is found to be occurring at the two crossings then they should be armored or relocated as necessary to protect the riparian zone. Recreation staging at the crossings should be discouraged. Discouraging staging in the riparian zone would protect soils from compaction and bank sheering and would protect vegetation from trampling.
11. The BLM project lead will inform all of the trail builders that collection of vertebrate fossil resources is not allowed without a BLM issued permit. The trail builders will also be instructed to halt construction in an area if vertebrate fossil resources are discovered and immediately notify the BLM project lead. The BLM project lead will notify the BLM paleontology coordinator, who will examine the site to determine the appropriate action.

12. All spills of fuel and lubricants used during construction of the trails should be promptly reported to the BLM. Any contaminated soil should be promptly removed and either disposed of or treated, as determined appropriate by the BLM.

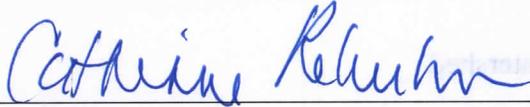
PROTEST/APPEALS: This decision shall take effect immediately upon the date it is signed by the Authorized Officer, and shall remain in effect while any appeal is pending unless the Interior Board of Land Appeals issues a stay (43 CFR 2801.10(b)). Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4. Within 30 days of the decision, a notice of appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at Grand Junction Field Office, 2815 H Road, grand Junction, Colorado, 81506. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U.S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

NAME OF PREPARER: Michelle Bailey

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Collin Ewing

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



8/17/12

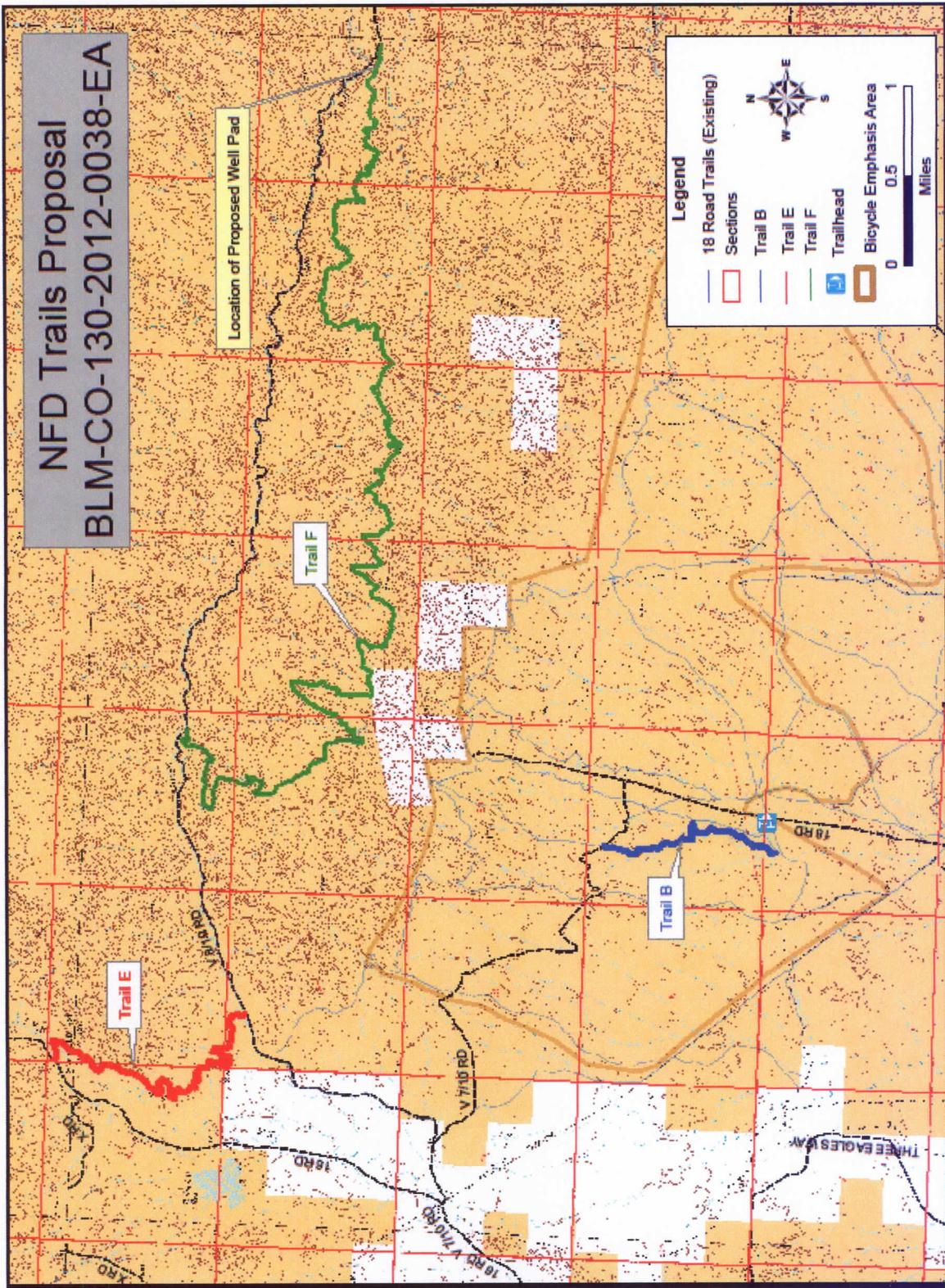
Field Manager
Grand Junction Field Office

Date

ATTACHMENTS:

A - Project Map

NFD Trails Proposal BLM-CO-130-2012-0038-EA



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Figure 1. Map of the study area showing the location of the study area in the district of ...

