

Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area & Wilderness

**Manager Report
FY 2008**

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GUNNISON GORGE NCA & WILDERNESS (CO154)

2008 Annual Manager's Report

Prepared by Karen Tucker, GGNCA Manager

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Total NCA Acreage: 62,844 acres including 17,784 acres within the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness Area

Annual Visitation: 90,000 visitors

Counties within the NCA: Montrose and Delta Counties

Congressional District & Representative: CO03
U.S. Senator Wayne Allard,
U.S. Senator Ken Salazar,
U.S. Congressman John Salazar

Establishing Authority: Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Act of 1999 (PL 106-76) and Black Canyon of the Gunnison Boundary Revision Act of 2003 (PL 108-78)

1. Physical Condition of Cultural and Natural Resources

The 2001 Gunnison Gorge land health assessment evaluated 110,000 acres which included the entire NCA (62,844 acres) and approximately 47,100 acres of public lands adjacent to the NCA. Overall, the majority of NCA lands (89%) meet standards.



Natural Resource and Heritage Resources Condition Trends

- ✦ Annual monitoring shows upland vegetation is not clearly improving or declining in the NCA.
- ✦ Native perennial shrubs, grasses and forbs continue to be scarce in many of the valley bottoms in the Mancos Shale areas on the west side of the NCA. Shrub vigor is low in some areas, a combination of past drought and heavy browsing—primarily by domestic sheep. These problems have been present for the past few decades and have diminished in some areas, while increasing in others.



Filming for the Gunnison Gorge "Virtual Trip" web podcast

- ✦ Vegetation on the east side of the NCA continues to be in better condition, with natives comprising the vast majority of species.
- ✦ Mancos Shale areas show a high potential to support biological soil crusts, but these remain minimal in disturbed valley bottoms, likely contributing to the absence of natural recovery.
- ✦ Noxious weeds continue to be a problem throughout the NCA; large areas are also infested with cheat grass and other annual, nonnative species.
- ✦ Riparian area condition is stable with areas improving as a result of new camping regulations limiting impacts and ongoing efforts to remove tamarisk and other invasive and noxious weed along the Upper Gunnison River. Much of the current condition is due to the river flow regime that supports a thick growth of the naturalized canary reed grass along the riverbanks.
- ✦ Cultural resources site conditions continue to be stable with little or no new vandalism or erosional deterioration noted.
 - **Smith Mountain Rock art sites** – Stable; 3 panels, not yet recorded for archives.
 - **Howell Village** – Stable; no new vandalism or noticeable deterioration.
 - **Lawhead Gulch Rock Art shelter** – Condition good. Site stabilized and interpretation in progress.

Ongoing NCA Inventory and Monitoring Work

1) **Water quality monitoring** sites on the Gunnison River main stem and major tributaries provide data on chemical, physical, and biological water quality parameters and aquatic macro-invertebrates.

2) **Riparian monitoring** sites on the Gunnison main stem and tributaries track changes in the riverbank and plant community. Additional sites were added this year as part of the large-scale riparian restoration project.

3) **Wilderness campsite monitoring** transects are read every 1-2 years to track impacts to soil and vegetation. The data helps determine campsite and visitor use and regulatory needs. Additional inventory sites were added this year to monitor human impacts throughout the Gunnison River corridor.

4) **Mancos Shale** cryptogam survey sites, vegetation plots, and LIDAR imagery sites, established as part of the USGS Mancos Shale Landscapes Project, provide data on plants and soils, effects of surface disturbances, and links between plant and cryptogam communities.



Sensitive species Montrrose penstemon, in Mancos shale area

7) **Gunnison sage grouse** habitat sites and bird population numbers are monitored annually in conjunction with Colorado Division of Wildlife and Gunnison Sage Grouse Working Group partners.

8) **Invasive plant and noxious weed** inventories, treatments, and monitoring are done annually in conjunction with Delta and Montrose counties.

9) **Cultural site** inventories are ongoing and site monitoring continues under the Site Steward program.

10) **Motorized and mechanical use** on NCA trails, roads and designated open areas is tracked via traffic counters and monitored regularly by the OHV crew.



Collecting data for Human Impact Monitoring Study

5) **Rangeland monitoring** data on livestock numbers, allotments, and habitat conditions are gathered annually and grazing is adjusted in response to monitoring data as part of the RMP's adaptive management strategy.

6) **Plant communities** are monitored annually in the Native Plant and Fairview Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), treatments sites, and other areas to ensure projects meet objectives for protection, fuel reduction and habitat improvement.



Gunnison sage grouse monitoring site

2008 Land Health and Cultural Heritage Protection and Restoration Projects

1) Riparian Restoration Project – 900 cottonwood poles and 2,500 sandbar willow cuttings were planted along the Gunnison River to begin restoration of the riparian community. Nearly all of the plantings leafed out in early May.

Unfortunately, higher than expected late spring floods and beavers removed the majority of the willow plants and extended high water periods throughout May and June caused root rotting of the cottonwood poles. Additional plantings are scheduled for 2009.



Cottonwood poles planted in March



Leaf out in May



Dead cottonwood poles in June

2) Gunnison Rock Art Site Protection Project – site recordation, excavation and installation of a fence around rock art panel to reduce impacts from sheep grazing and vandalism.

3) Gold Medal Trout Fishery Improvements – stabilization of banks and installation of rock veins at two popular river access sites to decrease erosion and improve fishery habitat.



Emergency Closure of Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC

**5) Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC
Emergency Closure** - above-average snow depth prompted the need for a emergency closure of the 22,000 acre Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC to all public entry to lower stress levels of wintering deer and elk and reduce impacts to big game and sage grouse critical habitat from antler shed collecting and illegal OHV activities.

BLM rangers and CDOW officers increased patrols in the area and were successful in apprehending and citing a number of users who violated the closure.

5) Invasive Weed Control Projects – mechanical (hydro-axe), chemical, and biological weed treatments of tamarisk, Russian knapweed, yellow toadflax, halogeton, and other invasive and noxious weeds covering over 228 acres and 20 miles of river corridor and tributaries throughout the NCA.



FO Rangeland Management Specialist Lynae Rogers attacks yellow star thistle in the Black Ridge allotment



Spraying weeds along NCA access road.

Weed inventories and treatments are done by FO staff, NCA Friends group volunteers, and through partnerships with Delta and Montrose Counties and the Tamarisk Coalition. This year, we received funding for a raft to use for future river corridor weed projects.

6) Fairview Native Plant ACEC Protection completion of a fence around the 160 acre ACEC to protect endangered clay loving buckwheat and other sensitive plants and habitat from motor vehicle use.

Work included road realignment and reclamation of a two track road that had been bladed and widened. impacted sites were planted with native seeds. We are closely monitoring the re-vegetation process.



New fence protects 160 acres of the Fairview ACEC

7) Bat Inventory –extensive inventory of 40,000 acres in the Wilderness canyon and Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC to identify bat species, including sensitive species that inhabit the NCA. The data will be used to develop a bat protection plan.

All of our 2008 accomplishments are highlighted in the Gunnison Gorge FY2008 Landscape Health Improvement Projects table at the end of this report.

2. Condition of Recreation Facilities, Roads and Trails

Facilities

- ✦ The NCA maintains 4 major NCA entrance sites and 16 developed recreation sites which include: a campground, toilets, sanitation dump station, picnic areas, boat ramps, Wilderness and multiple use trailheads, and OHV staging, training, and riding areas. Our facilities are rated in fair to good condition in FAMS and 2006 Assets Management Report.
- ✦ The NCA shares office space with the Field Office and does not have separate NCA facilities except for a 16 ft diameter tipi which serves as our Wilderness backcountry ranger station.
- ✦ In addition to developed sites, the NCA has over 60 dispersed campsites, access areas, overlooks, and other high-use areas which require regular monitoring and maintenance. Sites are maintained by permanent and seasonal staffs; the NCA shares one permanent maintenance position with the FO. Contracts are used to fund additional labor needed for some projects.
- ✦ Many facilities require weekly and sometimes daily maintenance. Vandalism to signs, restrooms, fences, etc. is a chronic problem.
- ✦ NCA funds do not adequately cover work needed to repair vandalism, address health and safety concerns, and keep facilities in good working conditions that meet visitor expectations. Costs for trash hauling, toilet and sanitation dump station pumping doubled last year due to increased gas prices, mileage surcharges, and other economic factors.



Sunset Rocks Trail

Special Area Management Challenges

Flat Top-Peach Valley OHV Recreation Area -9,750 acres

Popular area includes 75 miles of designated routes and two open areas for cross-country ATV and motorcycle use. The area receives the heaviest year-round use in the NCA with over 60,000 visitors annually and requires weekly maintenance and LEO attention to deal with the target shooting, trash dumping, underage drinking and drug parties, bonfires, and recurring vandalism.

Gunnison Gorge Wilderness -17,700 acres

Famous for boating, world-class Gold Medal fishing, and annual Stone Fly Hatch, the Wilderness includes 4 major trailheads and 30 designated river campsites. Seasonals provide regular maintenance of sites. Costs for vehicle shuttles, horse pack-ins, and per diem for multi-day patrols, significantly increase costs for visitor services, patrols and maintenance.

Gunnison River Special Recreation Management Area - 13,500 acres

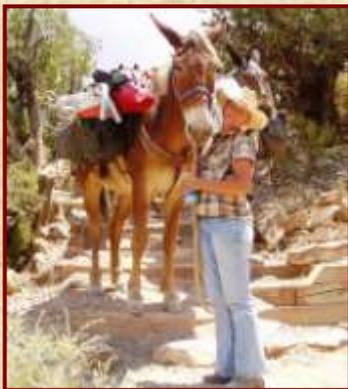
Area includes Gunnison Forks Watchable Wildlife Area & Day Use Recreation Site and three new sites added in 2007 and 2008. Sites receive year-round use and impacts from illegal camping, OHV use, and vandalism. Increasing use is resulting in rising costs for toilet pumping, vandalism repair, road maintenance, weed control and mowing, trash removal and seasonal and LEO patrols.

Dispersed Target Shooting Areas

A major maintenance problem is caused by target shooters who leave behind acres of land littered with glass, beer cans, broken clay pigeons, spent shells, and remains of large targets such as TVs, computers, furniture, and appliances. In FY 09, we will begin implementing new regulations that close the NCA to target shooting, but expect many users will ignore the new regulations, resulting in continued maintenance and patrol costs.



An "average" cleanup at a NCA target shooting site



Packing in river gear on the Chukar Trail

ROADS & TRAILS

- ✚ The GGNCA has over 65 miles of designated roads and 100+ miles of designated trails. Routes are a mixture of dirt and gravel county roads; high clearance and four-wheel drive BLM roads; primitive ATV and single-track motorcycle trails; and very steep and rocky hiking trails
- ✚ This year's spring runoff damaged access roads and trails and requiring immediate attention by BLM, Montrose and Delta Counties.

✚ Illegal trails in the Mancos areas are very visible and difficult to eradicate given the nature of soils; lack of vegetative cover, trees, rocks, and other topographic features that can be used as natural barricades.

- ✚ In addition to OHV tracks, the adobes are also crisscrossed with miles of sheep trails. Sheep routes are often mistaken and illegally used as OHV routes. Signs, barricades, and fences are used to address these problems but they continue to occur.
- ✚ The OHV crew monitored and maintained over 75 miles of multiple use routes this year to remove evidence of switchback cutting, rutting, and illegal off-route use and repair water bars and arroyo crossings damaged by spring floods and summer monsoonal rain events.



Illegal OHV tracks in Gunnison Gorge NCA closed area.



Steel sign shot with armor-piercing bullets

SIGNS

✚ We continue to replace NCA wooden directional, information and regulatory signs with ½-inch plate steel signs with decals to reduce theft and vandalism. Steel signs last longer but still require repairs when vandalized by graffiti, winches, armor-piercing bullets, AK-47s, and other heavy artillery.

- ✚ OHV crew monitors and maintains over 400 travel management signs. In 2008, nearly a third of the carsonite signs were shot, driven over, or stolen. Some signs are replaced two to three times a season. Cost of replacing travel signs averages \$8,000 per year.
- ✚ A GIS-photo based Sign Plan has been initiated to improve management of the NCA signs. Approximately 25% of the signs have been inventoried. Portal signs meeting BLM standards have been installed at the four major NCA access sites.

Deferred Maintenance Projects

Chukar Trailhead Toilet Vault Replacement – Project involved upgrade of composting toilet to a concrete vault to meet Bureau health, safety and universal access standards and eliminate confined space problems.

Ute Trailhead Toilet Upgrade –This project, scheduled for FY09, includes upgrading a pit toilet to a concrete vault, addressing accessibility issues, and improved road access.

Flat Top Recreation Area Upgrade – Funding is still being sought to upgrade the single vault toilet to a double, install new steel kiosks, and upgrade access road and parking area. Site is one of the NCA’s busiest year-round recreation sites and facilities fall far short of meeting visitor and site protection needs.

FY08 Construction Projects



Cottonwood Campground site

Cottonwood Campground and River Access Site –

Construction of a campground, restroom, boat launch, universal access fishing pier and campsite, road improvements, and signs. Site provides year-round accessibility for fishing the Gunnison’s outstanding Gold Medal trout fishery. Project implements RMP objectives for enhanced visitor services, experiences and safety.

Lawhead Gulch Trail – New trail provides access to the Gunnison River and rock art site. Future plans for the site include additional trail work, interpretive signs, road improvements and parking area.



Universal access fishing pier at Cottonwood site



3. Outreach, Environmental Education, Interpretation and Volunteers

- ❖ Most visitor contacts are made in the field by BLM law enforcement personnel seasonal river rangers, and visitor services and maintenance personnel. Contacts involve questions about Wilderness boating and fishing, camping regulations, and OHV recreation areas and trails.
- ❖ 20 percent of visitors come into the Montrose Public Lands Center where front desk personnel and volunteers working jointly for BLM, USFS, and NPS assist them. The NCA manager, recreation planner and seasonal staff spend many hours talking to visitors in person, on the phone and answering email and letter inquiries for NCA information and brochures.
- ❖ Our NCA website (<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/ggnca.html>) contains user information, regulations, maps, photos, commercial outfitter lists, and BLM contacts. The site was upgraded this year with photos and links for downloadable NCA and FO brochures and maps. A National Public Lands Day link was created to provide information and maps about our 2008 project.
- ❖ Key outreach materials include: Gunnison Gorge NCA/Black Canyon National Park Visitor Guide (updated annually); Gunnison Gorge Visitor Guide; Flat Top/Peach Valley OHV Recreation Area Brochure (2007), and Delta County annual tourism brochure which includes a new public land section with NCA maps and information.

Interpretation & Outreach

- ✚ GGNCA does not have a formal interpretive plan or program. Our approved table of organization includes an education/ interpretation position; however, base funds are not adequate to fund this position.
- ✚ With the help of our Friends Network, we are expanding our working relationships with local school teachers, community groups, tourism providers and user groups that help plan, fund and sponsor outreach projects.
- ✚ Our main outreach message is that NCA lands are special and demand special care. New trailhead signs focus on user regulations including: group size limits; day use and camping regulations; permit requirements; travel management; and stewardship ethics.



BLM archaeologist Glade Hadden interprets a cultural site for volunteers.

Environmental Education

OHV Education Program

- Our OHV crew are certified motorcycle and ATV instructors. Providing OHV training to the public is not common in BLM, and we are proud to showcase how effective programs are in exposing OHV users of all ages to stewardship principles while teaching them safety and responsible riding skills.
- Since 2005, over 300 students (K-12) have participated in the NCA's OHV training program which emphasizes programs such as "Stay the Trail," "Right Rider," and "Leave No Trace." This year, the crew held 15 OHV education classes for local students and adults.
- OHV crew members are middle and high school instructors and work with other teachers on environmental education efforts in science, history, and physical education courses.
- The teachers also work with over 100 students in local dirt bike and ATV clubs to foster responsible riding on public lands. The clubs assist with projects, trail maintenance, and networking with users to spread the word about OHV regulations, events, and NCA projects.



Montrose Middle School Dirt Bike Club assists in stewardship projects and patrols in the NCA's 9,700 acre OHV area.

Gunnison Gorge River Ranger Patrols and Programs



River rangers contact over 3,000 users a year in the Gorge

- This year, our river rangers conducted 25 educational outings with schools, environmental organizations, boating and angling groups, kids-at-risk programs, tourism groups, and local and state agencies. The programs enhance visitor safety, awareness and stewardship of the NCA.
- Participants receive hands-on training in Wilderness management, resource protection, and user ethics while learning about NCA natural and cultural resources.
- This year's projects included: campsite inventory and monitoring, environmental education projects, invasive species control, site construction and trail rehabilitation.
- NCA river rangers make over 3,000 visitor contacts a year to assist and educate visitors and ensure compliance with Wilderness regulations.

Take It Outside (TIO) Education Program

As part of our 2008 “Messing about in Boats” TIO program, our river rangers conducted day and overnight river trips and outdoor education projects with 32 children (ages 6-16) and nine leaders from San Miguel County EXPLORE! Program, Delta, Montrose and Ouray County Partners, and Robert A. Brown’s Center for Youth.

The community groups promote positive change and provide mentoring programs for economically disadvantaged and “kids at risk.” The adventures gave the kids “hands on” experience in camping, boating and learning about public land resources and stewardship.



River Ranger Peter Dennett and friends
“Take It Outside!” on a Gunnison River adventure



NCA Recreation Planner Edd Franz and Delta Visitor Center volunteer at the 2008 Hospitality Workshop

Other 2008 Outreach Efforts by NCA and FO staff

- ✚ Assisted Montrose Visitor and Convention Bureau and Delta County Tourism Cabinet in providing training for front desk and Welcome center staff at a Hospitality Workshop.
- ✚ Worked with Montrose Daily Press on articles which highlighted NCA’s river rangers, outdoor recreation planner, and the BLM and USGS Mancos Shale Landscapes Project.
- ✚ Field Office biological staff hosted a booth at the Delta County Fair on Invasive Plant Awareness and Control.
- ✚ Organized upland and river field trips and three days of filming recreational activities with State Office communication staff and National Operations Center (NOC) photographer. The NCA served as a pilot area for a “Virtual Trip” web podcast project for the Colorado BLM NLCS site.
- ✚ NCA manager participated in Montrose and Delta Counties “branding projects;” represented BLM on the Delta tourism Cabinet; and made NCA presentations at Delta County tourism retreat, Montrose Press, Southwest Resource Advisory Council, Gunnison Sage Grouse Working Group, and other partner and Friends group meetings.
- ✚ NCA Friends Network volunteers assisted in hosting special projects in celebration of Earth Day, National River Awareness Week, National Boating and Fishing Week, National Trails Day, and National Public Lands Day. This year’s events included river cleanups, trail building and maintenance, participation in Trout Unlimited’s Fly Fishing Expo, tamarisk removal, and cultural site protection.



Gunnison Gorge Friends Network volunteers celebrate National Public Lands Day by building a trail and fence at the Gunnison River rock art site.

2008 Volunteer Accomplishments

- 352 volunteers from local schools, non-profit groups, businesses and sporting groups contributed over 4,162 hours of work on NCA projects. Hosted workers from Delta Corrections Center added another 2,920 hours of work for a total of contributed hours valued at \$138,200.



Volunteers contributed over 4,000 hours of work in the NCA in 2008

- Montrose Public Lands front desk volunteer Ken Emory received BLM 2008 “Making a Difference” National Volunteer Award for outstanding volunteer service. Ken and fellow members of the Western Slope 4 Wheelers club have also adopted jeep trails in the NCA.
- The table summarizes 2008 volunteer work which included:** tamarisk control, river patrols, cleanups, archeological studies, site stewardship projects, campsite rehabilitation, travel management, signing, use monitoring, environmental education, public access enhancements, riparian improvements, tourism information and outreach.

	VOLUNTEER/ HOSTED WORKERS	VOLUNTEER HOURS	HOSTED WORKER HRS	VALUE WORK HOURS	FUNDS EXPENDED
2008 Gunnison Gorge NCA Volunteers & Hosted Worker Report					
Weed/tamarisk treatments	20	200		\$ 3,900	\$ 980
Montrose Public Lands Front Desk Volunteers & Montrose/Delta Co. Tourism Boards, Hospitality Training	42	410		\$ 8,000	\$ 500
River patrols, campsite cleanups, toilets & trails	30	480		\$ 9,400	\$ 1,500
Bat Survey volunteers	4	384		\$ 7,500	\$ 950
Western Wyoming College professor & students – Gunnison River Rock Art Shelter project	10	800		\$ 15,600	\$2,000
OHV patrols - trail maintenance & cleanup of recreation sites	20	160		\$ 3,100	\$ 600
Dept. of Corrections crew - fence building, recreation site maintenance and construction, dump site cleanups, weed removal, wildlife, range & fishery improvement projects	10		2,920	\$57,000	\$ 4,500
Environmental Education Projects, National Rivers Week, NPLD, Earth Day, "Living Classrooms" field trips, trash cleanups, riparian protection & enhancement projects, tourism outreach	216	1,728		\$ 33,700	\$ 2,500
Total	352	4,162	2,920	\$138,200.00	\$13,530.00

4. NCA Science Program

2008 Highlights



- + **Gunnison Rock Art Site** - Western Wyoming College students (*photo*) and professor are conducting inventories and excavation at NCA rock art site. Prehistoric deposits and archaeological remains dating back 3,000+ years are being analyzed and curated at the College.
- + **USGS Mancos Shale Landscapes Project** - Close out and transfer of research data of five-year USGS Mancos Landscapes Project. Products include: Landsat and LIDAR imagery; erosion models for hill slopes, valley floors and precipitation runoff; soil characteristics and geochemical analyzes, monitoring protocols, geologic maps, posters and guides.
- + **USGS Study on Roads and Traffic on Wildlife Habitat Use** - Study uses elk GPS transmitters and traffic monitors to understand the effects of traffic on elk migration routes and Gunnison sage grouse habitats. A goal of the study is to reduce big game grazing impacts on agricultural lands. BLM uses data to determine effectiveness of seasonal closures to protect sage grouse and where changes are needed in management and monitoring plans.



Blown out Mancos shale dam and invasive tamarisk trees

- + **Salinity Check Dam Project** - GeoCorps intern inventoried, mapped and documented erosion and invasive weed problems on 900+ salinity control check dams in the NCA's Mancos shale areas. Data will be used to develop large-scale restoration projects.
- + **Human Impact Monitoring Study** - Northern Arizona University is assisting with study on human impacts in the Wilderness. Study provides baseline data for a use allocation plan.
- + **Gunnison Gorge Visitor Survey** - Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) visitor satisfaction survey done in cooperation with the University of Idaho, provided data regarding fees, facilities, recreation use, resource management, staff and customer service, and educational and interpretive materials. The NCA received a 96% overall satisfaction rating.
- + **Bat Survey** - Survey results included capture or recording of echolocation calls from 13 bat species, including two species listed on the field office's sensitive wildlife species list.

Please see Science Table for additional information on NCA science projects.



Sensitive NCA bat species *Yuma myotis*

5. Cooperative Conservation

2008 Highlights

+ Colorado Division of Wildlife



- CDOW and Trout Unlimited (TU) produced an ESPN video on CDOW, BLM, NPS, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), TU, and other groups' efforts to reduce whirling disease and re-establish the Gorge rainbow fishery. In the video, the NCA manager talks about BLM's role in resource management, protection and visitor education.



CDOW Officer Doug Homan demonstrates just how deep snow levels were in the Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC.

- CDOW helped monitor snow depths, implement Gunnison sage grouse ACEC closure and assists in BLM's North Rim Landscape Strategy workgroup.
- We conduct joint hunting and fishing patrols and coordinate on sage grouse lek monitoring and annual fish surveys.
- Fishery biologist, Dan Kowalski, compiled a study of 20+ years of CDOW Gorge fishery research to update BOR, Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), and NPS, water users, other partners and public. The study provides data for NCA fishery and riparian projects.

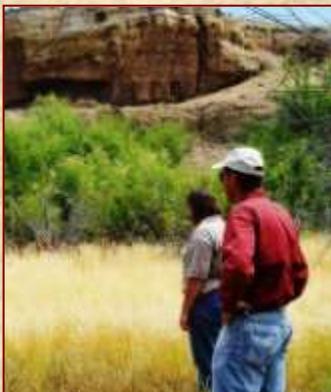
Colorado State Parks/OHV Program

- Since 2002, we have received \$300,000+ in grants from the State's OHV program to fund our trail crew.
- In 2008, we received \$62,000 in OHV grant funds and leveraged them to secure \$50,000 in BLM Challenge Cost Share funds essential to cover crew support, vehicle and project costs.
- Crew attends annual OHV workshops and coordinates regularly with State Parks on regulations, signing, certification training, user education and ethics programs.



Training young riders at Peach Valley Recreation Area

+ Colorado Department of Corrections – Delta Corrections Center (DDC)



Delta County "Weed Czar" Web Callicutt checks out the next weed project

- We partner with DDC on a 8-person inmate crew and supervisor; crew contributes \$50,000 a year in labor on projects.
- 2008 projects: Fairview ACEC fence construction, sign installation and repair, maintenance of recreation sites and range and wildlife projects, weed control and dump clean-ups.

+ Delta & Montrose Counties

- Ongoing coordination on road maintenance and easements, law enforcement, acquisitions, landowner and trespass issues, and conservation plans.
- Delta County provided contract administration for treating 200+ acres of invasive weeds in the NCA this year.



Gunnison sage grouse male displaying on lek

Crawford Gunnison Sage Grouse Partnership

- Landowners, range permittees, environmental and sporting groups, and interested citizens assisted in project maintenance, habitat monitoring, and the annual bird count.
- Partners also participated in the USGS elk movement study, Gunnison sage grouse emergency closure, and the North Rim Landscape Strategy.

Colorado Geological Survey (CGS) -STATEMAP Project

- Soil mapping project funded by the National Cooperative Mapping Program involved CGS staff and Mesa State geology intern.
- Completed 1:24,000 scale quadrangles of NCA Mancos shale areas and special geologic features.
- Maps also used by cities to ensure building compliance on swelling soils.
- Maps used in RMP implementation to develop best management practices and adaptive management decisions for Mancos shale soils.



CGS intern working on STATEMAP mapping project in GGNCA

Fairview ACEC Fence Project Partners

- Project to protect native plant species and habitat and resolve trespass issues in Fairview ACEC (*page 6*) involved significant collaboration with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Uncompahgre Valley Water Users (UVWU), Colorado Natural Areas Program (CNAP), Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP), landowners, and local environmental and OHV groups. BLM funding came from Healthy Lands Initiative (1110) and Sensitive Species (1150) program funds.
- UVWU provided labor and equipment for road work, reclamation and revegetation of impacted areas. The fence was constructed by the Delta Corrections crew.



Reclamation of two-track road



Road realignment along ACEC boundary



Gunnison Gorge Friends Network

- ❖ The NCA works with numerous non-profit organizations, interest groups, local businesses, tourism providers, local schools, colleges, and individuals in the Gunnison Gorge Friends Network on a variety of conservation efforts that promote resource protection and restoration, quality recreation opportunities; responsible public land uses, visitor education and stewardship.
- ❖ We are currently working with the Network to develop a “Yahoo Groups” site to foster increased communication and coordination among members of the many diverse groups and help streamline project administration, fundraising, volunteer recruitment and training.
- ❖ Network volunteers contributed over 3,000 hours on stewardship, outreach, resource protection and restoration projects in the NCA in 2008. Projects included: trail building and maintenance; cultural site monitoring and protection; volunteer training; project and event coordination; weed control; recreation, wildlife, and plant inventories; Adopt-A-Trail projects; environmental education, and sign installation.
- ❖ Without the help and contributions of funding, time, and energy of the Friends Network, we would not be able to meet our objectives for managing the NCA. We thank all of our science and cooperative conservation partners and friends groups for another great year of stewardship in the Gunnison Gorge NCA!!



Please see Partnership Table for detailed information on NCA collaborative partnerships and Gunnison Gorge Friends Network projects.

6. FY 2008 Business Practices

Gunnison Gorge NCA/Wilderness Funding and Work Month Summary



Table 1. BLM ALLOCATION	
GUNNISON GORGE NCA FY 2008	
NCA Funding – Labor and Operations	\$413,649
One Year Flexible – Labor and Operations	\$404,149
TOTAL NCA BUDGET	\$817,798

- ✦ Total allocated federal funding available for labor and project work in the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area in FY 07 was **\$817,798**. This allocation, shown in **Table 1**, was composed of \$413,649 of base funding and \$404,149 of one-year flexible funding.
- ✦ **Table 2** shows work months and costs for permanent and seasonal NCA and FO staff funded by NCA funds. It is important to note that although NCA funding extends across the NCA and FO, it does not cover all work done in the NCA.
- ✦ Approximately \$100,000 of FO base and one-time funds is used each year to fund NCA-related labor, vehicles, procurement, and support costs.
- ✦ This year again, the UFO covered \$20,000 in funding for Gunnison Gorge seasonal river rangers.

Table 2. STAFF & WORK MONTHS		
Work Months and Funding (10 ms = 1 work year)	Work Months	Funding (\$ K)
GUNNISON GORGE NCA STAFF		
Permanent Staff (NCA Manager, LEO, Recreation Planner)	34.5	260.6
River Rangers - 4 seasonals ¹	23.3	71.9
OHV Crew – 2 seasonals ²	5.1	18.3
SRP fees -SCEP position	4.1	12.6
Total for GGNCA	67	363.4
FO Staff Support Funded by NCA		
Biological & GIS	13	90.4
Cadastral & Engineering	2	6.1
Lands & Minerals	10.9	46.9
Admin. & Support	5.6	18.9
Maintenance	8.6	37.3 k
Totals for UFO	40.1	199.6
TOTAL	101	\$563 K

¹ Positions funded also by UFO funds & fees.

² Positions funded primarily by contributed funds.

³ Position funded also by Gunnison Gorge fees.

Major NCA Expenditures

Item	Cost
Labor	\$ 565,000
Travel & Training	\$ 12,700
Supplies/Materials	\$ 68,400
Vehicles	\$ 31,000
Contracts, Services & Agreements	\$ 142,700
TOTAL	\$ 817,800



Major expenditures are shown in the table. Labor costs include surcharges, benefits, administrative overhead, etc. Materials and supplies purchased include: boulders, fencing materials, weed control chemicals and equipment; facility maintenance needs (trash bags, lumber, toilet paper, rental equipment); visitor services (displays, signs, etc.); vandalism repair; and law enforcement equipment.

Contracts and services included: toilet pumping; Delta Corrections Crew support, GeoCorp internship; and interpretive, graphic design and mapping services.

2008 Special Recreation Permit Receipts

- Special Recreation Permit (SRP) fees for Wilderness use and commercial outfitting receipts stay in the NCA for immediate use. SRPs are required for all private and commercial users 16 years of age and older.

- Day-use permits are \$3/ person; camping permits are \$10/person for one night;

\$15/person for two nights. Annual day-use passes are \$15. Volunteers earn free annual passes by working a minimum of four hours on a resource protection or education project.

- FY 2008 revenue from 5,669 Wilderness SRPs for individuals and groups totaled \$31,800.

GGNCA Recreation Receipts	Recreation Visitors	Fee Receipts \$
1. Wilderness SRP Fees	7,500	\$31,800
2. Commercial SRP fees	3,600	\$ 32,800
TOTALS	11,100	\$64,600

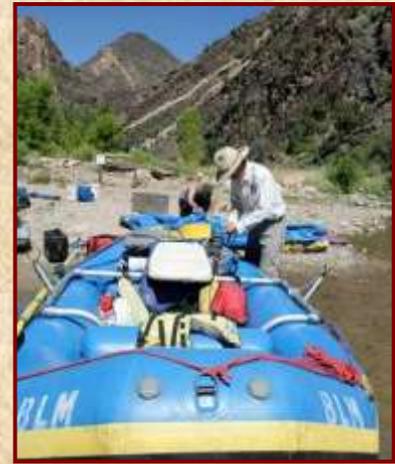


High flows brought increased use and safety problems for Gunnison Gorge Wilderness boaters

- We manage 22 commercial SRPs for a variety of uses including: whitewater boating, float-fishing, horse packing, jet boat use, and vehicle shuttles. We collect 3 percent of gross income from the SRPs which totaled \$32,800.

- Total fee receipts in 2008 were up 10% percent from 2007 due primarily to extended high river flows that increased use in August and September.

- ✦ Uses of receipts: road and facility maintenance; horse pack-ins and vehicle shuttles for river patrols; swift water rescue and EMT training, vehicle and per diem costs; resource monitoring; safety equipment, environmental education and outreach efforts.
- ✦ Fees also purchase Wag-bags for packing out human waste. Bags are provided to the public at no additional charge. Visitors are complimentary about the bags that reduce sanitation problems in the river corridor.
- ✦ Details on collection and use of NCA fees since 1999 can be found in our fee reports to Congress.

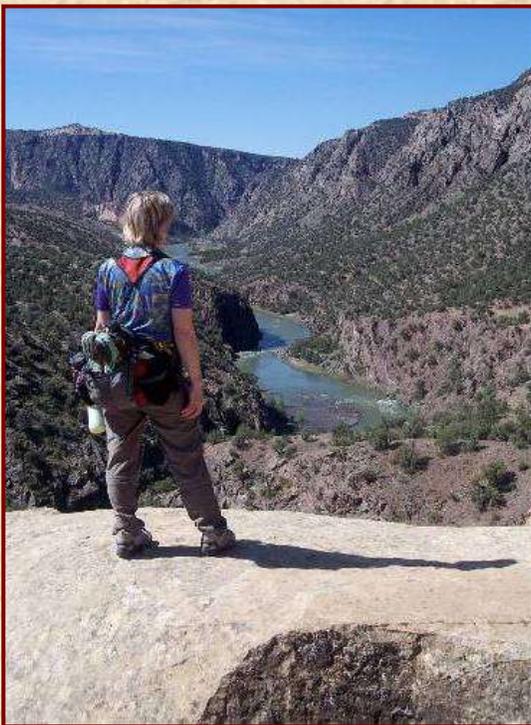


River Ranger Rooster Barnhart prepares for a Gorge patrol

Contributed Funds and In-Kind Support

The table summarizes major funding and in-kind contributions from science partners, collaborators, friends groups and volunteers in FY 2008.

For more information on project support and funding, please see Volunteer, Science and Partnership tables.



Ute Park, Gunnison Gorge Wilderness

2008 CONTRIBUTED FUNDS & IN-KIND SUPPORT	
2008	
Colorado State Parks - OHV crew grants, signs, training, support	\$ 62,000
U. S. Geological Survey – Mancos Landscapes & Travel Impact study	\$ 40,000
Colorado Division of Wildlife & Trout Unlimited –whirling disease video; fishery study, patrols	\$ 25,000
State Department of Corrections Crew hosted worker supervision, training and labor	\$ 80,000
Montrose/Delta Counties –weed control, road, easements	\$ 20,000
Western Wyoming College – Gunnison Rock Art Site excavation, testing, and curation	\$ 15,000
Geographic Society of America (GSA) GeoCorp intern stipend & administration; intern volunteer work on Living Classroom Project	\$ 7,700
Delta County Tourism Cabinet – printing brochure printing heritage tourism project, Delta & Montrose hospitality training workshop	\$ 4,000
Gorge Friends Network – event coordination, education, outreach, projects, front desk volunteers, etc.	\$ 40,000
Univ. Northern Colorado, Univ. of Northern Arizona –bat survey and Human Impact study	\$ 4,000
Uncompahgre Valley Water Users – heavy equipment and labor for Fairview Fence project	\$ 3,000
Others - NPS, Conservation Fund, BOR, Co. Geological Survey, etc.	\$25,000
TOTAL Contributions	\$325,700

GUNNISON GORGE NCA - CO154

FY 2008 Landscape Health Improvement Projects

PROJECT	PROGRAM	PE's	WORK COMPLETED	COMMENTS
<i>Invasive Plant and Noxious Weed Inventories</i>				
Riparian Areas	1770,1040	BS	210 acres	Clean Water - Watershed Restoration project (CWWR)
Wilderness campsites	1210	BS	7 acres	FO ecologist & river rangers
<i>Invasive Plant and Noxious Weed Treatment</i>				
General Weed treatments (herbicide)	1040/1120	JD	130 acres	Black Ridge & C-77 Rds. Uplands, Peach Valley, Chukar Road
River corridor thistle, knapweed, oxeye daisy, yellow toadflax, white top treatments	1210, 1220	JD	5 acres	River Rangers
Gunnison River SRMA tamarisk & knapweed	1040	JD	75 acres	Delta County Weed Program and BLM Partnership
Wilderness tamarisk retreatment sites	1210	JD	5 acres	River Rangers & Tammy Whacker volunteers
Gunnison Forks, trail-heads, knapweed control	1220	JD	10 acres	BLM maintenance
Wilderness campsites – Stone Fly overflow sites	1210	MK	3 acres	UFO biological & river rangers
<i>Landscape Health Monitoring & Recovery Projects</i>				
Grazing allotment monitoring	1020	ML	5 allotments	Green Mountain; UFO ecologist
Fairview Fence Project	1220, 1232, 1150, 1110	JB	2 projects; 2 miles	Delta Crew labor funded by Gorge user fees; State Dept of Corrections
<i>Riparian & Fisheries Protection, Improvements & Monitoring</i>				
Riparian Restoration – erosion control	1120	JH	5 projects	Rock veins, bank stabilization
Riparian Restoration – cottonwood fencing	1040	JG	2 miles	Protect trees from herbivory
Gunnison River SRMA–recreation sites	1220, 1652	IA,JA, JD	3 projects	Cottonwood Grove fishing pier, boat ramp, weed treatments
Gold Medal Fishery annual survey	1210	MD	8,000 acres	CDOW, BOR partnership

GUNNISON GORGE NCA - CO154

FY 2008 Landscape Health Improvement Projects

PROJECT	PROGRAM	PE's	WORK COMPLETED	COMMENTS
<i>Riparian & Fisheries Protection, Improvements & Monitoring (continued)</i>				
Monitor streams	1040	MO, MR	25 miles	FO hydrologist
Gorge corridor cleanup & campsite rehabilitation	1040	JG	3 miles	River Rangers and Friends Network
Fisher compliance patrols	1210, 1220, 1630	NU, NX	6 patrols	River Rangers, LEO & CDOW
<i>Sensitive Species Protection & Recovery Projects</i>				
Gunnison Sage Grouse Inventory	1150	CB	5,000 acres	USGS seismic counters data on vehicle use
Grass/Shrub treatment	1150	JA	100 acres	Fruitland Mesa cheat grass treatment
Gunnison Sage Grouse & buckwheat protection	1150,1110	JB	6 projects	Grouse closures, Fairview fence, guzzlers
Gunnison sage grouse guzzlers catchments	1150	JC	7 projects	Fruitland, Black Ridge maintenance
Stream/riparian treatments	1150	JG	2 miles	Riparian restoration project
Construct riparian improvements	1150	JH	5 projects	Rock veins and bank stabilization
Species recovery actions	1150, 1110	JP	17 projects	Fairview, sage grouse & Native Plant ACECs projects monitoring, N. Rim Strategy, FWS consultation
Gorge Bat inventory, USGS Sage grouse/elk study, buckwheat sites	1150	MQ	11,000 acres	Gunnison Gorge Wilderness, Fairview, Sage Grouse ACEC
Sensitive Species Population Monitoring	1150	MR	5 populations	Crawford Sage grouse, clay-loving buckwheat
Monitor Shrub/grass treatment	1150	MX	500 acres	Sage grouse ACEC treatment monitoring
<i>Rangeland Management</i>				
Grazing authorizations issued/transferred	1020	EF	22 permits	UFO Range Staff
Allotment inspections for LHA conformance.	1020	NA	5 allotments	Black Ridge, Smith Mountain, Brush Pt. Alkali Flats, Green Mountain
Allotments monitored	1020	ML	5 allotments	Black Ridge, Smith Mountain, Brush Pt. Alkali Flats, Green Mountain

GUNNISON GORGE NCA - CO154

FY 2008 Landscape Health Improvement Projects

PROJECT	PROGRAM	PE's	WORK COMPLETED	COMMENTS
<i>Hydrologic Monitoring</i>				
Geocorps Mancos check dam inventory	1010	BP	4 projects, 80 acres	GIS maps, photo plots, site data
USGS Mancos Landscapes project – Conclusion Fest	1010	BP	5,000 acres	USGS reports & products from 5 yr study
Water quality monitoring of Gunnison main stem and major tributaries	1010	MU	water quality monitoring; and aquatic invertebrates	Meets Colorado Water Quality Designations, Classifications and Standards
Monthly Climate Monitoring and Forecasting	1010	MI	1 station; 12 Climate Summaries	FO hydrologist
Mancos check dam project	1010	JA, JD	10 acres	FO hydrologist, GeoCorps intern
<i>Lands Management</i>				
Lands Right of Ways (ROW) and Temporary Use Permits (TUP)	1430, 1492, 5102	ER	5 cases	All in compliance
Acquisition	3130	HN	Ongoing project	Ongoing landowner negotiations; partner with The Conservation Fund
Selig Land Exchange	1430	FO, FM	In process	Exchange being processed
Film Permit	1430	EQ	1 permit	Commercial filming permit
Lands Compliance	1430, 1492, 5102	NH	18 inspections	Compliance completed & approved
Lands Assignments, Renewals, etc.	1430, 1492, 5102	FP	5 cases	Lands staff
<i>Heritage Resources Protection</i>				
Fencing of Gunnison Rock Art site (5DT 813)	1050	HF	1 plan	Site protection plan
Heritage resource inventory	1050	BC	5 acres	River corridor sites
Monitor Heritage Site 5DT 813	1050	MY	1 site	Collected baseline data/photos.
Consultation with Indian tribes	1050	AJ	1 consultation	Ute Tribes meeting at Gateway
Heritage Resources Recorded	1050	FD	18 sites	Data recovery

GUNNISON GORGE NCA - CO154

FY 2008 Landscape Health Improvement Projects

PROJECT	PROGRAM	PE's	WORK COMPLETED	COMMENTS
<i>Wilderness Protection, Resource Monitoring & Permit Administration</i>				
Wilderness Monitoring	1210	MD	17,700 acres	Foot, boat, vehicle, aerial monitoring
Wilderness patrols & campsite cleanups	1210, 1220	MD, NX	8,000 acres; 14 river miles	River Rangers
Trailhead & trail patrols	1210, 1220	MD, ID	6 major access trails	River Rangers, law enforcement officers (LEO), visitor services,
Route Assessments	1210, 1220, 1770	BY, MV	25 miles	NCA staff
Wilderness visitor contacts; GPRA survey	1210, 1220	BA, NX	45,000 acres	River Rangers, LEO, visitor services staff
Gunnison Gorge non-commercial permit administration, compliance	1232	FH, FV, FU	5,669 permits	River Rangers, LEO, visitor services staff
Evaluate seasonal road closures on east side to protect Wilderness values	1220	MV	15 miles	NCA manager & LEOs
NAU Human Impact Assessment	1210	BP	20,000 acres	NAU, NCA staff & River Rangers
Commercial permit administration and compliance	1210, 1220, 1232	EA, NX	22 permits	NCA staff, LEO, and River Rangers
<i>Recreation Management, Operations & Visitor Services</i>				
Routine (daily-weekly) maintenance of recreation facilities, dispersed camps, trailheads to control visitor impacts/ resource damage	1220, 1651, 1652	IA, IU	14 developed sites, 30+ dispersed recreation sites	1 maintenance person shared with UFO, seasonals & contracts
Construction of new campground & accessible fishing pier	1220, 1652	IA, IU, IW	1 site	Cottonwood Grove Recreation Site
Annual maintenance of recreation sites	1220, 1651, 1652	IA, IU, JD	14 developed sites	Trailheads, designated campsites, day use areas
Road maintenance; repair of sinkholes & culverts	1652	IP	10 miles	BLM, Delta & Montrose Counties
Black Ridge & Fruitland Mesa Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC closure	1220	BA	45,000 acres	NCA & FO staff, Gunn. Sage Grouse Partners
North Rim Study Project-Phase 1	1220	MA	85,000 acres	NCA, NPS, USGS, DOW, USFS, Delta county

GUNNISON GORGE NCA - CO154

FY 2008 Landscape Health Improvement Projects

PROJECT	PROGRAM	PE's	WORK COMPLETED	COMMENTS
<i>Recreation Management, Operations & Visitor Services (continued)</i>				
Monitor & sign travel management areas	1770, 1652	MA	50,000 acres	BLM & State Parks partnership
Trail maintenance to control erosion, replace signs, etc.	1210, 1220, 1770, 1652	ID	112 miles	OHV crew, Gunnison High School, River Rangers
OHV visitor contacts & compliance checks	1770	BA	5,000 acres	OHV crew, LEO,
Annual trail monitoring	1220, 1770	MV	260 miles	OHV crew, NCA staff
<i>Major Public Outreach & Environmental Education Projects</i>				
<i>National Events</i>				
Nat. Rivers Week - North Fork Awareness Event	1220	AL	1 event	200+ people; River Rangers, Friends Network
Earth Day - Lawhead Gulch Trail Work	1220	AL	1 event	NCA staff & Friends Network
National Trails Day - Chukar Trail Work Project	1232	AL	1 event	River Rangers & Gunnison High School
National Trails Day - Western Slope 4-Wheelers Adopt-a-Trail workday & Virtual Gorge trip filming	1770	AL	2 events	OHV crew & Western Slope 4 Wheelers Club Friends Network
Nat'l Fish/Boating Week NCA Awareness Float -	1220	AL	1 event	River Rangers & Friends Network
Nat'l Fish/Boating Week; - TU Fly Fishing Expo	1220	AL	1 event	NCA Rec Planner, FO Vol. coord, Friends Network
National Public Lands Day - Gunnison Rock Art Site	1220, 1770	AL	2 events	River Rangers & Friends Network
National Take It Outside Initiative	1220	AL	3 events	River rangers, EXPLORE & Brown Center
<i>Other Public Outreach & Environmental Education Projects</i>				
River Ranger education & river cleanup trips.	1210, 1220	AL	2 projects	River Rangers & Friends Network
Gunnison Sage Grouse Closure outreach meetings	1220	AL	2 projects	Gunnison Sage Grouse Partners
USGS Research Results	1220	AL	1 project	Mancos Results Fest
Delta County Fair – Weed & Invasive Plant Display	1020	AI	1 project	FO Range staff
Annual Water Festival – environmental education	1220	AL	1 project	FO hydrologist

GUNNISON GORGE NCA - CO154

FY 2008 Landscape Health Improvement Projects

PROJECT	PROGRAM	PE's	WORK COMPLETED	COMMENTS
<i>Other Major Public Outreach & Environmental Education Projects</i> project				
BOR Aspinal Operations meetings	1232, 1040	AL	4 programs	NCA staff & FO hydrologist
NCA Heritage Resource education projects	1050	AE	2 projects	Rock Art signs, NPLD project
Gorge Awareness Floats with WO science coord; SO Communications staff & community tourism leaders	1220	AL	2 programs	NCA, WO NLCS, SO staff, Montrose Visitor & Convention Bureau & Chamber of Commerce
Montrose-Delta Hospitality Training - NCA awareness, Benefits-Based Mgt (BBM)	1220	AL	1 program	NCA manager & Rec Planner, Delta City & County tourism staff
Tourism Cabinet float –NCA awareness/outreach, BBM	1220	AL	1 program	Delta & Gunnison Counties tourism boards,
Gunnison River Alliance Lower Gunnison Cleanup	1220	AL	1 project	River Rangers & Friends Network
Gorge “Virtual Trip” filming for SO NLCS website	1220	AL	3 projects	SO & NOC staff; NCA & FO managers & staff, & Sen. Salazar staff
SW RAC–RMP Implementation presentation	1220	AL	1 program	NCA manager
Fishing– signs, public outreach, visitor contacts	1220	AL	1 project	River Rangers & DOW Partnership
Colorado River Outfitter Association meeting	1210, 1040	AL	1 program	NCA Recreation Planner
Cross-training front desk & seasonals & rangers	1210, 1220	AL	1 program	River Rangers, NPS, FO Volunteer coordinator
NCA Living Classroom Geologic Guide & website	1220, 1770	AL	2 projects	GeoCorp Intern
River Rangers, Adobe Science, and NCA Recreation Planner articles	1220	AL	3 articles	Montrose Press & NCA Manager
Montrose & Delta County Branding Projects & Tourism Retreats	1220	AL	2 projects	NCA Manager
BLM/NPS Visitor Guide, maps & articles; Montrose Style NCA articles	1210, 1220, 1232	AL	3 articles	NCA manager
Orchard River site kiosk	1220	AL	1 project	NCA staff
Motorcycle & ATV certification & ethics training	1770	AL	15 classes	OHV crew – 15 classes; 117 students

GUNNISON GORGE NCA - CO154

FY 2008 Landscape Health Improvement Projects

PROJECT	PROGRAM	PE's	WORK COMPLETED	COMMENTS
Major Public Outreach & Environmental Education Projects (continued)				
NCA Presentation to Montrose Press staff	1220	AI	1 program	NCA manager
NCA website upgrades	1220	AL	1 project	NCA Recreation Planner
Other NLCS outreach: Dominguez –Escalante & San Miguel WSR field trips	1220	AL	2 events	Uncompahgre Plateau (UP) Partnership, Sen. Salazar aide, SWRAC
Law Enforcement Patrols, Enforcement & Investigations				
Recreation/Wilderness, OHV areas, trailheads, North Fork. SRMA, jeep trails, cultural sites, etc.	1220, 1232	NU	112 patrols	Monitor recreation sites, sign & facilities, permit & Wilderness compliance, OHV vehicle checks, visitor contacts & educ.
Other patrols (Lands, hazmat, wild land fire etc.)	1430, 1630, 1640, 2810	NU	28 patrols	Monitor ACECs, boundary patrols
Recreation - Wilderness, OHV areas, trailheads	1220, 1232	NV	3 incidents	Vandalism, OHV accidents, fee non-compliance
Other Investigations	1630	NV, NJ	3 investigations	Target shooting, trespass, wood cutting, trash dumping
Drug Enforcement	1630	OA	5 actions	Possession charges, fines, etc.



Gunnison Gorge Wilderness education float with Montrose and Delta county tourism partners and CSO communications staff

