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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym or Abbreviation

Full Phrase

2003 Act	Black Canyon of the Gunnison Boundary Revision Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-78, November 4, 2003)
ACEC Act	Area of Critical Environmental Concern Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-76, October 21, 1999)
APD	application for permit to drill
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (US Department of Agriculture)
ATV	all-terrain vehicle
BLM BOR	United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation
CDOW	Colorado Division of Wildlife
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
cfs	cubic feet per second
CNHP	Colorado Natural Heritage Program
CO-	Colorado Highway
COA	conditions of approval
CSUS	controlled surface use stipulation
DRMP	Gunnison Gorge NCA Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement
EIS	environmental impact statement
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
GIS	Geographic Information System
Gorge	Gunnison Gorge
Gunnison Forks	confluence of the Gunnison River and North Fork of the Gunnison River
IBA	Important Bird Area
kV	kilovolt
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MU	management unit
National Park	Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
NCA	National Conservation Area
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

LIST OF ACRONYMS *(continued)*

Acronym or Abbreviation	Full Phrase
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NLCS	National Landscape Conservation System
North Fork	North Fork of the Gunnison River
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NSO	no surface occupancy
NWSRS	National Wild and Scenic Rivers System
OHV	off-highway vehicle
ONA	Outstanding Natural Area
Park Service	United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service
PL	Public Law
planning area	Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area planning area
Pleasure Park	Gunnison River Pleasure Park (at Gunnison Forks)
PRMP	Gunnison Gorge NCA Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement
RAMP	Final Recreation Management Plan for the Gunnison Gorge Recreation Lands, Colorado
RAMP Addition	Addition to the Recreation Area Management Plan for the Gunnison Gorge Recreation Lands, Colorado
RMP	resource management plan
RNA	Research Natural Area
ROD	Record of Decision
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
ROW	right-of-way
SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
SRUP	Special Recreation Use Permit
TLS	timing limitation stipulation
Tri-State	Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association
US	United States
US-	United States Highway
USC	United States Code
US Forest Service	United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
USFWS	United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VRM	Visual Resource Management
Wilderness	Gunnison Gorge Wilderness
WSR Act	Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

RECORD OF DECISION

INTRODUCTION

The Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area (NCA) planning area (planning area) totals about 196,000 acres in southwestern Colorado and is adjacent to the cities of Montrose and Olathe in Montrose County, and near the cities of Delta, Hotchkiss, and Crawford in Delta County (Figure 1-1). The planning area encompasses 95,781 acres of federal lands managed by the US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 99,743 acres of private land, and 666 acres at Sweitzer Lake State Park. Within the planning area, the NCA encompasses 62,844 acres of BLM-managed lands and 2,225 acres of private lands. The interior 17,784 acres of the NCA, encompassing the Gunnison Gorge, is the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness (Wilderness). The Wilderness contains about 14 miles of the Gunnison River, and the NCA contains an additional eight miles of the Gunnison River downstream of the Wilderness boundary.

My decision is to approve the attached Gunnison Gorge NCA Resource Management Plan (RMP). This Record of Decision (ROD) will provide the overall resource management direction of BLM-administered lands in the planning area. The existing RMP for the Uncompahgre Field Office (BLM 1989) is hereby amended by this ROD to reflect and incorporate the decisions in this RMP for the affected lands. In addition to land use planning decisions, this ROD covers a variety of management actions that are considered implementation decisions. Therefore, this decision identifies which are land use planning decisions, which were protestable under the land use planning regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1610) and those actions that are implementation decisions and are currently appealable under the Department of the Interior's appeal regulations (43 CFR 4).

LAND USE PLAN DECISIONS

The attached Gunnison Gorge NCA RMP is hereby approved. The RMP was prepared by the BLM in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLMPA) (43 US Code 1701 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations (43 CFR 1600). An environmental impact statement (EIS) was prepared for the RMP in accordance with

the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The EIS assessed the possible environmental and social effects of implementing the RMP. The RMP is identical to the Proposed RMP/Final EIS (PRMP) published in January 2004 (BLM 2004), which was a refinement of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative D) from the Draft RMP/EIS (DRMP) published in March 2003 (BLM 2003c). Specific management decisions for BLM-administered lands in the planning area are provided in the RMP attached to this document.

All decisions, including land use plan decisions, are identified in Chapter 2 of the attached RMP. Land use plan decisions include:

- Goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines that define desired outcomes or future conditions;
- Land use allocations such as withdrawals and special management area designations;
- Visual resource management (VRM) classifications;
- Land tenure; and
- Allowable uses and restrictions including specific off-highway vehicle (OHV) areas, mining restrictions, areas allotted to and excluded from livestock grazing, areas open or closed to firewood cutting or other vegetative product removal, and areas closed to commercial timber harvest or having no allowable sale quantity.

Land use planning decisions can be distinguished from implementation decisions in that, although land use plan decisions are themselves final and effective upon adoption, the decisions normally require additional decision steps (such as permit approvals) before management or other activities having on-the-ground impacts can be carried out.

A 30-day protest period was provided on the land use plan decisions in the PRMP in accordance with 43 CFR Part 1610.5-2. Thirty-two protest letters were received. All but three of the protests were determined to represent valid protests. These three letters were considered comments, not protests. After consideration of all points raised in these protests, the BLM Director concluded that the NCA planning team and decision-makers, including the Colorado State Director, followed all applicable laws, regulations, policies, and pertinent process and resource considerations in developing the proposed plan. The resolutions to the protests resulted in minor editing and clarification of the RMP/ROD, and did not result in the necessity for re-analysis or re-publication of the PRMP/FEIS for additional public review and protest. One clarification was made in Appendix E of the RMP to explain the nature of additional NEPA documentation that will be completed, if necessary, prior to excepting, waiving, or modifying oil and gas lease stipulations. A second clarification explained that BLM interim management requirements for suitable wild and scenic river segments will apply until Congress acts on the suitability findings in the ROD, rather than for three years only, as stated in the PRMP/FEIS. All protesting parties and those submitting comments received a response from the BLM Director. This ROD serves as the final decision for the land use plan decisions described

above and becomes effective on the date it is signed. No further administrative remedies are available for these land use plan decisions (see the attached RMP).

IMPLEMENTATION DECISIONS

Implementation decisions are management actions to implement land use plans. Implementation decisions generally constitute BLM's final approval allowing on-the-ground actions to proceed. For the most part, unlike land use plan decisions, implementation decisions are not subject to protest under the planning regulations. Instead, implementation decisions are subject to various administrative remedies, primarily appeals to the Interior Board of Land Appeals in the Office of Hearings and Appeals. These types of decisions are based on site-specific planning and NEPA analyses and are subject to the administrative remedies set forth in the regulations that apply to each resource management program of the BLM. Decisions to construct, build, or install site-specific projects are subject to administrative remedies at the time such decisions are made, primarily appeals to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) in the Office of Hearings and Appeals. Over time and as funding and staff are available, the BLM intends to implement specific project-level decisions described in Chapter 2 of the attached RMP. These "implementation decisions" are different than the previously described land use planning decisions. Some implementation decisions in the RMP will require the preparation of appropriate, detailed, project plans and site-specific NEPA analyses prior to implementation, which will include the appropriate level of public involvement, public scoping, consultation and collaboration with other agencies and partners, friends groups, and complying with all applicable regulations, policies, guidance, and laws. Some implementation decisions do not require any additional environmental documentation, such as decisions to map, survey, inventory, monitor, collect information, conduct research, and prepare project specific or implementation level plans. These are typically administrative actions and not surface disturbing actions and are addressed to a sufficient level of detail in the RMP/EIS process to be implemented over time without further NEPA analysis. Other decisions have been addressed to a sufficient level of detail in the RMP/EIS process to be implemented over time without further NEPA analysis. Implementation decisions and Land Use Plan decisions are shown in Chapter 2 of the attached RMP. The opportunity to appeal Implementation decisions is being provided at this time, as described below.

Appeal Procedures for Implementation Decisions

Any party adversely affected by an implementation decision in Chapter 2 of the attached RMP may appeal within 30 days of receipt of this decision in accordance with the provisions of 43 CFR 4.4. The appeal must include a statement of reasons or the person(s) appealing must file a separate statement of reasons within 30 days of filing the appeal. The appeal must state if a stay of the decision is being requested in accordance with 43 CFR 4.21 and must be filed with the Field Manager at the following address:

Gunnison Gorge NCA
C/o Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Street
Montrose, CO 81401

A copy of the appeal, statement of reasons, and all other supporting documents should be sent to:

Regional Solicitor
Rocky Mountain Region, US Department of the Interior
755 Parfet Street, Suite 151
Lakewood, CO 80215

If the statement of reasons is filed separately, it must be sent to:

Interior Board of Land Appeals
Office of Hearings and Appeals
4015 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22203

It is suggested that any appeal be sent certified US mail, return receipt requested.

Request for Stay

Should you wish to file a motion for stay pending the outcome of an appeal of these implementation decisions, you must show sufficient justification based on the following standards under 43 CFR 4.21:

- 1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- 2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
- 3) The likelihood of immediate or irreparable harm if the stay is not granted.
- 4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the motion for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer.

OVERVIEW OF THE ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives Considered but Not Analyzed in Detail

The BLM worked with citizens, government agencies, and organizations to discuss management alternatives. Four alternatives were dismissed because they do not meet the purpose and need for action:

Maximize Resource Protection by Eliminating All Human Use on Planning Area Public Lands

This alternative would have substantially restricted or eliminated all or most human use, including OHVs, rafting, livestock grazing, and hiking, within the NCA, Wilderness, and other planning area public lands. The FLPMA mandates that BLM lands provide multiple use opportunities. The *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Act of 1999* (Public Law 106-76) (Act) requires that certain values, including exceptional multiple-use opportunities and recreational resources, must be protected by the management plan. Some alternatives considered in the DRMP, as well as the PRMP, restrict or eliminate some human uses in some planning area locations. This alternative, however, would substantially restrict or

eliminate all or most human use. The BLM does not believe this is feasible because the impact analysis does not compel the BLM to restrict or eliminate all or most human uses in certain locations. As such, this alternative was dismissed from further consideration.

Remove NCA and Wilderness Designations

This alternative would have removed the NCA designation provided by the Act, and the area would have remained public lands with no national designation. This alternative is not feasible or prudent because the Congressional Act designating the NCA and Wilderness cannot be revoked unless by another act of Congress, which is not likely in the foreseeable future. As such, this alternative was dismissed from further consideration.

Allow Unregulated Recreation

This alternative would have allowed unencumbered, unregulated recreation in the NCA, Wilderness, and remaining public lands in the planning area. The Act states that the NCA and Wilderness shall be managed to protect their natural, cultural, scenic, wilderness, and recreational resources. Allowing unregulated recreation would mean that users could travel anywhere on planning area public lands via automobile, OHV, mountain bike, foot, or horseback. In addition, private and commercial users would be allowed unregulated access to and use of the Gunnison River in the Wilderness and downstream. Such use would lead to increased user days and more user conflicts throughout the NCA and Wilderness, which would lead to additional impacts on the natural, cultural, scenic, wilderness, and recreational resources for which the NCA and Wilderness were designated. As such, these resources would not be protected as required by the Act. Therefore, this alternative was dismissed from further consideration.

Partial Implementation of the RMP

A number of alternatives were developed that would only focus on a few issues or otherwise result in partial implementation of the RMP. Preparation and full implementation of the RMP is a BLM requirement. As such, these alternatives were dismissed as infeasible, impracticable, or precluded by legal insufficiency.

Alternatives Analyzed in Detail

Four alternatives are analyzed in detail in the DRMP (BLM 2003c). General management themes for each alternative analyzed in detail are described below.

Alternative A

The objectives of Alternative A, continuation of current management (or “no action” alternative), was to continue implementing the direction and actions contained in existing guidance, laws, plans, and policies that are currently in effect, in compliance with the legislative Act designating the NCA and Wilderness (Appendix A), while meeting land health standards. Current levels of motorized and non-motorized uses and activities would have continued with some restrictions applied. More routes would have been designated for motorized and mechanized (e.g., mountain bicycle) use.

Noncommercial (private) and commercial recreation use on the Gunnison River would have continued, with no limitations on numbers of private boater launches. The Wilderness would have been managed for the same degree of solitude opportunities that are currently possible. Current levels, methods, and mix of multiple use resource management of planning area public lands would have continued. Existing guidance, laws, plans, policies, and management would have been amended only as necessary to comply with the Act.

Alternative B

The objectives of Alternative B were to resolve issues and concerns on planning area public lands with a focus on conserving natural values and improving and enhancing land health conditions where possible. Lands would have been managed overall for a primitive non-motorized and motorized setting. Human uses would have had greater restrictions and would have been managed for less-impacting results. Non-motorized opportunities would have been emphasized with more comprehensive restrictions and conditions on motorized activities. Open, cross-country, off-route motorized and mechanized (e.g., mountain bicycle) areas would have been more restricted and smaller. Group sizes for commercial Gunnison River activities in the Wilderness and beyond would have been reduced. Noncommercial (private) Gunnison River recreation would have been managed by implementing a limiting permit and allocation system. The Wilderness would have been managed to enhance and increase opportunities for solitude.

Alternative C

The objectives for Alternative C were to resolve issues and concerns on planning area public lands to provide a greater diversity of uses, additional developed facilities (such as roads and trails), and fewer restrictions outside the Wilderness, while meeting land health standards everywhere. Lands would have been managed for motorized and non-motorized settings. Economic return and community stability would have been an important consideration when actions are implemented. Overall, restrictions on people's activities would have been lessened. Open, cross-country, off-route motorized and mechanized (e.g., mountain bicycle) use opportunities would have been maximized with allocations of large open areas. Whitewater boating and Gold Medal trout fishing would have been emphasized in the Wilderness. Group sizes for commercial Gunnison River activities in the Wilderness would have been increased. The Wilderness would have been managed for maximum use, and commercial and private river recreation opportunities would have been limited only if necessary to maintain group encounter numbers.

Alternative D

Alternative D was and is the BLM's preferred alternative. Parts of some management units from Alternatives A, B, and C were incorporated into Alternative D. In some cases, management unit boundaries were modified to make management more effective. The objectives of Alternative D are to maximize diversity of multiple uses, including human activities and opportunities, while meeting or exceeding land health standards. Areas will be prioritized for land health standard improvement or enhancement. Lands will be managed for non-motorized and motorized activities in a variety of settings.

Areas for open, cross-country, off-route motorized and mechanized (e.g., mountain bicycle) activities will be allocated. A moderate amount of control will be exercised on motorized vehicular activities, and additional control will be exercised in some areas. Some human uses will be limited in some areas to recognize natural and other values. In the Wilderness and beyond, commercial and noncommercial (private) Gunnison River recreation will be analyzed to determine needed changes to meet Wilderness criteria and human satisfaction levels.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

Environmental preference is judged using the criteria in the NEPA and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508). The CEQ defines the environmentally preferred alternative as that which will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of the NEPA. This section lists six broad policy goals for all federal plans, programs, and policies:

- 1) Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- 2) Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- 3) Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- 4) Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity, and variety of individual choice;
- 5) Achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
- 6) Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Based on these criteria, identifying the most environmentally preferable alternative involves balancing current and potential resource use with resource protection. Alternative B in the DRMP (BLM 2003c) was considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative based on these criteria, as well as the alternative's established objectives.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

The PRMP was developed based on environmental impacts of the alternatives analyzed in the DRMP (BLM 2003c); issues raised throughout the planning process; how each alternative resolves existing conflicts on planning area public lands; public input and scoping throughout the process; and laws, regulations, and BLM Manuals and other guidance. Aspects of DRMP Alternatives A, B, and C are included in Alternative D and the PRMP. The PRMP was developed by the Gunnison Gorge NCA staff and Manager, the Uncompahgre Field Office Manager, and interdisciplinary team members and represents the mix and variety of actions that, in the opinion of the preparers, best resolve the issues and management concerns that drove preparation of the RMP/EIS.

All actions in the attached RMP comply with current applicable state and federal regulations, standards, and policies. In certain instances, laws, regulations, or policies will require some management actions to receive overriding priority in conflict resolution, such as protection of threatened and endangered species or historical or archaeological resources.

MITIGATION MEASURES

The attached RMP decisions include any mitigation measures necessary to minimize impacts.

PLAN MONITORING

The BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-9) require monitoring of RMPs on a continual basis with formal evaluations conducted at periodic intervals. The attached RMP decisions incorporate monitoring measures for a variety of resources. Revisions or amendments to the RMP may be necessary to accommodate changes in resource needs, policies, or regulations. A detailed, decision-specific implementation and funding schedule will be completed following approval of the RMP. It will contain detailed implementation and monitoring plans, including all monitoring recommended in the attached RMP, and schedules necessary to implement RMP decisions. It is anticipated that several follow-on strategies or activity plans will be prepared during implementation of the RMP.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The BLM implemented an extensive public collaboration program for this planning effort. The BLM distributed newsletters, hosted public open houses, and facilitated a public collaboration focus group. The BLM also collaborated with parties after the public comment period on the DRMP (BLM 2003c) to help resolve issues dealing with wild and scenic river recommendations, rights-of-way utility corridors, and OHV use.

Scoping

Public involvement is an integral component of BLM's resource management planning process. The planning process officially started on August 18, 2000, with the publication of a notice of intent in the *Federal Register*, which notified the public of the BLM's intent to develop a management plan. The notice of intent also formally initiated the scoping process, or solicitation of public comments. In November 2001, a project-specific Web site (www.gunnison-gorge-eis.com) was launched to serve as a clearinghouse of project information. The Web site provides background information about the project, a public meeting calendar, and copies of public information documents, and is updated regularly with current information. A link was also available for Web site visitors to submit comments. A directed mailing of the project newsletter and newspaper advertisements, a press release, and a television spot also were issued to notify the public of the project, to announce the three public open houses, to request public comments, and to provide contact information.

Open houses were held in three western Colorado locations in the vicinity of the project planning area during February 2002. They provided the public the opportunity to

receive information, ask questions, and provide input. In addition to BLM representatives, a total of 66 people attended the open houses. The close of the official scoping period was March 8, 2002. A total of 81 written submissions were received from different entities and affiliations. Many of the submissions contained multiple comments on different topics. A total of 1,243 individual comments were made in the 81 written submissions received. A scoping report was published in March 2002 and posted on the project Web site. Information received through written scoping comments was evaluated, verified, and incorporated into the RMP/EIS as appropriate.

Focus Group

A citizen/agency focus group was developed to assist BLM in the planning process. The BLM Southwest Resource Advisory Council officially sanctioned the focus group as is subcommittee. The focus group has provided extensive and important input to the RMP/EIS process. The focus group members provided data and information for those resources and uses that they represent, assisted in identifying issues to be addressed in the planning process, assisted in formulating alternatives, and reviewed and provided input on the preliminary draft alternatives. A total of 12 meetings were held with the focus group, and a total of 296 people attended the meetings. For each geographical visitor use zones in the NCA, three focus group meetings were held. During the first meeting, the focus group was presented an overview of the existing conditions and management in a particular geographic zone. The group then broke into smaller groups to voice issues and opportunities group members think are present in each zone. The second meeting consisted of an outdoor field trip to each zone. Maps were brought into the field, and the group discussed what was present on the ground. The third meeting consisted of meeting indoors again and collaboratively developing alternative management ideas for the RMP. In addition to the 12 focus group meetings, an additional four collaborative citizen/agency meetings were held.

All individuals who had attended any of the above 12 focus group meetings were provided an opportunity to comment on the preliminary draft alternatives in December 2002, which were posted on the project Web site and available for review at the BLM's Gunnison Gorge NCA Office. A total of 193 focus group members were contacted. A total of almost 50 written submissions were received on the preliminary draft alternatives, either in letter or electronic mail format, which helped BLM refine the alternatives before publishing the DRMP.

Newsletter

Five editions of the project newsletter, *News from the Gorge*, have been published to date:

- 1) The January 2002 issue kicked off public scoping; it was mailed to 650 contacts on the project distribution list.
- 2) The April 2002 issue provided public scoping results; it was mailed to over 1,000 contacts on the distribution list.
- 3) The January 2003 issue described the alternatives being analyzed in the DRMP; it was mailed to over 1,000 contacts on the distribution list.

- 4) The March 2003 issue announced the availability of the DRMP; it was mailed to over 1,000 contacts on the distribution list.
- 5) The January 2004 issue announced the availability of the PRMP and summarized comments submitted on the DRMP; it was mailed to over 1,500 contacts on the distribution list.
- 6) The November 2004 issue announced the availability of the RMP and ROD; it was mailed to over 1,500 contacts on the distribution list.

Public Review and Comment on the DRMP

The DRMP (BLM 2003c) was published on March 14, 2003. A notice of availability (NOA) was published in the *Federal Register* on that date, which notified the public of the availability of the DRMP. The NOA also solicited written public comments during the 90-calendar-day review period. The DRMP was available on the project Web site and at seven local public libraries. Three newspaper advertisements and a press release were issued to notify the public of the DRMP availability, to announce the three open houses, and to request public comments.

Copies of the DRMP were distributed to 266 parties, including elected officials, regulatory agencies, focus group members, and other members of the public. Approximately an additional 900 parties were notified of the availability of the DRMP via a directed mailing of the project newsletter. Eighty-nine additional parties received copies of the DRMP by request to the BLM. Most of these recipients were the same parties who had received a CD-ROM and were requesting a paper copy of the document. Therefore, in total, 282 parties received copies of the DRMP.

Open houses were held in the towns of Delta, Hotchkiss, and Montrose, Colorado, during the 90-day public review period of the DRMP. A total of 66 people attended the open houses.

The comment period closed on June 16, 2003. A total of 642 written submissions were received by the deadline. A total of 1,348 individual comments were made in the 642 submissions. All information received through these comments has been evaluated, verified, and incorporated into the PRMP, as appropriate.

About 23 percent of submissions (150 submissions) were unique in that they were not associated with a standardized form letter or postcard. A total of 492 (77 percent) of the 642 total submissions included two different "form" letters, which are letters identical or very similar in content. Some of these submissions included additional comments supplementing those in the standardized text.

Distribution and Availability of the PRMP

An NOA was published in the *Federal Register* to notify the public of the availability of the PRMP. Newspaper advertisements and a press release also were issued. The PRMP was available via the project Web site and at seven local public libraries. All recipients of the DRMP, and all parties who submitted written comments on the DRMP (some of

whom are the same parties), were mailed the project newsletter announcing the availability of the PRMP. The newsletter was mailed to approximately an additional 900 contacts on the distribution list. In total, approximately 1,700 parties received notification of the PRMP availability. All focus group members and all parties who submitted non-form letter written comments on the DRMP were mailed copies of the PRMP.

A 30-day protest period was provided on the PRMP in accordance with 43 CFR 1610.5-2. See the “Land Use Plan Decisions” section above for information on these protests.

Consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service

In conformance with the Interagency Programmatic Section 7 Consultation Memorandum of Agreement (October 2000), the BLM initiated consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in June 2001 to request a list of species either federally listed or proposed for listing that may occur in the planning area. The BLM received USFWS response in July 2001. The BLM updated this list with USFWS' concurrence in March 2002 and again in October/November 2002. Species known to occur in the planning area were addressed in the planning process. In compliance with Section 7 requirements of the Endangered Species Act, the BLM prepared a biological assessment for the implementation of the RMP. It was submitted to USFWS in draft form in July 2003, USFWS comments were received in August 2003, and the revised and final biological assessment was submitted to USFWS in January 2004. The BLM received USFWS' concurrence with the biological assessment, which completes the informal Section 7 consultation process, on March 11, 2004.

Native American Tribal Coordination

Federal law and regulation require coordination with federally recognized Native American tribes that may be interested in the planning area. Uncompahgre Field Office staff have coordinated with three Native American tribes via meetings, phone calls, e-mail messages, letters, and directed mailings of two project newsletters. Uncompahgre Field Office staff also have made presentations to Tribal councils and have escorted Tribal officials on planning area field visits. Three Native American tribes were notified of the DRMP and PRMP availability. No comments were received from Tribal officials on the DRMP or PRMP.

Public Participation in RMP Implementation

The implementation and funding schedule to be completed following approval of the RMP will contain opportunities for public involvement in implementing RMP decisions.

MANAGERS' RECOMMENDATION

Having considered a full range of alternatives, associated impacts, and public impact, I recommend adoption of the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan. The existing RMP for the Uncompahgre Field Office (BLM 1989) is hereby amended to reflect and incorporate the decisions in this RMP for the affected lands.

Barbara Sharrow 10/27/04

Barbara Sharrow Date
Field Manager
Uncompahgre Field Office
US Bureau of Land Management

Karen Tucker 10/27/04

Karen Tucker Date
Manager
Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area
US Bureau of Land Management

STATE DIRECTOR APPROVAL

I approve the attached Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan, as recommended. This document meets the requirements for a Record of decision provided in 40 CFR 1505.2 and for a resource management plan as described in 40 CFR 1610.0-5(k).



Ron Wenker
Director
Colorado State Office
US Bureau of Land Management

Date

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