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BLM COLORADO FRONT RANGE DISTRICT NEWS

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Fort Carson to conduct short-term, high altitude helicopter training on public lands in southeast Colorado

The BLM received an urgent request from Fort Carson military base for U.S. Army personnel to conduct limited, short-term High Altitude Mountain Environment Training on public lands in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Based on a specific set of guidelines, the BLM has determined that this training qualifies as casual use and does not require a permit. The Army will be using five landing zones on public lands in Fremont County from about Oct. 14 to Dec. 20, 2015. The landing zones were selected in remote locations to minimize impacts to neighboring landowners or resources.

HAMET involves helicopters conducting approaches over and briefly landing on designated zones. According to Fort Carson, this training will reduce the risk of fatal accidents during the 4th Combat Aviation Brigade's upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. HAMET is crucial in mitigating preventable and fatal aviation accidents by training aviators on the unique challenges and aircraft limitations during mountainous flight. Colorado's Front Range provides the ideal elevation and terrain as well as access to the necessary military infrastructure for this training.

Fort Carson has periodically coordinated with the BLM to conduct HAMET in this area since 2010. The BLM is currently working on an environmental assessment of a Fort Carson proposal for a long-term right-of-way. The environmental assessment is an opportunity for the BLM to more formally examine HAMET's impacts to public lands and determine appropriate mitigation measures if a right-of-way is granted. The current short-term use does not reflect any intent or predetermination for approval of a longer-term authorization. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/rgfo/planning/hamet.html>.

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