

## **Arkansas River Travel Management Plan - Sub-unit Desired Future Conditions**

### **BROWNS CANYON (Subunit A)**

**General Setting** - The Browns Canyon subunit contains a total of 6,757 acres, all of which are BLM public lands. The subunit consists of a narrow corridor of BLM lands that straddles a 5 mile-long section of the Arkansas River. The Arkansas River is a national destination area for whitewater boating and this is the most heavily used section of the river. The BLM lands in the subunit adjoin the San Isabel National Forest along the eastern border of the subunit.

The landscape in the subunit is extremely rugged and dominated by massive granite rock formations. Because of its ruggedness, most of the subunit has remained unroaded. The only access road into the subunit is Chaffee County Road 194. CR 194 enters the subunit from Highway 285 and ends at the Arkansas River at the Hecla Junction Recreation Site. The recreation site is a major ingress and egress point for rafters. During the rafting season, the recreation site and the river itself are used daily by hundreds of visitors. Off-river access beyond the recreation site is limited to foot travel, where visitors have developed a myriad of user created foot trails extending from the recreation site along the west bank of the river. The amount of recreation use on the east side of the river is comparatively low, however, due to the difficulty of crossing the river to access it. Access to BLM lands in the eastern portions of the subunit is also limited by the tracks for the Union Pacific Railroad that run along the east bank of the river. Users reach the narrow strip of BLM lands east of the river either by boat or by hiking down through National Forest lands that adjoin the eastern boundary of the subunit.

The entire subunit lies within the Browns Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Approximately 3,400 acres of the northeastern portion of the subunit and east of the Arkansas River is within the Browns Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA). A congressional bill is currently being developed for establishing the Browns Canyon Wilderness that includes the current WSA and additional BLM lands in the subunit east of the Arkansas River.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. **ACEC and WSA Values** – The special management area designations for the Browns Canyon ACEC and WSA recognize the area's outstanding scenic and recreational values, as well as the occurrences of rare plants and animals.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

The values and qualities for which the Browns Canyon ACEC and Browns Canyon WSA were designated are maintained and undiminished.

Opportunities are available for recreation uses that are compatible with maintaining the quiet and pristine qualities of these areas.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting ACEC and WSA values

- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Protecting uncommon plant communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Securing the WSA from encroachments by motorized and mechanized vehicles

### **SALIDA (Subunit B)**

**General Setting** - The Salida subunit contains a total area of 41,071 acres, including 13,481 acres of BLM public lands. It includes the community of Salida and is affected by all the associated pressures and issues that come from its proximity to public lands. Buena Vista is located nearby but is outside the boundary of this subunit. Most of the BLM lands are heavily utilized areas that provide easy-to-access recreation opportunities. Mild winter conditions allow year-round access for a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation uses. The sights and sounds of human activity from towns, airports, highways, railroads, residential subdivisions, power lines, and motorized recreation uses are evident throughout most areas of the subunit.

The Rainbow Trail is a major recreation attraction located on National Forest lands near the southern edge of the subunit. This portion of the Rainbow Trail is open to foot, horse, bicycle, and motorcycle uses but is closed to ATV use.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. **Watershed Conditions** – The subunit includes important watersheds. Current levels of soil erosion from BLM lands are contributing to the declining quality of water and fish habitat in the Arkansas River.
2. **Wildlife Habitat** - The BLM lands in the subunit include important elk, deer, bighorn sheep, and black bear habitat that is gradually diminishing in both size and quality.
3. **Unique Geologic Resources** - Geologically significant sites are located on BLM lands in Castle Gardens and King Gulch that are being degraded by human uses. The Castle Gardens and King Gulch areas contain significant occurrences of fossils.
4. **Rare Plants and Animals** – The occurrences of sensitive plants and animals are being diminished by human uses. The Castle Gardens and King Gulch areas contain significant occurrences of sensitive plants. Castle Gardens contains one of the three largest and highest quality known occurrences of Brandegee wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum brandegei*). Another sensitive plant species, rock-loving neoparrya (*Aletes lithophilus*), occurs in King Gulch. A rare subspecies of bat, Townsend's big-eared bat (*Plecotus townsendii pallescens*), is found in Longfellow Gulch.
5. **Proliferation of New Trails** - The proliferation of user created trails is resulting in increasing amounts of resource damage. Users have created many of the trails and cut-offs surrounding the town of Salida without authorization. Motorized “play” and hill-climbing activities occurring in and around Castle Gardens, King Gulch, and S-mountain have denuded parts of these areas and are sources of severe erosion.
6. **User Conflicts and Unsafe Conditions** - BLM lands are currently used for a variety of recreation activities, including hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, jeeping, ATV and motorcycle riding. User conflicts and unsafe conditions are occurring where motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized users share the same trails.

7. Demand for Expanded and Enhanced Recreation Opportunities – The level of demand for mountain biking opportunities is extremely high in this subunit. The Salida Mountain Trails Park Committee, with the support of several other community-based organizations, is promoting a proposal for expanding and improving the available network of community trails that extend from the city of Salida onto nearby BLM and Forest Service lands.

8. Exclusive Access and Uses from Private Lands - Some of the BLM lands in the subunit abut subdivisions and other parcels of private lands that affect access and travel uses on public lands. In some cases private lands limit public access to BLM lands and have resulted in the development of multiple private access points that are only accessible to the private landowners. Many of these access points are being used for motorized access that are creating new travel routes and adversely impacting vegetation, soils, and other natural resources.

9. Rainbow Trail – Several user created trails branch off the Rainbow Trail that affect both BLM and National Forest lands.

10. Illegal Users - The incidence of illegal uses of BLM lands is unusually high in this subunit. Activities of particular concern include: trash dumping; abandonment of automobiles and household appliances; target shooting; paint ball shooting; long-term occupancy of dispersed camping areas; gatherings involving underage drinking and/or use of illegal drugs; unattended campfires; driving off existing roads; and constructing unauthorized trails.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Watershed conditions are improving throughout the subunit; rates of soil erosion are decreasing and water quality and fish habitat in the Arkansas River are improving.

Available areas of wildlife habitat are expanding and improving throughout the subunit, supporting sustainable numbers of deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and black bear.

Occurrences of Brandegees wild buckwheat and rock-loving neoparrya are stable or increasing.

The population of Townsend's big-eared bat is stable or increasing.

Previous impacts to unique geologic features from off-trail recreation uses are no longer evident in Castle Gardens and King Gulch.

Impacts from dumping trash, target shooting, off-road vehicle play, unauthorized trail construction, and other illegal uses are no longer evident in areas where these activities had previously occurred.

Visitors travel via a well-managed system of designated roads and trails that serve a variety of motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses and that are being maintained to limit adverse impacts to vegetation, soils, and water.

Designated travel routes between BLM and National Forest lands are cooperatively established to accommodate the same types of uses.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting and improving watershed conditions
- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Protecting uncommon plant communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Protecting unique geologic features
- Protecting BLM lands from illegal uses
- Ensuring consistency with National Forest travel management designations
- Minimizing conflicts between recreation uses

### **BADGER CREEK (Subunit C)**

**General Setting** - The Badger Creek subunit contains a total of 42,734 acres, including 34,114 acres of BLM public lands. Nearby population centers include Salida, Swissvale, Howard, and Coaldale. Non-motorized recreation uses of hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking are comparatively low, whereas the opportunities for jeeping and riding ATVs and motorcycles are more widely known to users outside of the local area and are moderately high. The subunit includes a designated OHV OPEN area at Sand Gulch. Portions of the area are used for motorcycle trials events that are held under special recreation permit. Additionally, a state school section adjoins the OHV OPEN area that is being heavily utilized by OHVs. Several existing roads in the subunit, including the WAPA power line road, are also popular attractions for OHV users.

Badger Creek is a major tributary of the Arkansas River and is the key landscape feature in this subunit. Severe storm events in the Badger Creek watershed are noted for affecting Arkansas River turbidity conditions for many days following a storm. Badger Creek has been and continues to be the object of extensive efforts to reduce erosion and improve water quality. In 1999 the Royal Gorge Field Office completed an extensive ecosystem management analysis of the Badger Creek watershed to identify the management actions that were needed to improve watershed conditions in the area. As a result of this analysis and in response to a sudden and dramatic increase in extreme 4WD activity, several existing and user created routes were closed to motorized uses to protect riparian, fisheries, and wildlife values in the Badger Creek, Little Badger Creek, and Bloody Gulch drainages. This action effectively limited access in Badger Creek to foot and horse travel until the summer of 2004, when a catastrophic flood drastically altered the stream course and destroyed some vehicle barriers.

No special status management areas such as Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) are located in this subunit; however, several environmental groups, including the Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition and Upper Arkansas and South Platte Project, are actively promoting that portions of the subunit should be designated as wilderness

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. **Watershed Conditions** - The subunit includes important watersheds. Current levels of soil erosion from BLM lands are contributing to the declining quality of water and fish habitat in Badger Creek and the Arkansas River.
2. **Riparian Habitat and Fisheries** - The subunit contains valuable riparian habitat that is being adversely impacted by human uses. A nearly continuous ribbon of riparian habitat occurs along Badger Creek from its source in South Park to where it joins the Arkansas River. This stream

serves as an important spawning area for brown trout that ultimately contribute to the Arkansas River population and offers excellent remote, backcountry fishing opportunities.

3. Wildlife Habitat - The BLM lands in the subunit include important elk, deer, bighorn sheep, and black bear habitat that is gradually diminishing in both size and quality.

4. Noxious Weeds - The spread of knapweed and other noxious weeds is severely diminishing the health of the vegetation in this subunit and is the object of on-going eradication and control projects. Substantial portions of the riparian habitat in Badger Creek and its tributaries have been invaded by tamarisk (salt cedar).

5. User Conflicts - Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation users are occurring in Badger Creek and other portions of this subunit that were previously closed to motorized travel in 1999. Disturbance to livestock, damage to fences, and other conflicts resulting from off-road motorized recreation uses are also affecting grazing uses in this area.

6. Exclusive Access and Uses from Private Lands - Exclusive access from private in-holdings and from subdivisions bordering BLM lands is an issue here. Some existing BLM roads that are not accessible to the public because they are blocked by private lands are being accessed and used exclusively by private landowners; resulting in the creation of unauthorized travel routes that adversely impact vegetation, soils, and other natural resources. Trespass issues also exist in this subunit where motorized recreation users are crossing onto private lands to gain access to the public lands.

7. Road Right-of-way and Maintenance Issues - Several sections of the existing roads in this subunit cross private lands for which public easements or rights-of-way do not exist. Without such easements, held either by BLM or other public entity such as the county, continuous public access across these lands cannot be assured. BLM only performs regular maintenance on roads where it has jurisdiction of the right-of-way. BLM is prohibited from maintaining roads that are not under BLM jurisdiction, including county roads. Consequently, the lack of BLM easements affects the ability of BLM to perform maintenance and improvement work on roads for which the county has established a public right-of-way but does not maintain them.

8. State Lands – Several OHV routes are located on the state school section in the Sand Gulch area that lead onto and from adjoining BLM lands. The location of portions of these routes on the state school section affects travel management decisions in this area because BLM does not have the authority to designate travel routes on non-BLM lands.

9. Special Recreation Uses - Motorcycle trials events have been authorized by BLM in this area for many years. The Rocky Mountain Trials Association is requesting that the areas that have been used in the past for holding motorcycle trials events be designated as OHV Open areas so that they are available year-round for training and practice.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Watershed conditions are improving throughout the subunit; rates of soil erosion are decreasing and water quality and fish habitat in Badger Creek and the Arkansas River are improving.

Riparian vegetation in the Badger Creek drainages is healthy and functioning and Badger Creek is a productive brown trout fishery.

Badger Creek is free of tamarisk and other noxious weeds.

Available areas of wildlife habitat are expanding and improving throughout the subunit, supporting sustainable numbers of deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and black bear.

The condition of vegetation is improving throughout the subunit. The spread of knapweed and other noxious weeds is subsiding.

BLM and county roads that traditionally have been used and maintained continue to be available to the public for motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses.

Visitors travel on public lands via a designated system of roads and trails that serve a variety of motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses. Some areas in the subunit are managed where visitors can experience opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking in quiet and remote settings, while opportunities for motorized recreation uses are available in other parts of the subunit.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)\_

- Protecting and improving watershed conditions
- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Protecting and improving riparian areas and fish habitat conditions
- Resolving road access and maintenance issues
- Resolving travel management issues involving State Lands
- Protecting uncommon plant communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Minimizing conflicts between recreation uses
- Resolving conflicts related to motorcycle trials events

### **RED GULCH (Subunit D)**

**General Setting** - The Red Gulch subunit contains a total area of 28,072 acres, including 15,660 acres of BLM public lands. The subunit is remotely located midway between Canon City and Salida. The BLM lands in the subunit receive low amounts of recreation use and are known and used primarily by local residents from nearby subdivisions and the small communities of Coaldale and Cotopaxi. Recreation uses are primarily motorized and dispersed.

Access into substantial portions of the BLM lands in the subunit are blocked by private lands, including the Spruce Basin, Park Mountain, and Indian Springs subdivisions. The access roads to BLM from the Dirty Gulch State Trust Lands are closed to the public from June 1-August 30. Another State School Section located in the subunit (Section 16, Pasture Gulch) is accessed via existing roads from adjoining BLM lands. Previous travel management decisions that resulted from the Texas Creek Trail Construction and Maintenance Environmental Assessment (1997) also affected access in this subunit.

Bernard Creek is the only perennial tributary of the Arkansas River in this subunit. The major side-drainages into Bernard Creek include Sand Gulch and Falls Gulch. A large portion of the subunit, however, is drained by Red Gulch, an intermittent tributary of Fernleaf Gulch.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. Watershed Conditions - The subunit includes important watersheds. Current levels of soil erosion from BLM lands are contributing to the declining quality of water and fish habitat in the Arkansas River.

2. Wildlife Habitat - The BLM lands in the subunit include important elk, deer, bighorn sheep, and black bear habitat that is gradually diminishing in both size and quality. The subunit lies within a game management area that contains critical habitat for deer, turkey, bear, and lion and that is considered to be a key hunting area for mule deer.

3. Demand for Expanded and Enhanced Recreation Opportunities - The Colorado Motorcycle Trail Riders Association is promoting a proposal for expanding the available network of ATV and motorcycle trails in the Texas Creek subunit that would also affect travel uses in the Red Gulch subunit. CMTRA is requesting the re-opening of previously used ATV and motorcycle routes that were closed following the 1999 environmental assessment of the Texas Creek Trail Construction and Maintenance Project and the construction of a new single-track motorcycle trail. CMTRA's proposal would re-establish a motorized connection between the Texas Creek and Red Gulch subunits.

4. Road Maintenance Issues - The road accessing Sand Gulch is included in the Fremont County road system but is not maintained by the county. BLM is prohibited from maintaining roads that are not under BLM jurisdiction, including county roads, limiting the ability of BLM to perform needed maintenance and improvement work.

5. State Lands – A major access point into the western part of the subunit from County Road 12 enters through the Dirty Gulch State Trust Lands, leased by the CDOW for wildlife purposes and closed to the public from June 1-August 30. Existing OHV routes are also located on the state school section in the Pasture Gulch area that lead onto and from adjoining BLM lands. The location of portions of these routes on the State Trust and school lands affect travel management decisions in this area because BLM does not have the authority to designate travel routes on non-BLM lands.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Watershed conditions are improving throughout the subunit; rates of soil erosion are decreasing and water quality and fish habitat in the Arkansas River are improving.

Available areas of wildlife habitat are expanding and improving throughout the subunit, supporting sustainable numbers of deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and black bear.

Visitors travel via a managed system of designated roads and trails that serve a variety of motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses and that are being maintained to limit impacts on vegetation, soils, and water.

Non-maintained county roads that traditionally have been used continue to be available to the public for motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses.

Designated travel routes between BLM and State lands are cooperatively managed to accommodate the same uses.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting and improving watershed conditions
- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Resolving road maintenance issues
- Resolving travel management issues involving State Lands

### **TEXAS CREEK (Subunit E)**

**General Setting** - The Texas Creek subunit contains a total area of 28,191 acres, including 21,454 acres of BLM public lands. The subunit is remotely located midway between Canon City and Salida. The area is regionally known for its developed network of 4WD and ATV trails and receives heavy amounts of motorized recreation uses. Approximately 8,000 acres of the subunit occurs within the Texas Creek Gulch/Reese Gulch OHV OPEN areas. In 1999, an environmental assessment for the Texas Creek Trail Construction and Maintenance project was conducted for the purpose of constructing new trails and for realigning and maintaining existing trails in the area. As a result of this environmental assessment, some existing trails that extended outside of the OHV OPEN areas were closed to protect important vegetation, watershed, and wildlife resources.

No Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) are included in this subunit but a very small portion of the Arkansas Canyonlands Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is affected. Several environmental groups, including the Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition and Upper Arkansas and South Platte Project, are actively promoting that portions of the subunit should be designated as wilderness. Environmental interests are generally opposed to allowing the expansion of motorized trails outside of the area contained within the current OHV trail system.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. **Watershed Conditions** - The subunit includes important watersheds. Current levels of soil erosion from BLM lands are contributing to the declining quality of water and fish habitat in the Arkansas River.
2. **Riparian Habitat** - Important riparian habitat occurs in substantial portions of the subunit, including Long Gulch, Fernleaf Gulch, Maverick Gulch, Bull Gulch, and East Gulch. Areas of healthy riparian habitat are relatively scarce in the region and are gradually declining in size and quality.
3. **Wildlife Habitat** - The BLM lands in the subunit include important habitat for elk, deer, bighorn sheep, and black bear that is gradually diminishing in both size and quality. The subunit lies within a game management area that contains critical habitat for deer, elk, bighorn sheep, turkey, bear, and lion and that is considered to be a key hunting area for mule deer. The contiguous BLM lands included within the Texas Creek subunit and the adjoining Red Gulch and Big Hole subunits provide important habitat connectivity for wildlife movement.
4. **Road Maintenance Issues** - The main access roads into the Texas Creek subunit are included in the Fremont County road system but are not maintained by the county. BLM is prohibited from maintaining roads that are not under BLM jurisdiction, including county roads, which limits the ability of BLM to perform needed maintenance and improvement work.
5. **Demand for Expanded and Enhanced Recreation Opportunities** - The Colorado Motorcycle Trail Riders Association (CMTRA) is supporting a proposal for expanding the available network of ATV and motorcycle trails in the Texas Creek subunit that would reopen portions of Long Gulch, Fernleaf Gulch, Maverick Gulch, and East Gulch to motorized access. CMTRA is requesting the

re-opening of previously used ATV and motorcycle routes that were closed following the 1999 environmental assessment of the Texas Creek Trail Construction and Maintenance Project. CMTRA's proposal would also re-establish a motorized connection between the Texas Creek and Red Gulch subunits. The Rocky Mountain Trials Association is also requesting that the areas that have been used in the past for holding motorcycle trials events be available year-round for training and practice.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Watershed conditions are improving throughout the subunit; rates of soil erosion are decreasing and water quality and fish habitat in the Arkansas River are improving.

Riparian habitat occurring along the various drainages in the subunit is healthy and functioning to stabilize stream courses.

Available areas of wildlife habitat are expanding and improving in the subunit, supporting sustainable numbers of deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife. Viable wildlife corridors and habit connections are maintained within the subunit and with the adjoining Red Gulch and Big Hole subunits.

Visitors travel via a designated system of roads and trails that serve a variety of motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses and that are being maintained to limit impacts on vegetation, soils, wildlife and water. Numerous opportunities are available throughout the subunit for motorized recreation uses, including designated routes of varying levels of difficulty for users of 4WDs, ATVs, and motorcycles.

BLM and county roads that have been traditionally used and maintained continue to be available to the public for motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting and improving watershed conditions
- Protecting and improving riparian areas
- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Protecting rare natural vegetative communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Resolving road maintenance issues

## **BIG HOLE (Subunit F)**

**General Setting** - The Big Hole subunit contains a total area of 28,477 acres, including 23,408 acres of BLM public lands. The subunit is remotely located between Canon City and Salida. Access into the subunit is extremely limited due to extreme topography, the lack of a bridge-crossing on the Arkansas River, and the lack of public easements through adjoining private lands or along the right-of-way of the Union Pacific Railroad. Recreation usage in the subunit is very light and public access is limited to mostly foot and horse travel. Lesser amounts of motorized recreation uses occur that originates primarily from private lands bordering along the northern portions of the subunit. The subunit contains numerous primitive roads that were used for past

ranching and mining operations. Many of these old roads have become overgrown with vegetation or have become impassible from lack of use and maintenance.

A substantial portion of the subunit is within the Arkansas Canyonlands Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and contains an area of unique relict vegetation within the High Mesa Grasslands Research Natural Area (RNA). Buildings and artifacts remaining from historical ranching and mining activities are also located in the subunit. No Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) are included in this subunit, however, several environmental groups, including the Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition and Upper Arkansas and South Platte Project, are actively promoting that the subunit should be designated as wilderness.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. Watershed Conditions - The subunit includes important watersheds. Current levels of soil erosion from BLM lands are contributing to the declining quality of water and fish habitat in the Arkansas River.
2. Riparian Habitat - Important riparian habitat occurs along East Gulch. Areas with healthy riparian habitat are relatively scarce in the region and are gradually declining in size and quality.
3. Wildlife Habitat - The BLM lands in the subunit include important habitat for elk, deer, bighorn sheep, and black bear that is gradually diminishing in both size and quality. Bighorn sheep severe winter range and lambing grounds and elk severe winter range occur in the southern sections, and elk severe winter concentration areas occur along the northern sections of the subunit. The contiguous BLM lands included within the Big Hole subunit and the adjoining Texas Creek and Red Gulch subunits provide important habitat connectivity for wildlife movement.
4. Vegetation - Dense stands of pinyon pine and juniper trees dominate most areas below 8,000 feet elevation; creating conditions for catastrophic wildfires and limiting the production of grasses and other plants that are valuable for wildlife. Noxious weeds, including knapweed and tamarisk, have also invaded portions of the subunit. The Big Hole subunit is the object of on-going fuels reduction treatments to reduce the potential of catastrophic wildfires and to enhance forage production for wildlife. Treatments to eradicate and control the spread of noxious weeds are also on-going in this subunit.
5. ACEC and RNA Values – The special management area designation for the Arkansas Canyonlands ACEC recognizes the areas outstanding scenic and recreational values, as well as the occurrences of rare plants and animals that are found in this subunit, including Arkansas Canyon Stickleaf (*Mentzelia densa*) and peregrine falcon. The High Mesa Grasslands RNA contains an undisturbed relict plant community that is thought to have existed prior to changes in native rangelands caused by intensive cattle grazing and the introduction of exotic plants.
6. Exclusive Access and Uses from Private Lands - Exclusive access from private in-holdings and from subdivisions bordering BLM lands is an issue here. Some existing BLM roads that are not accessible to the public because they are blocked by private lands are being accessed and used exclusively by private landowners; resulting in the creation of unauthorized travel routes that adversely impact vegetation, soils, and other natural resources.
7. Safety Concerns and Motorized Encroachment into McIntyre Hills WSA at Five Points Gulch – The major public access point into the Big Hole Subunit is located where Five Points Gulch enters the Arkansas River. Visitors access the subunit via a short but steep primitive road that extends about 60 feet from the south side of US 50 into Five Points Gulch. Users then proceed north

under the highway bridge and must ford the Arkansas River to reach the public lands on the other side.

The access road into Five Points Gulch is located at the east end of bridge and is situated at a place where the sight distance is severely restricted. Most visitors do not want to risk the hazards associated with entering and leaving Five Points Gulch via this access road, but instead park at a turnout located about 200 yards east of the bridge and access the gulch on foot. Some visitors, however, do chose to drive down into the gulch, which poses serious safety hazards for both the visitor and other highway users.

A second hazard that exists at this access point is the river crossing, which can only be safely done when the Arkansas River flows are less than 400 CFS. At high flows people and vehicles risk being swept downstream.

Another concern involves the McIntyre Hills WSA. The boundary for the WSA is located about 100 feet above where the access road enters Five Points Gulch. A substantial amount of ATV and motorcycle encroachment into the McIntyre Hills WSA is occurring via this access road.

8. Demand for Expanded and Enhanced Recreation Opportunities - Interest has been expressed from both motorized and non-motorized recreation users for improved access into the subunit.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Watershed conditions are improving throughout the subunit; rates of soil erosion are decreasing and water quality and fish habitat in the Arkansas River are improving.

Riparian habitat in East Gulch and other areas is healthy and functioning to stabilize stream courses.

Available areas of wildlife habitat are expanding and improving in the subunit, supporting sustainable numbers of deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife. Viable wildlife corridors and habit connections are maintained with the adjoining Texas Creek and Red Gulch subunits.

Occurrences of noxious weeds are subsiding and the risk of catastrophic wildfire is maintained at minimal levels by on-going fuels reduction treatments.

The values contained in the Arkansas Canyonlands ACEC and High Mesa Grasslands RNA are maintained and undiminished.

Occurrences of Arkansas Canyon Stickleaf and populations of peregrine falcon are stable or increasing.

Opportunities are available for non-motorized recreation uses in a quiet and remote backcountry setting.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting and improving watershed conditions
- Protecting and improving riparian areas

- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Protecting rare natural vegetative communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Protecting ACEC and RNA values
- Minimizing conflicts between recreation uses
- Resolving safety issues at Five Points Gulch access point
- Securing the McIntyre Hills WSA from encroachments by motorized and mechanized vehicles

### **CRAMPTON MOUNTAIN (Subunit G)**

**General Setting** - The Crampton Mountain subunit contains a total area of 25,076 acres, including 12,794 acres of BLM public lands. The terrain is extremely steep and mountainous and includes rugged canyons in the Cottonwood Creek and Tallahassee Creek drainages.

Private lands and topographic barriers isolate the BLM lands in this subunit from those in the adjoining Big Hole and Grand Canyon Hills subunits. Many of the BLM lands in the subunit are bordered by subdivisions.

The area is not widely known for its recreational opportunities but is known and used mostly by local residents from nearby subdivisions and ranches. The creation of new motorized trails is occurring in portions of the subunit, including the area around Soapy Hill.

Big game hunting is the major recreation use in this subunit. The subunit includes the Cottonwood Ridge State Trust Lands, which is managed by the CDOW for wildlife and fishing purposes and is restricted to foot and horse access.

Only a small portion of the subunit is easily accessible via motor vehicle and attracts moderate amounts of recreation uses. Most of the area, however, is difficult to access and experiences low amounts of use. The BLM roads in the subunit are primitive 4WD roads that were constructed and used for past mining and logging operations and for the construction and maintenance of the WAPA power line. An environmental assessment was conducted in 1986 to address the impacts of off-road travel uses that were occurring in the area surrounding Crampton Mountain. As a result of this environmental assessment, some existing roads were closed to limit access in those portions of Crampton Mountain that were being adversely affected by off-road travel. A total of six roads were closed with BLM and Division of Wildlife habitat improvement money. The closures included five dead end roads and one loop road across the top of Crampton Mountain.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. Watershed Conditions - The subunit includes important watersheds. Current levels of soil erosion from BLM lands are contributing to the declining quality of water and fish habitat in Cottonwood Creek, Tallahassee Creek and the Arkansas River.

2. Riparian Habitat - Important riparian habitat occurs along the Cottonwood Creek and Tallahassee Creek drainages. Areas with healthy riparian habitat are relatively scarce in the region and are gradually declining in size and quality.

3. Wildlife Habitat - The BLM lands in the subunit include important habitat for elk, deer, bighorn sheep, turkey, and black bear that is gradually diminishing in both size and quality.

4. Road Maintenance Issues - The roads accessing Rough Gulch and Sand Gulch are included in the Fremont County road system but are not maintained by the county. BLM is prohibited from maintaining roads that are not under BLM jurisdiction, including county roads, which limits the ability of BLM to perform needed maintenance and improvement work.

5. State Lands – Visitors must cross through the Cottonwood Ridge State Trust Lands to access the BLM lands that are located above it. Because DOW restricts travel through the Trust Lands to foot and horse uses, designated travel uses for the BLM lands situated above the Trust Lands are limited.

6. Proliferation of New Trails - The proliferation of user created trails is resulting in increasing amounts of resource damage. Users have created ATV and motorcycle trails extending down Cottonwood Creek from Soapy Hill and trails have been created in other portions of the subunit, as well.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Watershed conditions are improving throughout the subunit; rates of soil erosion are decreasing and water quality and fish habitat in the Arkansas River are improving.

Riparian habitat occurring along Cottonwood Creek and Tallahassee Creek is healthy and functioning to stabilize stream courses.

Available areas of wildlife habitat are expanding and improving in the subunit, supporting high numbers of deer, elk, turkey, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife.

Visitors travel via a designated system of roads and trails that serve a variety of motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses and that are being maintained to limit impacts on vegetation, soils, and water. Some areas in the subunit are managed where visitors can experience opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking in quiet and remote settings, while opportunities for motorized recreation uses are available in other parts of the subunit.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting and improving watershed conditions
- Protecting and improving riparian areas
- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Protecting rare natural vegetative communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Resolving road maintenance issues
- Ensuring consistency with DOW travel management designations
- Minimizing conflicts between recreation uses

### **SANGRES FOOTHILLS (Subunit H)**

**General Setting** - The Sangres Foothills subunit contains a total area of 48,632 acres, including 21,686 acres of BLM public lands. This subunit includes lands in Fremont County located south of the Arkansas River and between the Chaffee and Custer County lines. The BLM land

ownership patterns in this subunit are highly fragmented. Substantial blocks of BLM lands are separated by private lands that have been subdivided into residential properties. Many of the BLM lands also adjoin the San Isabel National Forest and include several public access points for the Rainbow Trail.

The Rainbow Trail is a major recreation feature located on National Forest lands that border along the southwestern boundary of the subunit, and that runs parallel to this boundary for the entire length of the subunit. A lot of the usage on BLM roads in this subunit is from people passing through to reach the Rainbow Trail. The entire Rainbow Trail is open to foot, horse, bicycle, and motorcycle uses. The operation of ATVs, however, is only permitted on that portion of the trail extending south of Big Cottonwood Creek.

Nearby population centers include the communities of Salida, Swissvale, Howard, and Coaldale. Motorized recreation uses such as jeeping, ATV riding, and motorcycle riding predominate on most BLM parcels. The BLM lands in the Kerr Gulch area are well-known and heavily used by people from outside of the local area for motorized recreation and for big game hunting opportunities. Other BLM parcels in the subunit are not widely known and attract low to moderate amounts of use, mostly from residents of the nearby subdivisions and communities. Public access is limited to many BLM parcels by extreme topography and by intervening private lands. The only public access to some BLM parcels is from existing and user created trails coming off adjoining National Forest lands from the Rainbow Trail.

Previous travel management decisions were made in the Kerr Gulch, Hamilton Creek, and Falls Gulch portions of the subunit. These decisions resulted in closures of some of the motorized routes in these areas.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. Watershed Conditions - The subunit includes important watersheds. Several important tributaries of the Arkansas River are affected by BLM lands in this subunit, including Bear Creek, Hayden Creek, and Big Cottonwood Creek. Current levels of soil erosion from BLM lands are contributing to the declining quality of water and fish habitat in the Arkansas River.
2. Wildlife Habitat - The BLM lands in the subunit include important habitat for elk, deer, and black bear that is gradually diminishing in both size and quality. The Kerr Gulch area is considered to be a key hunting area for elk and mule deer.
3. Proliferation of New Trails - The proliferation of user created trails is resulting in increasing amounts of resource damage on BLM lands near Wellsville and in the Kerr Gulch and Falls Gulch areas of the subunit.
4. Exclusive Access and Uses from Private Lands - Some of the BLM lands in the subunit abut subdivisions and other parcels of private lands that affect access and travel uses on public lands. In some cases private lands limit public access to BLM lands and have resulted in the development of multiple private access points that are only accessible to the private landowners. Many of these access points are being used for motorized access that are creating new travel routes and adversely impacting vegetation, soils, and other natural resources.
5. Rainbow Trail - Old mining roads and user created trails that stem off the Rainbow Trail are being used by the public to reach some BLM lands that are otherwise not legally accessible to the public. Some of these routes are adversely impacting vegetation, soils, and other natural resources on both BLM and National Forest lands. In some cases these routes pass through

BLM lands onto adjacent private lands and are being used by the private landowners for exclusive access to the Rainbow Trail.

**6. Road Maintenance Issues** - The BLM access roads in the Taylor Gulch, Kerr Gulch, and Big Cottonwood Creek areas are included in the Fremont County road system but are not maintained by the county. BLM is prohibited from maintaining roads that are not under BLM jurisdiction, including county roads, which limits the ability of BLM to perform needed maintenance and improvement work.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Watershed conditions are improving throughout the subunit; rates of soil erosion are decreasing and water quality and fish habitat in the Arkansas River are improving.

Available areas of wildlife habitat are expanding and improving throughout the subunit, supporting high numbers of deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and black bear.

Visitors travel via a designated system of roads and trails that serve a variety of motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses and that are being maintained to limit adverse impacts to vegetation, soils, and water.

Designated travel routes between BLM and National Forest lands are cooperatively managed to accommodate the same uses.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting and improving watershed conditions
- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Protecting rare natural vegetative communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Resolving road maintenance issues
- Minimizing conflicts between recreation uses

### **WEST MCCOY GULCH (Subunit I)**

**General Setting** - The West McCoy Gulch subunit contains a total of 17,904 acres, including 11,377 acres of BLM public lands. The subunit is situated south of the Arkansas River midway between Canon City and Salida and near the small communities of Coaldale and Cotopaxi. The subunit contains important wildlife habitat and includes the McCoy Gulch State Trust Lands. Hunting big game is a major use in this subunit.

The types and amounts of recreation uses occurring in the area vary greatly between the east and west halves of the subunit. The west half receives high amounts of OHV use along Fremont County Road 37, which the county has designated as open to ATV travel. The BLM lands west of FCR 37 are also accessible from numerous primitive roads that stem off the county road and lead to several inactive granite quarries that are located in the area.

Most of the BLM lands to the east of FCR 37, however, are virtually inaccessible to the public for OHV use because of intervening private lands and natural terrain barriers. Consequently, legal

public access to the east half of the subunit is limited to foot and horse use from only a few places where the BLM lands can be reached without trespassing on private lands.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. **Watershed Conditions** - The soils in the area exhibit high potential for erosion. Current levels of soil erosion from BLM lands are contributing to the declining quality of water and fish habitat in the Arkansas River.
2. **Wildlife Habitat** - The BLM lands in the subunit include important habitat for elk, deer, bighorn sheep, and black bear that is gradually diminishing in both size and quality. The subunit is elk winter range and a key elk migration corridor and is good deer habitat.
3. **Proliferation of New Trails** - The proliferation of user created trails is resulting in increasing amounts of resource damage. Users have created many of the trails and cut-offs from the existing road network. ATV and motorcycle trails are being systematically extended across steep and unstable slopes beyond the ends of existing 4WD routes.
4. **Exclusive Access and Uses from Private Lands** - Exclusive access from private in-holdings and from subdivisions bordering BLM lands is an issue here. Some existing BLM roads that are not accessible to the public because they are blocked by private lands are being accessed and used exclusively by private landowners; resulting in the creation of unauthorized travel routes that adversely impact vegetation, soils, and other natural resources.
5. **Access Trail to McCoy Gulch State Trust Lands** - The foot and horse access trail from BLM lands to the McCoy Gulch State Trust Lands is partly located on private lands. To assure continued public access, the trail either needs to be moved entirely onto to BLM lands or an easement acquired for the portions of the trail crossing the private lands.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Watershed conditions are improving throughout the subunit; rates of soil erosion are decreasing and water quality and fish habitat in the Arkansas River are improving.

Available areas of wildlife habitat are expanding and improving throughout the subunit, supporting sustainable numbers of deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and black bear.

Visitors travel via a managed system of designated roads and trails that serve a variety of motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses and that are being maintained to limit impacts on vegetation, soils, and water. Some areas in the subunit are managed where visitors can experience opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking in quiet and remote settings, while opportunities for motorized recreation uses are available in other parts of the subunit.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting and improving watershed conditions
- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors

- Protecting rare natural vegetative communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Resolving access issue with trail to McCoy Gulch State Trust Lands
- Minimizing conflicts between recreation uses

### **MCINTYRE HILLS (Subunit J)**

**General Setting** - The McIntyre Hills subunit contains a total of 25,201 acres, including 22,162 acres of BLM public lands. This sub-unit is located south of the Arkansas River between Parkdale and Texas Creek. The BLM lands in this subunit lie almost entirely within the McIntyre Hills WSA and Arkansas Canyonlands ACEC. The special management area designations for the WSA and ACEC recognize the area's outstanding scenic and recreational values, as well as the occurrences of rare plants and animals that are found in this subunit. Only about 2,250 acres of the BLM lands occur outside of these special management areas.

The lands in this subunit are extremely steep and rugged. The north boundary of the subunit borders approximately 13 miles of the Arkansas River and US Highway 50. The Arkansas River and the narrow highway corridor include about 650 acres of the Arkansas River Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA) and are heavily used for whitewater boating, fishing, picnicking, camping, and viewing wildlife. The amount of recreation use occurring outside of AHRA corridor is very limited, due to the extreme topography of the lands along the river canyon. The WSA and ACEC lands adjacent to the AHRA are mostly used by day-hikers who explore the lower portions the major gulches; however, encroachment into the WSA by users with ATVs and motorcycles is a recurring problem in Five Point Gulch.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. **WSA Management** – OHV encroachments are occurring in portions of the McIntyre Hills WSA that violate congressional direction for managing WSAs.
2. **ACEC Management** - OHV encroachments are occurring in portions of the Arkansas Canyonlands ACEC that are adversely affecting important wildlife habitat and watershed values.
3. **Exclusive Access and Uses from Private Lands** - Some of the BLM lands in the subunit abut subdivisions and other parcels of private lands that affect access and travel uses on public lands. In some cases private lands limit public access to BLM lands and have resulted in the development of multiple private access points that are only accessible to the private landowners. Many of these access points are being used for motorized access that are creating new travel routes and adversely impacting vegetation, soils, and other natural resources.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

The values and qualities for which the McIntyre Hills WSA and Arkansas Canyonlands ACEC were designated are maintained and undiminished. Opportunities are available for recreation uses that are compatible with maintaining the quiet and pristine qualities of these areas.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting ACEC and WSA values

- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Protecting rare natural vegetative communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Securing the WSA from encroachments by motorized and mechanized vehicles

### **GRAND CANYON HILLS (Subunit K)**

**General Setting** - The Grand Canyon Hills subunit contains a total area of 27,137 acres, including 8,618 acres of BLM public lands. This sub-unit is located immediately west of Canon City and is heavily influenced by the issues and pressures resulting from its proximity to an urban population. Many of the BLM parcels are heavily utilized areas that provide easy-to-access recreation opportunities. Mild winter conditions allow year-round access for a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation uses. The sights and sounds of human activity from towns, airports, highways, railroads, residential subdivisions, and motorized recreation uses are evident throughout many areas of the subunit.

The subunit contains approximately 2,200 acres of the Grape Creek ACEC and 900 acres of the Arkansas Canyon Lands ACEC.

Portions of Grape Creek and the Arkansas River itself flow through BLM lands contained in this subunit. Both are key watershed features in this subunit.

The subunit attracts heavy amounts of recreation use from both local residents and tourists. The major recreation attractions include the Arkansas River, Royal Gorge Bridge, Royal Gorge Park, Temple Canyon Park, Tunnel Drive Trail, Rockefeller Ecology Park, and the BLM Fishing Access Trail at Parkdale. The Arkansas River through the Royal Gorge is a national destination area for whitewater boating and one of the most heavily used sections of the river. The BLM lands in the subunit adjoin the San Isabel National Forest along the south boundary of the subunit.

Most of the BLM lands in the sub-unit are located south of Royal Gorge Park and surround three sides of Temple Canyon Park. The BLM lands are accessible via Fremont County 3 and BLM Road 6100 (Grand Canyon Hills access road), and via a half dozen primitive 4-wheel drive roads that lead from these two major access roads.

Due to the fragmented patterns of land ownership and extreme topography, many BLM parcels are not easily accessible, and some are surrounded by private lands that provide no legal public access to the public lands. Legal public access is lacking into the Grape Creek WSA from Temple Canyon Park, although the public routinely crosses private lands upstream of the Park to hike and fish on the Grape Creek State Trust Lands and BLM lands above here.

Numerous short spurs and dispersed camping sites occur along FCR 3 between Canon City and Temple Canyon Park. The BLM lands along this section receive heavy amounts of recreation use from local residents including day-hiking, rock collecting, and motorcycle riding, and dispersed camping. Illegal trash dumping is a serious problem in this area. This section of FCR 3 is also used for an annual Hill Climb that attracts hundreds of spectators during the week end that the event is held.

The section of Grape Creek located between the Arkansas River and the Rockefeller Ecology Park is attracting high amounts recreation use for hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, and fishing due to the good access provided by the trail that leads from the Ecology Park. Trespass issues exist in this area with private lands located between the Ecology Park and the Arkansas River.

BLM Road 6100 is open to year round traffic but is gated at the bottom for closing when conditions are wet and muddy. This road provides dead end access to the Grand Canyon Hills area and to the south rim of the Royal Gorge. Approximately 2,000 acres of Grand Canyon Hills is designated as an OHV OPEN area. Portions of the area are used for motorcycle trials events that are held under special recreation permit. Recreational uses in this area include driving 4WDs, ATVs, motorcycles and hiking, horseback riding, hunting, and dispersed camping.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. Watershed Conditions – The subunit includes important watersheds. Current levels of soil erosion from BLM lands are contributing to the declining quality of water and fish habitat in the Arkansas River.
2. Rare Plants and Animals – The occurrences of rare plants and animals are being diminished by human uses. The special management area designations for the Arkansas Canyonlands and Grape Creek ACECs recognize outstanding scenic and recreational values, as well as the occurrences of rare plants and animals that are found in this subunit, including peregrine falcon, Townsend's big-eared bat, Arkansas canyon stickleaf (*Mentzelai densa*), Degener beardtongue (*Penstemon degeneri*), and golden blazing star (*Mentzelia chrysantha*).
3. Coordination with Municipal, County, and National Forest Lands and Trails – BLM lands in the subunit adjoin Royal Gorge Park, Temple Canyon Park, Rockefeller Ecology Park, Tunnel Drive Trail and the San Isabel National Forest. Travel use decisions made on BLM lands may also affect uses on lands managed by the Canon City Parks and Forestry Department, the Canon City Area Metropolitan Recreation and Park District, Fremont County, and the San Isabel National Forest.
4. Exclusive Access and Uses from Private Lands - Some of the BLM lands in the subunit abut subdivisions and other parcels of private lands that affect access and travel uses on public lands. In some cases private lands limit public access to BLM lands and have resulted in the development of multiple private access points that are only accessible to the private landowners. Many of these access points are being used for motorized access that are creating new travel routes and adversely impacting vegetation, soils, and other natural resources.
5. Illegal Uses - The incidence of illegal uses of BLM lands is unusually high in this subunit. Activities of particular concern include: trash dumping, abandonment and disposal of automobiles and household appliances, target shooting, paint ball shooting, long-term occupancy of dispersed camping areas, gatherings involving underage drinking and/or use of illegal drugs, unattended campfires, driving off existing roads, and constructing unauthorized trails.
6. Special Recreation Uses - Motorcycle trials events have been authorized by BLM in this area for many years. These events could be allowed to continue in an OHV LIMITED area, however, motorcycle use for practice purposes could not be easily accommodated by a system of designated routes.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Watershed conditions are improving throughout the subunit; rates of soil erosion are decreasing and water quality and fish habitat in the Arkansas River are improving.

The values and qualities for which the Arkansas Canyonlands and Grape Creek ACECs were designated are maintained and undiminished. Populations or occurrences of peregrine falcon,

Townsend's big-eared bat, Arkansas canyon stickleaf, Degener beardtongue, and golden blazing star are stable or increasing. Opportunities are available for recreation uses that are compatible with maintaining the quiet and pristine qualities of these areas.

Visitors travel via a designated system of roads and trails that serve a variety of motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses and that are being maintained to limit adverse impacts to vegetation, soils, and water.

The public has legal public access from Temple Canyon Park to the Grape Creek WSA, and from the Ecology Park to the Arkansas River.

Designated travel routes between BLM, City, County, and National Forest lands are cooperatively managed to accommodate the same uses.

Impacts from dumping trash, target shooting, off-road vehicle play, unauthorized trail construction, and other illegal uses are no longer evident in areas where these activities had previously occurred.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting scenic and recreation values
- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Protecting rare natural vegetative communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Protecting threatened and endangered and sensitive species
- Resolving access issues in Grape Creek
- Ensuring consistency with City, Recreation District, County, and National Forest travel management objectives
- Protecting BLM lands from illegal uses

### **ROAD GULCH (Subunit L)**

**General Setting** - The Road Gulch subunit contains a total of 55,981 acres, including 12,709 acres of BLM public lands. The area is remotely situated away from major highways and communities, however, most of the private lands in the subunit have been subdivided into residential home sites, and many are occupied by year-round residents. The area is not widely known for its recreation opportunities, but receives substantial amounts of recreational use by local residents. The Turkey Gulch State Trust Lands are located in the subunit, and hunting is a major use in this area.

Most of the BLM lands are concentrated in two large blocks surrounding Lookout Mountain and Poverty Mountain that are contiguous to the public lands included in the McIntyre Hills and Grape Creek subunits. The remaining BLM lands consist of isolated fragmented parcels that are surrounded by private lands.

Access to BLM lands in the Lookout Mountain and Poverty Mountain areas is provided by Fremont County Roads 28 (Road Gulch/Copper Gulch Road) and by a number of primitive BLM roads that extend from FCR 28 and Highway 69. The BLM roads in these areas are heavily used for jeeping, ATV riding, and motorcycle riding. Some road closures have been implemented around the Turkey Gulch State Trust Lands to protect riparian habitat and to assist the Division of

Wildlife in restricting motorized travel on the State property. Previous closures have also been implemented at the top of Five Point Gulch and on several roads in the Poverty Mountain area to prevent motorized encroachments into the McIntyre Hills WSA.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. Watershed Conditions - The soils in the area exhibit high potential for erosion. Current levels of soil erosion from BLM lands are contributing to the declining quality of water and fish habitat in the Arkansas River.

2. Wildlife Habitat - The BLM lands in the subunit include important habitat for elk, deer, turkey, and black bear that is gradually diminishing in both size and quality. The Turkey Gulch State Trust Lands and surrounding BLM lands provide high-quality turkey habitat and hunting opportunities.

3. Proliferation of New Trails - The proliferation of user created trails is resulting in increasing amounts of resource damage. Users have created many of the trails and cut-offs from the existing road network. ATV and motorcycle trails are being systematically extended across steep and unstable slopes beyond the ends of existing 4WD routes.

4. Exclusive Access and Uses from Private Lands - Exclusive access from private in-holdings and from subdivisions bordering BLM lands is an issue here. Some existing BLM roads that are not accessible to the public because they are blocked by private lands are being accessed and used exclusively by private landowners; resulting in the creation of unauthorized travel routes that adversely impact vegetation, soils, and other natural resources.

5. WSA Management – OHV encroachments are occurring in portions of the McIntyre Hills WSA that violate congressional direction for managing WSAs.

6. County Road Issues - Several roads affecting BLM lands in this subunit are included in the Fremont County Road and Highway system but are not maintained by the county. The status of these roads under county jurisdiction raises several legal issues that limit the ability of the BLM to maintain or manage travel uses on these roads. In two of the cases the roads in question are not even being kept open to the public, but have been closed to public use where they cross private lands. The roads are being used exclusively, however, by the private landowners to access public lands. In both of these cases the uses originating from the private lands are adversely impacting vegetation, soils, and other resources on the public lands. BLM would like to limit access and uses on these roads but cannot legally impose restrictions on roads that are recognized and claimed by the county as public rights-of-way.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Watershed conditions are improving throughout the subunit; rates of soil erosion are decreasing and water quality and fish habitat in the Arkansas River are improving.

Available areas of wildlife habitat are expanding and improving throughout the subunit, supporting high numbers of deer, elk, turkey, and black bear.

Visitors travel via a managed system of designated roads and trails that serve a variety of motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized travel uses and that are being maintained to limit impacts on vegetation, soils, and water.

The values and qualities for which the Grape Creek WSA and ACEC were designated are maintained and undiminished. Opportunities are available for recreation uses that are compatible with maintaining the quiet and pristine qualities of these areas.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting and improving watershed conditions
- Protecting and improving wildlife habitat conditions and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Protecting WSA values in adjoining McIntyre Hills and Grape Creek subunits
- Resolving county road issues with Fremont County

### **GRAPE CREEK (Subunit M)**

**General Setting** - The Grape Creek subunit contains a total of 47,649 acres, including 32,534 acres of BLM public lands. This subunit is situated southwest of the Canon City and mostly in Fremont County, except for a small portion of the subunit that extends into Custer County. The BLM lands in this subunit are mostly contained within the Grape Creek WSA and Grape Creek ACEC. The special management area designations for the WSA and ACEC recognize the area's outstanding scenic and recreational values, as well as the occurrences of rare plants and animals. Approximately 6,000 acres of the BLM lands occur outside of these special management areas.

Grape Creek is an important perennial tributary of the Arkansas River and the key landscape feature in the subunit. The 15 mile-long section of Grape Creek that is included in the subunit is known for its beautiful scenery and offers outstanding opportunities for hiking and fishing in a primitive setting.

The majority of users access Grape Creek at the north end of the subunit by walking along the historic railroad grade from Temple Canyon Park. The only other public access route into Grape Creek is via BLM Road 6227; located approximately 7 miles upstream from Temple Canyon Park. Since the majority of visitors are forced to return to the point where they parked their vehicles, the heaviest amounts of recreation use occurs within a mile or two of Temple Canyon Park and the end of BLM 6227. The remaining sections of the canyon receive only moderate to light amounts of recreation use. Illegal encroachment into the WSA by users of motorized and mechanized vehicles is occurring in portions of Grape Creek.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. **WSA Management** – OHV encroachments are occurring in portions of the Grape Creek WSA that violate Congressional direction for managing WSAs.
2. **ACEC Management** - OHV encroachments are occurring in portions of the Grape Creek ACEC that adversely affect important wildlife habitat and watershed values.
3. **Exclusive Access and Uses from Private Lands** - Some of the BLM lands in the subunit abut subdivisions and other parcels of private lands that affect access and travel uses on public lands. In some cases private lands limit public access to BLM lands and have resulted in the development of multiple private access points that are only accessible to the private landowners.

Many of these access points are being used for motorized access that are creating new travel routes and adversely impacting vegetation, soils, and other natural resources.

4. Legal Public Access Issues - The public has traditionally accessed Grape Creek from Temple Canyon Park via a trail that crosses private and state lands over which BLM does not have a public easement. Without a legal easement, continuous public access across these lands cannot be assured.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

The values and qualities for which the Grape Creek WSA and ACEC were designated are maintained and undiminished.

Opportunities are available for recreation uses that are compatible with maintaining the quiet and pristine qualities of these areas.

Traditional access from Temple Canyon to the Grape Creek State Trust Lands and BLM public lands is available to the public for non-motorized travel uses.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting ACEC and WSA values
- Protecting uncommon plant communities and occurrences of sensitive plants and animals
- Protecting wildlife habitat and maintaining core wildlife areas and movement corridors
- Resolving legal public access issues
- Securing the WSA from encroachments by motorized and mechanized vehicles

### **CUSTER COUNTY (Subunit N)**

**General Setting** - The Custer County subunit contains a total area of 108,807 acres, including 3,621 acres of BLM public lands. This large sub-unit includes all of the scattered BLM lands located within the Arkansas River TMP in Custer County except for lands in the Grape Creek WSA and ACEC. The subunit encompasses the north end of the Wet Mountain Valley and includes DeWeese Reservoir and the towns of Westcliffe and Silver Cliff. The BLM lands consist of small, scattered parcels that are surrounded by private lands. Many of the BLM parcels have been identified for disposal. The largest parcels are concentrated in three areas; Bear Peak, the White Hills, and DeWeese Reservoir.

The BLM lands provide open space and benefits to wildlife; however, due to the small size of most parcels the benefits to wildlife are not substantial.

Nearly all of the BLM parcels are accessed from county roads. The parcels surrounding DeWeese Reservoir are managed under a recreation partnership with Colorado Division of Wildlife. Recreation uses on other parcels is low. Recreation use originates mostly from local residents of adjoining subdivisions and the nearby communities.

**Identified Issues and Concerns** (summary of the major resource management concerns and social issues)

1. **Exclusive Access and Uses from Private Lands** - Some of the BLM lands in the subunit abut subdivisions and other parcels of private lands that affect access and travel uses on public lands. In some cases private lands limit public access to BLM lands and have resulted in the development of multiple private access points that are only accessible to the private landowners. Many of these access points are being used for motorized access that are creating new travel routes and adversely impacting vegetation, soils, and other natural resources.

**Desired Future Conditions** (summary of desired outcomes that respond to the identified issues and concerns)

Recreation uses at DeWeese Reservoir are managed by DOW to provide access for fishing and dispersed camping opportunities along designated travel routes. In other areas, opportunities are available along county road corridors for dispersed hiking and horseback riding.

Visitors travel on public lands via a designated system of roads and trails that serve a variety of motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized uses. Some areas in the subunit are managed where visitors can experience opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking in quiet and remote settings, while opportunities for motorized recreation uses are available in other parts of the subunit.

**Management Objectives** (the following management objectives will receive primary consideration in evaluating and comparing travel management alternatives and for identifying the alternative that works best to achieve the desired future conditions)

- Protecting vegetation and soil conditions