

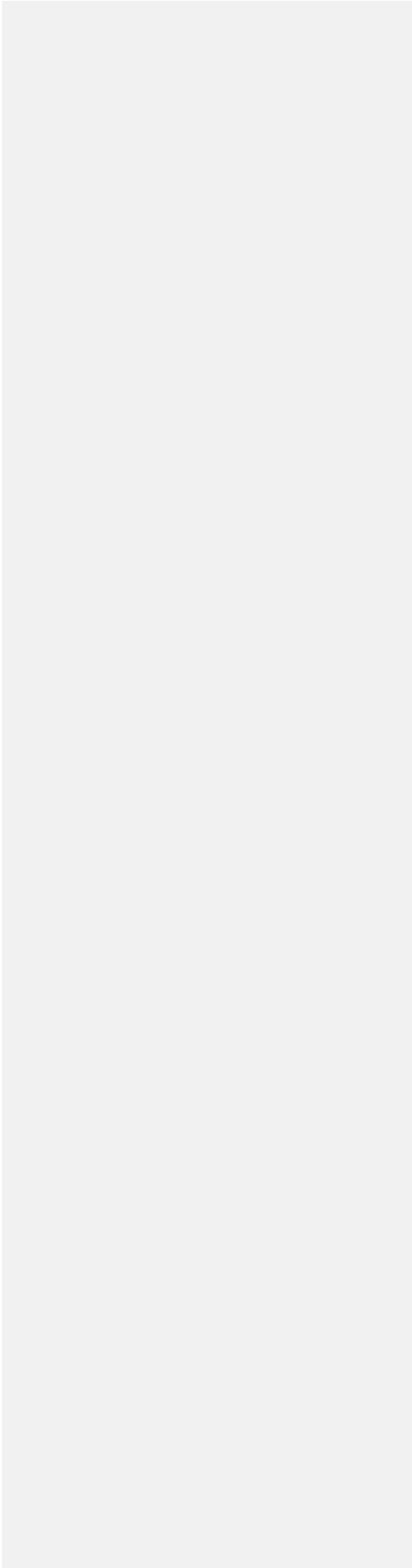
**Rio Grande Natural Area – A Cooperative Plan for Non-Federal Lands**

**Draft**

**~~September~~November 2013**

**Table of contents**

**List of abbreviations**



## The Rio Grande Natural Area Commission

In 2006, the U.S. Congress established the Rio Grande Natural Area (RGNA) along with a nine-member commission comprised of ~~local citizens, and state government~~ and federal government officials, ~~and local citizens. The commission's~~ ~~Their task task is~~ to advise the Secretary of the Interior ~~and to prepare through~~ a land management plan related to non-federal properties located within the ~~area's~~ ~~RGNA's~~ boundaries.

The act was the result of 20 years of local conservation efforts to protect a variety of natural resources while taking into account local priorities ~~for like~~ water and land management. A critical element of this conservation work is the cooperative relationship between citizens and state and federal resource managers to create a ~~landscape managed with the same principals outlined in the RGNA plan~~ ~~singularly managed landscape.~~ The non-binding RGNA plan will work in tandem with a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) plan to protect the diverse and vital environment and it is considered an amendment of the BLM San Luis Management Plan.

Although the RGNA plan cannot dictate ~~management on a private lands~~ ~~area management strategy,~~ ~~it is~~ the commission's ~~did intent~~ ~~priority to~~ engage and solicit all landowners for their input and participation ~~in regards to opportunities for improved management along the Rio Grande river corridor,~~ ~~particularly in regards to private property lines east of the Rio Grande in Costilla County.~~

## RGNA Commission

RGNA commissioners have knowledge and experience in fields of interest relating to the preservation, restoration and use of the area. The BLM evaluated the nominees based on their education, training, experience and knowledge of the RGNA's geographical area, and their ability to demonstrate a commitment to collaborative resource decision-making.

Harold Anderson, Citizen of the Local Region

Rick Basagoitia, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife

Michael Blenden, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Craig Cotten, Colorado Division of Water Resources

~~Helen Hankins~~ Tom Heinlein, Bureau of Land Management

Steve Vandiver, Rio Grande Water Conservation District

Rio de la Vista, Citizen of the Local Region

Michael Willett, Citizen of the Local Region

Comment [R1]: Perhaps this word is in the legislation—but I think some kind of definition of what this means would be helpful here....

Comment [R2]: Update this with new state Director- note Helen's role

Open seat

**Comment [R3]:** Possibly mention Paul Robertson's role as Commissioner

## Introduction and Statement of Work

The RGNA is designated as all land one-quarter of a mile from either bank of the Rio Grande; ~~from, from~~ the southern boundary of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge and south to the New Mexico state border. Its purpose is to conserve, restore and protect the natural, historic, cultural, scientific, scenic, wildlife and recreational resources of the area.

Encompassing ~~by~~ approximately 5,900 acres of private land; ~~-(about 66 percentpercent of the area -),~~ and 2,900 acres of BLM ~~managed~~ public lands, the RGNA includes a 33-mile stretch of the river, which ~~dividing~~ is the boundary line between Conejos County to the west and Costilla County to the east. All of the land on the Costilla County side is privately owned except for a small parcel of county owned land near State Highway 142, while the Conejos County side is split approximately 75/25 between BLM and private ownership.

**Comment [R4]:** Would check this figure....

The ~~attached inventory of~~ RGNA resources inventory is derived from a number of existing reports, studies and other documents ~~that discuss~~ discussing the resources of this area and/or related nearby areas. ~~-T, and~~ the recommendations are based on the commission's and the public's input. A detailed inventory is provided at the end of this document in addition to resource studies and links referenced within the report.

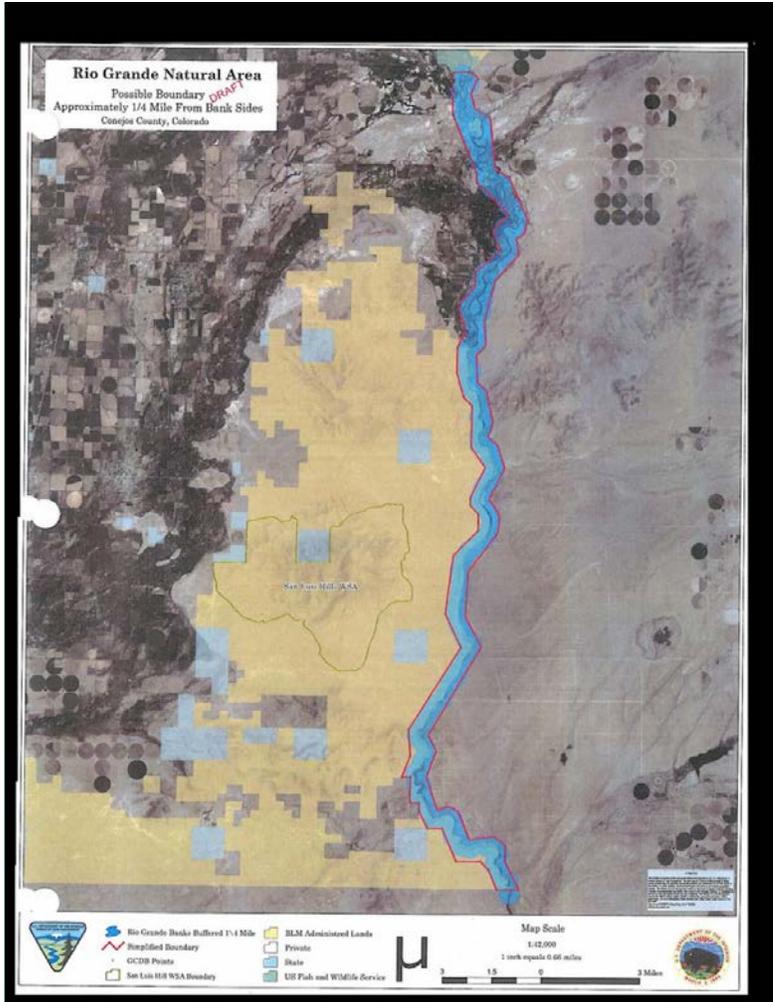
The ~~cRGNA C~~ Commission's recommendations are founded on public input and collaborative decision-making with pPrivate landowners and -sState, local and fFederal gGovernments. It, and will guide future RGNA land management objectives in addition to providing as well as provide input to the BLM for their its RGNA management plans. management plans within the RGNA.-

**Comment [R5]:** Collaborative with who? BLM? State and local agencies and entities? If we say this, should list parties involved

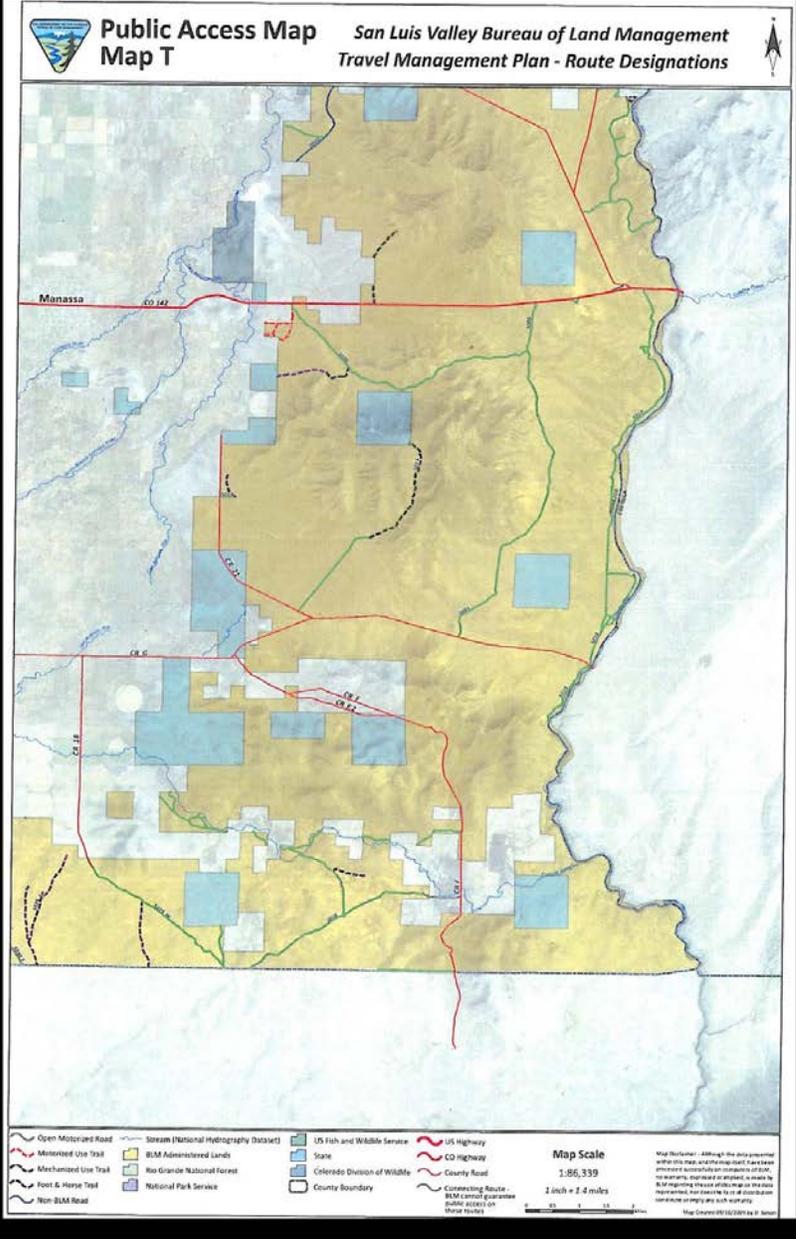
The plan, prepared under section 6(b)(2)(A), shall apply to private land in the RGNA only to the extent that any the private landowner agrees in writing to be bound by the management plan. In general, the plan provides recommendations for private landowners and aims to guide them to resources and organizations that can assist them in implementing management practices that can enhance the area.

**Comment [R6]:** Let's review the Act's language and discuss this point—since the Commission will not exist indefinitely, it's a bit hard to ascertain how and with whom there will be a written and binding agreement?

**Comment [SM7]:** Paul, Could you address Comment R6?



Comment [SKP8]: Hyperlink or "clickable" map to show details



## Inventory of Resources and Recommendation of Policies

### Recommendations Common to All Resource Areas

- Recommendations pertaining to the RGNA as a whole and will be common to all resources areas. What are common resources? Viewscapes, wildlife, cultural, grazing practices?
- Land grant and Conejos Rio Grande private and Costilla County boundary issues need to be resolved.
- Encourage replatting and consolidation of land
- Funding for road maintenance and other programs
- Who will administer the plan?

**Comment [R9]:** What other maps are available and which do we want to include? For example- CPW's wildlife maps, others?

**Comment [SKP10]:** Two boxes: Recommendations should be one box, resources should be a different box

**Formatted:** Highlight

**Formatted:** Highlight

**Formatted:** Bulleted + Level: 1 + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

**Formatted:** Highlight

**Formatted:** Highlight

### List of Resource Studies and Links

- List of property

*There was a suggestion to include lists of known properties and/or boundaries with the RGNA.*

- Conejos County Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Digital copy not available

- Costilla County Comprehensive Land Use Plan on

[www.costillacounty-co.gov/documents/pz\\_comphresensiveplan.pdf](http://www.costillacounty-co.gov/documents/pz_comphresensiveplan.pdf)

- San Luis Resource Area Plan

[http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/slvfo/Travel\\_Management.html](http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/slvfo/Travel_Management.html)

- Rio Grande Corridor Final Plan

[http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/nm/field\\_offices/taos/taos\\_planning/docs.Par.80725.File.dat/rio\\_grande\\_plan\\_all.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/nm/field_offices/taos/taos_planning/docs.Par.80725.File.dat/rio_grande_plan_all.pdf)

**Comment [R11]:** What does this refer to? Properties?

**Formatted:** Highlight

**Formatted:** Highlight

**Formatted:** Font: Italic

**Comment [R12]:** Suggest scanning this for inclusion on RGNA website

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Highlight

**Formatted:** Highlight

**SEE ALSO LIST (in progress) OF STUDIES COMPILED FOR NATURAL RESOURCES-**

## Natural Resources

### An Inventory of Resources

Much of the RGNA's natural environment remains unimpaired, providing natural resources, including water, plants and fertile soils, needed to support human beings throughout their existence in the area.

The Rio Grande starts is North America's second largest river, starting in the San Juan Mountains and traveling for 1,885 miles before emptying into the Gulf of Mexico. Along its way, it gives life to the RGNA, and to the many other areas dependent entitled to its water. The Rio Grande Compact, an agreement between Colorado, New Mexico and Texas, sets a framework for an equitable allocation and use of the river's water annually for the three states. T, and the Bureau of Reclamation's Closed Basin Project was designed to help assist the Colorado Rio Grande meet its compact obligations to the down river states.

From the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge south to North of Las Sauces and the confluence with the largest tributary, the Conejos River, the Rio Grande has a heavily meandering streambed with oxbows, side channels and riparian vegetation that consists of dense willow stands thickets and clump, cottonwood groves and large irrigated meadows. Land ownership of The majority of the The majority of the RGNA between the southern end of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge and Las Sauces consists of privately owned cattle ranches with a few dispersed between scattered BLM managed parcels.

South of Las Sauces, the river Rio Grande is less meandering, and the terrain in the RGNA intensifies (narrows?) narrows between the Brownie Hills on the east side of the river Rio Grande and Flat Top Mountain on the west bank side. In this section of the river Rio Grande, there is

Comment [SKP13]: Use additional subtitles as necessary

Comment [R14]: Would like to rewrite this sentence for an opening re the RGNA—possibly something like: The RGNA's natural resources have long been important to the people and wildlife of the region. While human activities have affected the natural environment in various ways, from changes in the water flow patterns to provide for agriculture and wildlife benefits above the area to grazing by livestock (some well managed on private lands and some uncontrolled on both public and private lands), to roads, historic dam sites, and other uses, the river continues to play an important role in the lives of today's residents.

Comment [R15]: What does 2<sup>nd</sup> largest mean? Largest in way way? Understand that it is the 5<sup>th</sup> longest..... Let's check on stats and decide what we're trying to say.

Comment [R16]: What is important to say here... It gives life seems a but vague- as there are no water rights drawn from the river in this reach, it does not sustain working lands to much of a degree, as any irrigation water comes from sources other than the Rio Grande- but does sustain wildlife

Comment [SKP17]: Nice try!

Comment [R18]: While there are irrigated meadows along the river, it's important to note that they are not irrigated by diversions from the river in this reach, as there are no diversions below the AWRN

Comment [R19]: This word seems a but vague to me—what does this mean? Gets more varied?

relatively unimpeded access to the river channel. ~~Unfortunately, lack~~ Lack of grazing management and extensive ~~extensive for trespass grazing by~~ livestock trespass grazing, which (including ~~includes~~ a number of abandoned horses, ~~s) has degraded~~ left is degrading the ~~potential~~ riparian zone. ~~in this area to poor condition.~~

South of the State Highway 142 Bridge, the terrain on either side of the ~~river~~ Rio Grande opens slightly and there is ~~considerable~~ opportunity for recreational access to the river access from the BLM ~~managed side onto the west~~ parcel to the west. The remnants of a failed dam attempt, including pylons on either side of the ~~river~~ Rio Grande and large rocks forming the base of the dam. ~~A, and a large cement diversion structure on the east bank (on the Costilla County owned parcel)~~ parcel on the east side of the Rio Grande remains about halfway between State Highway 142 and the Lobatos Bridge.

~~On the east side of the river, the Upper Box extends for 1.3 miles. Beginning~~ about a mile below the State Highway 142 ~~Bridge. Bridge is a reach called the Upper Box reach that which extends for 1.3 miles.~~ Within the Upper Box, vertical rock walls of up to 100 feet create a canyon and narrow river zone ~~enclosed landscape~~. Other places ~~within the section~~ between the State Highway 142 and the Lobatos Bridge ~~section~~ include sparsely vegetated hills on either side of the ~~river~~ Rio Grande, rising anywhere from 500 to 900 feet.

Below the Lobatos Bridge, the Rio Grande deepens into ~~a more dramatic channel~~, the Lower Box. From the riverbed, the canyon walls rise ~~each~~ over 200 feet at the Colorado/New Mexico state border, creating an enclosed setting that conveys an intense feeling of isolation and remoteness. While the cliffs confine the riparian zone in this area, there is ample raptor habitat in the rock walls.

There are some questions as to the Rio Grande's official meander line, an important determination because of the BLM land parcel located on the river's Rio Grande's eastern bank. Some consider the Rio Grande's east bank to mark the meander line, and others consider it the river's center.

~~A At the time of this plan's preparation, major n~~ Natural resources challenges within the RGNA presently is the number of ~~include~~ abandoned and feral ~~feral~~ horses and trespass ~~trespass~~ cattle grazing ~~grazing~~ trespassing. The unmanaged grazing ~~causes~~ competes ~~se animals create an unnecessary competition~~ with managed grazing and wildlife for natural resources, while stressing the overall environment, the health of the riparian vegetation's ~~carrying capacity~~ and threatening motorist safety on area roads. ~~RGNA roads.~~

DISCUSS AND DETERMINE KEY POINTS FOR THIS SECTION: The Secretary of the Interior is encouraged to negotiate with the State of Colorado, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District and affected water users in the s ~~State~~ to determine if changes in the

Comment [R20]: Need to rewrite this – explain different perspectives- BLM, private landowners, issues

Comment [R21]: Seems that the term meander line may be incorrectly used here... as it relates to property ownership or what?

Formatted: Highlight

Comment [SKP22]: Need to include additional information

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

streamflow that are beneficial to the RGNA may be accommodated. **Also, if discussions ever occur, every interested party within the valley should be involved.**

Formatted: Highlight

The RGNA does not authorize the imposition of any mandatory streamflow requirements.

Comment [SKP23]: Cite Act

### List of Resource Studies and Links

- LiDAR

<http://lidar.cr.usgs.gov/>

- Rio Grande Compact

<http://water.state.co.us/DIVISIONSOFFICES/DIV3RIOGRANDERIVERBASIN/Pages/Div3RioGrandeRB.aspx>

- Closed Basin Project

<http://www.rgwcd.org/page21.html>

- Soil surveys

[http://soils.usda.gov/survey/online\\_surveys/colorado/](http://soils.usda.gov/survey/online_surveys/colorado/)

- Colorado Natural Heritage Program county resource profiles

<http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/wetlandinventory/profile.asp?GeoUnitID=104>

<http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/wetlandinventory/profile.asp?GeoUnitID=114>

<http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/wetlandinventory/profile.asp?GeoUnitID=115>

- Memorandum regarding the Western Boundary of the Sangre de Cristo Grant, Malcolm Ebright

### On-going, unresolved issues

#### Boundary issue on both sides of river

-Cite 1990 BLM Solicitors Opinion

#### Replanning and consolidation

-encourage voluntary easements

-reduce fragmentation

### Recommendation ~~s~~ ~~FF~~ For ~~PP~~ Policies

•Supporting a river restoration study focusing on sediment influx and riparian habitat where appropriate. ~~which should also support the following:~~

- Supporting permanent and/or temporary ~~exlosures (possibly temporary)~~ in appropriate areas to improve habitat without disturbance
- Supporting grants to aid and enable natural resource conservation projects within the RGNA

Formatted: Bulleted + Level: 1 + Aligned at: 0.75" + Indent at: 1"

~~Supporting consideration of the RGNA in future subdistrict development~~

Comment [R24]: Don't think that this is applicable

•Supporting grazing management education for landowners. ~~which will also support the following:~~

•Supporting removal of abandoned/feral horses. ~~education for landowners and access to land management tools~~

Formatted: Indent: Left: 1"

•Supporting ~~Addressing and solving~~ resolution of ~~trespass cattle problems~~ cattle trespassing

~~Supporting mobile exlosures (possibly temporary) in appropriate areas to improve habitat without disturbance~~

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman, Font color: Auto

~~Supporting grants to aid and enable natural resource conservation projects within the RGNA~~

•Supporting grazing management education for landowners

Formatted: Indent: Left: 1"

•Encouraging landowners to enter into voluntary land conservation easements

- Coordinate ~~with~~ between weed districts, soil conservation ~~d~~istricts and BLM on weed management.

Comment [SM25]: Fix indent on this one, it should be move out. Sorry, I just can't fix it.

Comment [SKP26]: Who will coordinate?

~~Prohibiting the construction of water storage facilities in the RGNA~~

Formatted: Bulleted + Level: 1 + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

Comment [SKP27]: List parties involved

Comment [R28]: Let's discuss—do we need to say this or is it inherent in other plans?

## Wildlife Resources

### An Inventory of Resources

Wildlife populations within the RGNA are highly dependent on its resources for survival, especially ~~the~~ its riparian zones, ~~permanent~~ bodies of water that lies between a water source and upland habitat, and critical wetland areas, ~~essentially consisting of fairly narrow strips of land bordering creeks, rivers, lakes or other bodies of water.~~ Plant species, soil types, and topography are distinctive when compared to the surrounding, drier upland area.

Formatted: Space After: 8 pt, Line spacing: Multiple 1.2 li

Comment [R29]: This sentence is unclear—if trying to define riparian zone-- rewrite

Formatted: Font:

Within the 33 miles of the RGNA, the riparian zones ~~is~~ are in varying conditions for various reasons. ~~For example, along~~ Not all stream or shore zones develop into riparian areas. This is primarily true in the last eight miles of the RGNA, ~~where the shorelines are primarily rock,~~ there is a narrow zone of little to no riparian vegetation. ~~In other reaches where there is~~ good potential for riparian vegetation and habitat ~~development~~ qualities. ~~It is believed~~ uncontrolled trespass grazing and other use-related factors currently limit the health of the ~~creation and maintenance of the productive~~ riparian zone ~~areas.~~

Comment [R30]: Suggest organizing this differently—perhaps something like this below.

Formatted: Font: Bold, Highlight

Formatted: Font: Bold, Highlight

Formatted: Font: Bold, Highlight

### Wildlife Species:

## **Fisheries**

Formatted: Font: Bold

~~In addition to~~The Rio Grande river sustains ~~both~~ native species of fish such as trout \_\_\_\_\_ and introduced species ~~of fish like~~such as carp, northern pike, and \_\_\_\_\_ ~~and trout,~~

Formatted: Font: Bold

## **Birds and Waterfowl**

~~M~~any species of waterfowl are evident along the ~~river~~Rio Grande. ~~Nesting waterfowl include Canada goose, mallard, gadwall and cinnamon teal.~~

The San Luis Valley is one of the most southernmost major water bird production area in the Central Flyway, and is also considered the most important water bird production area in the state ~~of Colorado~~ because a significant portion of water bird populations migrate through the Rio Grande corridor.

~~RGNA nesting waterfowl include Canada goose, mallard, gadwall and cinnamon teal.~~ There are also significant concentrations of nesting raptor ~~s,~~ including bald and golden eagles, prairie falcons, owls and hawks.

In January 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated critical habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher, listed as an Endangered Species in 1995, along 23 miles of the Rio Grande and a 2.9-mile stretch of the Conejos River. The small bird ~~allegedly found~~ along the RGNA riparian habitats lives among dense groves of willows, arrowweed, buttonbrush, box elder and alder. In 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) designated critical habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher, but it did not include the San Luis Valley, citing progress towards a community-based Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). **While there are significant stands of willows in the RGNA, the BLM has only identified breeding pairs near the confluence of the Rio Grande and Conejos rivers and the McIntire-Simpson parcel, which lies west of the RGNA and further upriver along the Rio Grande.**

Comment [R31]: Have SWWFL been found in the RGNA? Need to be precise on this point.

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

## **Mammals:**

Formatted: Font: Bold

Large ungulates in or adjacent to the RGNA include mule deer and pronghorn antelope.

## **Elk?**

Formatted: Highlight

**What other smaller species are there? Beaver, coyote, etc...**

Formatted: Highlight

*The relationship between livestock and wildlife should be defined and discussed and include an explanation of why the abandoned/feral horses and the permitted/trespass cattle grazing affects the native species.*

Formatted: Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic

~~Livestock: In addition to grazing on the private ranches, there are cattle grazing permits on the BLM which are managed with the landowners and agency range personnel. There are significant populations of abandoned/feral horses on the eastern side of the river that cross over onto both private and BLM lands. These, along with trespass cattle, are presently unmanaged and are depleting riparian habitat crucial for wildlife survival.~~

Formatted: Font: Italic, Highlight

### List of Resource Studies and Links

- Colorado Natural Heritage Program county tracked element inventories

<http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/wetlandinventory/elementsList.asp?GeoUnitID=104>

<http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/wetlandinventory/profile.asp?GeoUnitID=114>

<http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/wetlandinventory/profile.asp?GeoUnitID=115>

- San Luis Valley Regional Habitat Conservation Plan

[www.slvhcp.com/Planning\\_docs.html](http://www.slvhcp.com/Planning_docs.html)

- Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Southern Alamosa and Costilla Counties, San Luis Valley, Colorado, CSU

[www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2004/Southern Alamosa and Costilla Wetlands.pdf](http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2004/Southern_Alamosa_and_Costilla_Wetlands.pdf)

- Biological Inventory of Rio Grande and Conejos Counties (CSU)

[www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2000/Rio Grande and Conejos Counties Vo11.pdf](http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2000/Rio_Grande_and_Conejos_Counties_Vo11.pdf)

- [Colorado Parks and Wildlife State Wildlife Plan](#)

Formatted: List Paragraph, Bulleted + Level: 1 + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman, Font color: Auto

Comment [R32]: What is meant by this here?

Comment [SM33]: Paul could you chime in on comment R24.

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font: Italic

### Recommendations For Policies

- NEPA?

*NEPA was mentioned during a subcommittee meeting. The reason was to recognize a NEPA process could come into play at some point because BLM parcels are included in the RGNA.*

- Addressing and offering solutions for trespass cattle problems and abandoned/feral horses.

Education on impact of trespass grazing

Encouraging river restoration and habitat enhancement projects- including fencing where appropriate and needed for grazing management

Use of sheep/grazing to manage vegetation

Encouraging voluntary conservation easements

Mitigate water use by focusing on on-going management

recognize and mitigate consumptive use of riparian vegetation

New consumptive use of habitat improvement projects

Restore to what target?

Maximum vegetation will result in x acre feet of water removed

Suggestion: Restore the natural processes (biological and physical) that created the system

Habitat

What role does the HCP play in balancing water loss from vegetation?

Willows growing outside of high-water line on east side of river will be on private property.

**Comment [SKP34]:** Big question: how to manage vegetation for water consumption?

**Comment [SKP35]:** Big question: What is the recovery goal for the habitat?

**Comment [SKP36]:** Andrew and Mike Blenden will conduct a literature review

**Formatted:** Font: Italic

**Historic/Cultural Resources**

**An Inventory of Resources**

The Rio Grande is an important paleontological, cultural and historical resource corridor because it is one of the largest river systems in the American Southwest. The story of human use in this area spans ~~thousands~~ hundreds of years and provides an excellent opportunity for public outreach, interpretation and research.

North of the RGNA, within the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge is the Hansen Bluff, which is significant for its large number of special vertebrate and invertebrate ~~fossils~~ fossils, and Native American aArtifacts.

The BLM has recorded cultural resource phenomena within the RGNA, including prehistoric, historic and isolated finds. Only a very small percentage of the total cultural resources in the planning area, however, are recorded because most have not been inventoried. Pre-historic sites include locales of stone tool manufacture, open-air and sheltered camps and rock art panels.

Historic sites range from building foundations to the location of the storied 1694 crossing of the Rio Grande by Don Diego de Vargas, to petroglyphs and natural dwellings.

The Lobatos Bridge, which crosses the Rio Grande at Conejos County Road G, is the one historic structure in the RGNA listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Other historical themes include aboriginal riverine use and occupation, water development, transportation/travel corridors and early turquoise, ~~and~~ uranium and gold mining.

RGNA sites warranting interpretation and protection include:

*Need help further identifying and defining these sites.*

•De Vargas Crossing (5CN23/5CT213)

•Rock Art Site 5CN204

•Rock Art Site 5CT262

•Lobatos Bridge

•Valdez Ferry (5CN23) (1861)

•Dam Site (1940s/1950s)

•Rock Art Site 5CT263

•Rio Grande cave paleoindian site

- Stewart's Ferry (1863)

- Stage Coach Route that crossed at the Valdez Ferry

Formatted: Font: Italic

Comment [SM37]: Lauren  
Just for the Commissions purpose could you specify which sites? Is the lobatos bridge and De Vargas crossing rock art included in these?

Comment [SM38]: Which one?

Formatted: Bulleted + Level: 1 + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

## List of Resource Studies and Links

### •List of references to publicly known sites

- Map(s)
- Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area  
[www.sdcnha.org](http://www.sdcnha.org)
- Los Caminos Antiguos Historic/Scenic Byway  
[www.coloradodot.info/travel/scenic-byways/south-central/los-caminos](http://www.coloradodot.info/travel/scenic-byways/south-central/los-caminos)
- CSU Natural Heritage Program Document Library  
[www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/reports.aspx](http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/reports.aspx)
- San Luis Valley Rock Art, Kessler, 2000
- Wild and Scenic Rio Grande, DeVries and Maurer, 1994

## Recommendations For Policies

- Supporting enhanced historical experiences through additional interpretive signs that explain the historical value.

Different levels of interpretation at different sites

### Education

For interpreted sites, include site etiquette about how to interact with the resources.

Work with universities to host a field school at priority areas.

Use conservation easements or purchase private property to protect sites with high cultural and historic significance.

- Supporting marketing and public outreach to ensure historic preservation and ~~and~~ education.

Use a broad approach and plan ahead

Signs/messaging: “East side of Rio Grande River off limits to public – NO TRESPASSING!”

Prioritize sites/fencing/signs

Formatted: Highlight

Comment [R39]: For what purpose?

Comment [SKP40]: Concern about informing public of cultural sites

Comment [SKP41]: Web messaging too

Comment [SKP42]: “Closed for vegetation restoration”

Formatted: Indent: First line: 0.5"

Recruit/establish a friends group/volunteers to assist with monitoring of sites

Record, but not necessarily publicly document historic sites and petroglyphs

•Encouraging tribal input on the Rio Grande's history and RGNA natural resource uses

- ~~Reecomment~~Recommend the Dee -Vargas crossing ~~getis~~ interpreted and protected.
- Recommend priority areas for additional cultural or heritage resources through partnerships with higher education institutes.
- Recommend the Mortenson Dam Diversion Structure ~~be kept and graffiti be managed.is~~ managed for graffiti and other damages.

Formatted: Bulleted + Level: 1 + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

## Scientific Resources

### An Inventory of Resources

The RGNA's abundant resources provide numerous scientific exploration opportunities for professional, amateur or academic purposes.

At the professional level, the natural resources, wildlife and water resource managers of the BLM and the State of Colorado have developed a long-term understanding of biological processes, animal use and migration habit and the management and delivery of water through the Rio Grande.

On an amateur level, visitors come to the RGNA to engage their own curiosity about the remarkable natural world and its geology, flora and fauna. The RGNA's isolated character provides a sense of solitude, heightening scientific understanding, providing a clearer lens on the natural world. At night, the RGNA ~~, an open eye and a telescope~~ brings awareness ~~of to~~ the universe in a way unachievable in a more ~~populated populated, well lit, heavily lit location, place where lighting impacts the view of the night skies.~~

Finally, the RGNA ~~also represents~~ ~~serves as~~ a living laboratory. The San Luis Valley's elementary students visit the Rio Grande to understand the scientific method in practice, and high school and college students conduct experiments and train to become professional scientists in their own right. The RGNA represents an incubator of not only scientific understanding of the natural processes that have shaped the San Luis Valley for millions of years, but also a place where students can develop the skills, talent and desire to increase knowledge of ~~the RGNA~~ the environment we depend upon and all its aspects in the future.

#### List of Resource Studies and Links

• Publicly available BLM Visual Resource Manuals

BLM (Sean Noonan) Visual Resource Inventory

Monument Legislation

#### Recommendations For Policies

• Supporting experiential learning opportunities for students through "Youth Days" ~~(how?)~~

• Supporting employment opportunities ~~(how?)~~

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

## Scenic Resources

### An Inventory of Resources

The RGNA is a scenic resource in itself.

With the exception of the box canyons, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and the San Juan Mountains are visible from most of the area. Depending on the segment of the river, visitors can experience remarkable vistas of the Brownie Hills, Flat Top Mountain, the San Luis Hills Wilderness Study Area, the Las Sauces farming and ranching community and the Rio Grande's Upper and Lower Box Canyons.

The RGNA's northern half is ~~relatively~~ more developed, including ~~the town village of~~ Las Sauces and ~~its physical farming and ranching~~ structures.

South of Las Sauces, the land within the RGNA remains mostly undeveloped with a few exceptions ~~of for~~ buildings along the east side of the Rio Grande below the State Highway 142 Bridge.

Additionally, several subdivision roads, county roads and BLM designated routes on the west side are visible within the RGNA.

### List of Resource Studies and Links

- Map(s)

### Recommendations For Policies

- Encouraging landowners to enter into voluntary~~and~~ conservation easements
- Recommending a BLM Visual Resource Management Class II rating - to retain the existing character of the landscape – and offering landowners ~~tools to maintain a singular~~ landscape management tools.

Stay consistent with monument

Comment [SKP43]: Need a description for the layperson

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

Comment [R44]: Would like to consider either defining or replacing this word

## Recreation Resources

### An Inventory of Resources

~~Most~~ Recreational activities ~~for the general public within the RGNA within the RGNA take place occur primarily are available~~ on ~~public land~~ BLM parcels ~~within the RGNA.~~

~~Public~~ ~~River~~ Rio Grande access is ~~available on public land located~~ at the confluence of the Conejos ~~River~~ and ~~the~~ Rio Grande, State Highway 142, and the Lobatos Bridge.

Boaters enjoy Class II water on the Rio Grande, depending on seasonal stream flows.

~~Fishing, and is available bait, lure and fly fishers angle for brown~~ Introduced as game species in the 1930s, brown trout, rainbow trout and northern pike ~~continue to attract fishermen, e, all game species introduced in the 1930s.~~

Hunting within the RGNA occurs on a limited basis. Waterfowl are hunted along the river to a limited extent, and there is deer, antelope and small game hunting potential. ~~No areas are closed to firearm use or hunting in the RGNA, except as posted by private landowners.~~

Trespassing on private lands, however, does occur, and is a concern for ~~the landowners, impacting and can have an impact on~~ a number of the RGNA's resources ~~including in addition to landowners.~~

On the BLM ~~parcels located managed land~~ within the RGNA, there is motorized access to the Rio Grande in several locations north of State Highway 142, and along the river between State Highway 142 and the Lobatos Bridge, which is one of the BLM's preferred boating access areas. Due to the steep walls of the Lower Box Canyon, there is no motorized access to the river ~~below past~~ the Lobatos Bridge. The open motorized roads on the BLM ~~parcels managed land~~ provides access ~~for of~~ other dispersed recreation activities, such as hiking, biking, picnicking and wildlife viewing.

~~The only available public access on the private lands within the RGNA is located in the subdivided portions of Costilla County between State Highway 142 and the Lobatos Bridge. The subdivided parcels in this area bordering the river Rio Grande contain a right of way for pedestrian access along their western boundary, though the easement does not appear well known or well used, used.~~ There is a Costilla County owned parcel just below the State Highway 142 Bridge, ~~that is~~ in the planning stages for a recreational site.

Comment [R45]: It is noted earlier that there are native species here too—need to be consistent with this

Comment [R46]: What limits this—land ownership, access, quality of hunting?

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Comment [R47]: This next sentence implies that there is hunting allowed throughout... could clarify this better

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Comment [SKP48]: Trespass/poaching on private

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Comment [SKP49]: Need clarification. Is this access only for landowners in the subdivision or for the general public?

Comment [R50]: Would like to clarify this

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

## List of Resource Studies and Links

- Costilla County Trails, Recreation and Open Space Plan

<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CNTY-Costilla/CBON/1251595143234>

- SLV Trails and Recreation Master Plan

[www.slvgo.com](http://www.slvgo.com)

- Map(s)

## Recommendations For Policies

- Supporting historic routes preservation, including the road to the New Mexico border, to discourage trespassing on the east side.

- Supporting ~~improving roads work~~road improvements where appropriate to protect the natural resources and provide safe, reliable access for ~~recreational uses~~recreation enthusiasts

~~Constituting~~ Instituting a set of rules including vehicle access limits and vehicle type regulations, including the removal of roads and a prohibition against motorized use on federal land in the area on the western side of the Rio Grande from Lobatos Bridge south to the New Mexico state line

- Encouraging Costilla County to preserve and develop its recreational facilities ~~traditions~~

- Encouraging Costilla County to do a road analysis relative to qualities of the RGNA.
- Recommending signs indicating no trespassing ~~on~~trespassing are placed on the eEast side ~~signs be put up and~~ on the wWest side if roads are closed on the wWest side.
- O and obtain easements with willing landowners on the eEast side to allow for river access.

- Supporting travel management plans for the east side of the Rio Grande

**Comment [R51]:** Need to discuss this—what's in the legislation and what are we recommending? Also this seems to perhaps contradict the first point above—let's clarify this too.

**Formatted:** Font: Times New Roman, Font color: Auto

**Formatted:** Font: Times New Roman, Font color: Auto

**Formatted:** List Paragraph, Bulleted + Level: 1 + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

**Formatted:** Font: Times New Roman, Font color: Auto

•Supporting existing Rio Grande boating access in Costilla County, and encouraging the identification of new locations with willing landowners.

**Comment [R52]:** Let's discuss—are there any new location possible?

•Supporting dispersed campsite and parking area development where appropriate

•Supporting existing trail enhancements on public lands.

•Supporting enhanced recreational experiences through interpretive signs, primarily for education, not advertisement to maximize visitation.

•Supporting RGNA social media sites—who would maintain these? What is the objective of doing this?

**Formatted:** Highlight