

Summary of Public Scoping Comments Dry Creek Planning Area

Background

The Bureau of Land Management Uncompahgre Field Office began work on the Uncompahgre Travel Management Plan (TMP) in March 2007. The public scoping process was initiated at that time, with the public notified through press releases, web site postings, and letters sent to approximately 650 individuals and groups who had expressed an interest in participating in the travel management planning effort. Public meetings were then held in late March and early April.

At the close of the public scoping period, the Uncompahgre Field Office had received comments from 74 individuals and organizations in response to the request for public input relating to the Dry Creek Planning Area. These comments were placed into subject categories and summarized by members of the Dry Creek Travel Management Planning Team. This document contains a general summary of the comments.

How the Stakeholder Comments were used

The BLM Travel Management Planning Team first identified the issues and concerns of stakeholder groups. Then the team began working on defining the boundaries and goals for the travel management plan and for the individual planning area sub-regions.

For the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan, the goals were written in the form of “Desired Future Conditions” (DFCs), which are brief statements that describe the physical, biological, social and management conditions that are expected to be achieved when the travel management plan has been implemented.

The purpose of DFCs is to define the kinds and amounts of activities or uses (social component) that a given land area can sustain while maintaining the area’s health (physical and biological components) and complying with any special management requirements (management component) that may apply in the area.

Stakeholder comments were an important part of the planning process, especially for identifying social component issues, which were considered by the team when drafting the DFCs for this plan. The DFCs then guided the analysis of the routes within the draft alternative travel network systems.

Summary of Comments—Issues and Concerns

Access and Transportation

- Increased use of roads and trails off of Dave Wood Road and Hwy 90.
- Route proliferation in the past ten years, with a road up every mesa and pull-offs to canyon rims.
- High cost of fuel requires people to stay closer to home, which means using public lands.
- Support the change from open to limited to existing trails for motorized use.

- Support most of BLM’s emergency closures and, if after proper review, those areas are shown to have suffered resource damage, we fully support those areas to remain closed.
- Opposed to the closing of additional trails to motorized traffic in the Dry Creek Areas.
- Some of the trails have not been used by some and could be closed as a result of the travel planning process, which is not okay.
- Eliminating dead-end trails, along with other through trails, could result in hundreds of users at a time on the few trails left.
- Closing trails will create more user conflict.
- Access closed due to private land owners complaining about trails being too close to their property.
- Outfitters who try to convince federal agencies to close trails for authorized uses only.
- Do not want to have access to nearby areas restricted for those of us who use the land gently, and who try to leave sites better than we found them.
- Off-road travel is promoted through firewood cutting and by individuals without permits seeking Christmas trees, firewood or to collect rocks.
- Major increase in off-road travel in just the past 2-3 years.
- Adjacent property owners would like access to public lands.

Cultural and Historic Resources

- Historical and cultural areas need to be protected from resource damage.

Land Health and Threats

- Land is increasingly trashed—even with large household appliances—and eroded over the past several years, reflecting disrespect for themselves and abuse of what belongs to all of us.
- Huge amount of dumping and trash from vehicles being allowed to drive into the Lindcott Canyon area.
- Mining trash is left behind.
- Beautiful areas with great ecosystems deserve to be passed on to future generations in good health.
- Concerns with rapid expansion of noxious and invasive weeds and the effects on fire and runoff patterns.

Lands, Rights-of-Way, and Withdrawals

- Many facilities were constructed as many as 50 years ago, and significant repair and/or replacement will be necessary. Continuous and uninterrupted access to each of these facilities will be required.

Law Enforcement and Public Safety

- Implementing designated routes requires larger staffing and funding commitments.
- Any new plan will be ineffective without increased funding for enforcement and education.
- Regulations are not enforced now.
- Lack of enforcement for a travel plan doesn’t seem to be much deterrence for people who respect decisions.
- Regulations and restrictions needed due to the increase in use and the projected future growth of the surrounding area.

Multiple Use

- Public lands should be managed to benefit all users.
- There is a delicate balance evident here between use and abuse, as a result of human activities and numbers of human visits/uses.

Noise

- Increased traffic is causing noise pollution.

Recreation

- Quiet use opportunities are nonexistent, especially on weekends, and the current uncontrolled access must be halted.
- Allowing dispersed motorized use for camping on both sides of routes will encourage further route proliferation (especially short spur routes) and related impacts, including weed expansion.
- Allowing dispersed ORV use for camping may violate Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act because ground-disturbing activity would occur without the federal agency's ability to first inventory those locations for the presence of potentially significant cultural resources.
- Hikers and horseback riders have access to roads and trails that motorized vehicles cannot go to, even if wanted or allowed.
- Concerns over motorized events.
- Potential loss of existing motorized recreation opportunities might result from the travel management plan.
- Increased use and impact of user-created routes.
- New machines are capable of traveling in amazingly difficult places. This increased capability has led to increased resource damage.
- Maintain primitive four-wheeling experiences.

Socioeconomics

- Continuing regional growth will put additional pressure on public lands to provide mixed uses expected by public.
- The proximity of the area to Montrose with its large population means that there is constant pressure, not just to use the existing travel routes but to expand them.
- The Uncompahgre Plateau has become an increasingly popular destination.
- Additional closings could have an economic impact on the local economy because of the huge OHV community that uses the area for recreation (buy supplies, gas, food, etc. from the Montrose-area merchants).
- Need more environmental education and stewardship programs in schools.

Soils

- Route proliferation is causing increased soil erosion.
- Vehicles traveling the Plateau in muddy conditions cause damage to the soil and encourage erosion.

Vegetation

- Reclamation/restoration is much more difficult and costly than preservation.
- Weed control.
- Preservation of plant habitat.

Water Resources

- Increase in motorized use may impact water quality.

Wildlife, Fish and Aquatic Life

- Preserve wildlife habitat and corridors.
- Increased traffic, increased speeds, and roadway improvements are problematic for wildlife.