

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 South Townsend Avenue
Montrose, CO

DECISION RECORD

CO-150-2008-33 EA

Project Name: Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment
For the Uncompahgre Field Office Dry Creek Travel Management Plan

INTRODUCTION: The Dry Creek Travel Management Planning Area (planning area) is located on the lower east flank of the Uncompahgre Plateau and extends south from 25-Mesa Road to Dave Wood Road. The planning area is within a few miles of Montrose, Olathe, and Delta, Colorado and contains approximately 110,500 acres of public land and approximately 4,500 acres of private land. The decision will be for public lands only and will not apply to private lands without easements.

This Decision regarding Off-Highway Vehicle Area Designations was subject to a 30-day public protest period and 60-day governor's consistency review which ended on June 12, 2009. The Uncompahgre Field Office received three protests; one that had standing but was denied and two that did not have standing and were dismissed. The Directors Protest Resolution Report can be found online at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/protest_resolution/protestreports.html. In accordance with BLM policy, decisions pertaining to OHV Area Designations require an amendment to the Resource Management Plan, and once the decision to amend the plan is final, a separate decision record will be issued, designating routes and other travel management implementation decisions.

The Dry Creek Travel Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (CO-150-2008-33 EA) is available for review at the following web address: <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/ufo.html>

DECISION: It is my Decision to

(1) Change the Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Area Designations on public lands within the Dry Creek Travel Management Planning Area through an amendment to the 1989 Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan.

OHV Area Designation Changes

OHV areas designated as *Open* or *Limited* will be changed to *Limited to designated routes yearlong or with seasonal restrictions*. Routes with seasonal restrictions are closed to all motorized and mechanized travel from December 1 to April 15 or from December 1 to March 30 annually in order to prevent disturbance to wintering big game. These routes are available for motorized and mechanized travel the remainder of the year. Any exceptions to the listed

dates are made by the authorizing officer and are implemented according to appropriate notification and posting, and/or according to other appropriate regulations.

Following are the acreages within each designation:

- Closed (to motorized and mechanized use) – 10,668 acres within Camel Back Wilderness Study Area (WSA)
- Limited to Designated Routes Yearlong or Seasonally – 99,896 acres
- No public lands within the planning area are designated as Open.

No new routes are permitted to be constructed or established unless reviewed and analyzed through a public environmental analysis and subsequently authorized by the BLM. See CO-150-2008-33 EA for maps identifying routes and restrictions.

(2) Approve the following management actions described in CO-150-2008-33 EA.

Travel Use Conditions

The following describe travel use conditions allowed, restricted or limited on routes designated for use by motorized and mechanized modes of travel:

General

Motorized and mechanized travel off of designated routes is not authorized or permitted, except as noted in the description of the Proposed Action.

Emergency and Administrative Use

Any emergency or administrative motorized vehicle or equipment use on BLM-managed lands off of designated routes requires prior notification and approval by an authorized BLM official. Should prior notification not be possible, contact with an authorized BLM official must be made within 72 hours following emergency entry.

Motorized access in Camel Back WSA for emergency and administrative activities will comply with guidance provided under Wilderness Study Area Interim Management Plan guidance. An emergency situation is defined as one where there is a threat to human life, property (including livestock) or public land resources. Emergency activities utilized, such as for law enforcement, will be the minimum necessary to address the situation and rehabilitation and restoration work would follow where needed.

Horseback Riding and Hiking

Horseback riding and hiking are permitted on all public lands within the planning area.

Advanced Technology

Motorized and mechanized modes of travel employing advanced technology must adhere to specified route width restrictions described in the Definitions of Travel Use Categories, Appendix 1 of CO-150-2008-33 EA.

Game Retrieval

The use of wheeled, muscle-powered game carts or wagons to retrieve big game is permitted off of designated routes during Colorado Division of Wildlife authorized big game and mountain lion hunting seasons only. Use of carts and wagons is not allowed within the Camel Back WSA (Sub-Region B).

Parking

In order to minimize resource impacts and help prevent new user-created routes, users are allowed to park motorized or mechanized modes of travel immediately adjacent and parallel to available designated routes for any purpose. Parking is limited to one vehicle-width from the edge of the route. Users are encouraged to park motorized or mechanized modes of travel in already disturbed areas whenever possible, consider safety, and keep routes passable for other users.

Camping

Short spur routes leading to popular dispersed campsites are designated and identified. Dispersed camping is allowed in other areas, consistent with parking requirements described above.

Travel Management Support Facilities

Travel management support facilities are allowed in order to help meet objectives, desired future conditions, and land health standards stated in CO-150-2008-33 EA. Support facilities include staging areas, hardened camping areas, trailheads, and portal signs. These facilities will consist of a maximum of three acres of disturbed surface.

Access onto Public Lands from Private Lands

Motorized and mechanized travel onto public lands from adjacent private lands is limited to public access points and designated routes described in the alternatives. If there is not a designated route, then motorized and mechanized travel is not permitted. User-created or constructed hiking or horseback riding trails from private lands onto public lands are not permitted without appropriate environmental documentation and assessment.

Adaptive Management

The BLM reserves the option to further restrict travel and use by vehicle type or season on any route in order to protect natural or other resources or infrastructure from being impacted by vehicle use during extreme weather conditions, to reduce safety hazards, or in other unforeseeable situations, or to better manage and protect sensitive resources or other values, such as big game or nesting raptors. These actions could include emergency closures of routes, as well as permanent or seasonal route closures or relocations. The latter actions would be taken following appropriate emergency closure or other procedures, and/or after appropriate site-specific National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis.

The designated routes may be modified in order to add, re-designate, relocate or close certain routes, for maintenance needs, or for seasonal or other use restrictions on routes. Such changes would be documented using appropriate BLM Land Use Planning regulations and NEPA procedures. In addition, individuals or organizations may request that the BLM make route status changes based on a variety of criteria, including route or resource conditions,

maintenance needs, existing uses, historical, cultural or economic information, changing needs, ecological issues, and use types and levels.

Enforcement

BLM personnel, including law enforcement, recreation and other resource staff and volunteers are assigned to actively patrol and enforce route designations.

Design Features

The following design features will be implemented and include mitigation measures intended to reduce or eliminate impacts to certain resources.

- BLM re-routes or re-locations necessary for erosion control or other mitigation are limited to a corridor 25 feet wide on either side of the centerline of all designated routes.
- An official agency map showing designated routes will be made available to the public and used to determine if travel is permitted and authorized on a particular route during any part of the year. The user is responsible for determining the correct mode of travel and restriction based on official agency maps

RATIONALE: The changes to existing OHV Area Designations and the additional management actions are intended to balance recreational demands with resource needs, planning goals, compliance with Public Land Health Standards and the Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review. My Decision is based on the findings and analysis in CO-150-2008-33 EA, including supporting documentation and reports, and public participation and involvement in this project.

Implementation of the Proposed Action will not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation, and does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment; this has been documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact. Best available data was used in the preparation of this EA. An Environmental Impact Statement for this project would not, in all likelihood, provide any significant new information.

COMPLIANCE: This decision amends the Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan (1989).

This decision is in compliance with other major laws to minimize environmental impacts to public lands, including: Endangered Species Act of 1973 (P.L. 94-325); Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended (16 U.S.C. 703-712); Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948 (Clean Water Act), as amended (33 U.S.C. Chap. 26); Clean Air Act of 1963, as amended (P.L. 88-206); Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, as amended (P.L. 93-629, 7 U.S.C. 2801 *et seq*); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (P.L. 89-665); Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 (P.L. 86-253); Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended (P.L. 96-95); and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-601).

MONITORING: An Implementation and Monitoring Plan will be prepared and will include measures for route closures or rehabilitation of impacted areas, as well as route signing, trailhead construction, and other implementation activities. Levels and types of uses, visitor experiences and natural resources will be monitored. Monitoring will determine if targeted opportunities and experiences and protection of sensitive resources and land health are being achieved in order to meet desired future conditions. Monitoring tools will include traffic counter data, on-site patrols, surveys, and analysis of use. Actions will then be taken to correct any deficiencies in these goals.

SIGNATURE OF RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL:

 11-30-09
Barbara Sharrow Date
Field Manager
Uncompahgre Field Office

DECISION

It is my decision to amend Off-Highway Vehicle area designations in the Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan as described above.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

 12/01/09
Dave Huhsaker Date
Acting State Director