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Contact: Erin Curtis, Public Information Officer, (970) 244-3097

BLM Seeks Public Comment on Bridgeport Access to Dominguez Canyon Wilderness

Grand Junction, CO -- The Bureau of Land Management Grand Junction Field Office will hold a public meeting to gather input on options to allow safe horse and pedestrian access into Dominguez Canyon from the Bridgeport Trailhead.

Dominguez Canyon is one of the key attractions within the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area and Dominguez Canyon Wilderness.

The current trail leading from the parking lot off of Bridgeport Road into Dominguez Canyon Wilderness runs alongside Union Pacific railroad tracks for about two miles. At one point the trail crosses the tracks at an area where trains stop – sometimes for several hours – to allow other trains to pass. Hikers have been reported to go through or under train cars when stopped, which officials say is an extremely hazardous thing to do.

Officials with Union Pacific Railroad and Mesa County have prepared a feasibility study to determine engineering issues for constructing the various alternatives. The BLM will begin now to conduct an environmental assessment to examine potential options. This assessment will likely analyze the construction of a bridge over the railroad tracks at potential locations. The analysis will also likely analyze the option of tunneling under the railroad tracks, as well as reasonable alternatives recommended by the public.

“The primary purpose for this action is to provide safe public access into the NCA and Wilderness,” said Catherine Robertson, manager of the Grand Junction Field Office. “We haven’t experienced any accidents and we want to keep it that way as use increases in the area.”

At the public meeting, the BLM will provide information about the alternatives and gather comments. The meeting will be held on June 16 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Mesa County Administration Building’s multipurpose room in the Old Courthouse at 544 Rood Avenue in Grand Junction. Members of the public can access a map showing the various options at <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo.html>.

BLM is asking the public to provide information that can assist in the development of the environmental assessment. Comments should be as specific as possible and cite any data or other information that would assist in developing the most realistic range of alternatives and the best-informed environmental assessment.

Comments can also be provided by email to gjfo_webmail@blm.gov (please put “Bridgeport Public Access” in the subject line). Comments may also be mailed to Chris Ham, Bridgeport Public Access, 2815 H Road, Grand Junction, CO 81506. For more information, please contact the BLM Grand Junction Field Office at 970-244-3000. Comments should be provided by July 5, 2010.

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Encompassing nearly 210,000 acres of BLM-administered public lands on the western slope of Colorado, the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area is one of the BLM's 16 National Conservation Areas in the West. National Conservation Areas are part of the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System, a unique network of special places that serve as scenic showcases for the conservation, protection, and restoration elements of BLM's multiple use mission. These treasured landscapes make up more than 27 million of the 253 million total acres of western public lands managed by the BLM in the western United States.

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