

1.1

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE *Providing Comments for Draft RMP/EIS*

Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Ave, Montrose, CO 81401
Office hours are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm
Phone: (970) 240-5300 | TDD (970) 240-5366
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The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) is revising the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Uncompahgre planning area. The Uncompahgre RMP will set forth a plan of action for managing resources and uses for the next twenty years under the BLM's dual mandate of *multiple use* and *sustained yield*. The Draft RMP/EIS is now available for your review and comment.

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE COMMENTS

During this comment period, many public land users, organizations, and businesses will want to provide comments to help in the Uncompahgre RMP planning effort. The best and most useful comments are substantive comments; that is, those that have substance. Try not to provide comments that offer opinion only.

Substantive comments at this stage of the RMP do one or more of the following:

- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in the EIS;
- Question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis;
- Present new information relevant to the analysis;
- Present reasonable alternatives other than those analyzed in the EIS;
- Cause changes or revisions in one or more of the alternatives;
- Recommend specific changes to the landscape or management actions.

TYPES OF COMMENTS TO AVOID

Comments that are not substantive include:

- Comments in favor of or against an action without any reasoning (such as "I don't like" without providing any rationale);
- Comments that only agree or disagree with BLM policy;
- Comments without justification or supporting data (such as "allow more grazing");
- Comments that don't pertain to the planning area (such as "the government should eliminate all dams throughout the west");
- Comments that take the form of vague, open-ended questions.

Please make an effort to provide substantive comments, which will be of greatest benefit to this planning effort. Thank you for your interest in the Uncompahgre RMP.

UFO Planning Webpage:
www.UFORMP.com

Mail comments to:
RMP Project Manager
2465 S. Townsend Ave
Montrose, CO 81401

Email comments to:
UFORMP@blm.gov

Email is the preferred method



BLM

1.1—Providing Comments

2.1

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Uncompahgre RMP Planning*

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UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) manages over 883,000 acres of public lands and 2,344,844 acres of subsurface mineral estate in six southwestern Colorado counties (Delta, Gunnison, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel). The field office includes the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area (NCA) and Wilderness and portions of the Dominguez-Escalante NCA, Dominguez Canyon Wilderness, as well as four river systems (the Gunnison, San Miguel, Dolores and Uncompahgre).



The varied topography within the UFO ranges from salt desert shrub and lowland riparian (4,701 feet) to red rock desert to piñon-juniper woodland up to sub-alpine forest on Storm King Mountain (11,449 feet). These lands contain a wealth of resources and opportunities for public use and enjoyment.

Management of the UFO is currently guided by two RMPs: the **1985 San Juan/San Miguel RMP** and the **1989 Uncompahgre Basin RMP**. Both RMPs have been amended multiple times in order to reflect changing resource conditions and issues within the UFO and surrounding area.

UNCOMPAHGRE PLANNING AREA

The Uncompahgre planning area is the portion of the UFO about which the BLM will make decisions during RMP planning. The planning area is 675,800 surface acres and does not include the Gunnison Gorge NCA or Dominguez-Escalante NCA, both of which are managed under separate RMPs.

The municipalities of Delta, Montrose, and Ouray, and the towns of Austin, Bowie, Cedaredge, Crawford, Hotchkiss, Maher, Mountain Village, Naturita, Norwood, Nucla, Olathe, Orchard City, Paonia, Paradox, Ridgway, Somerset, Sawpit, and Telluride are near or within the planning area. Typical of many western public lands, the planning area has experienced increased use and an expanding wildland-urban interface. In fact, Montrose is one of the nation's fastest-growing counties.

Major **recreational opportunities** within the planning area include hiking, horseback riding, camping, rafting, fishing, biking, Nordic skiing, OHV riding, snowmobiling, sightseeing, and hunting. **Non-recreational uses** include livestock and grazing activities, forest resource activities, mineral exploration and development, administrative purposes, and rights-of-way.

BLM

2.1—Uncompahgre RMP Planning



LAND USE PLANNING IN THE BLM

The BLM engages in land use planning in order to ensure that public lands are managed in accordance with the intent of Congress, under the principles of *multiple use* and *sustained yield*. Land use plans are one of the primary tools guiding BLM management activities in support of this dual mandate. In addition, effective planning creates enhanced opportunities for a variety of recreational and non-recreational public land uses.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

The BLM believes that public involvement is central to crafting a land use plan that reflects local, regional, and national values and receives widespread support, and is actively seeking the participation of local communities and government agencies in this planning effort.

The BLM has seventeen Cooperating Agencies to help in the planning effort. Cooperating Agencies include federal, state and local agencies, including counties and some communities.

The BLM is holding public open house meetings during December 2013 in Hotchkiss, Delta, Montrose, Ridgway, Norwood, and Naturita to help inform the public of the availability of the Draft RMP/EIS for a 90-day review and comment period. **It is not necessary to attend a scoping session in order to submit a comment.**

UFO Planning Webpage:

www.UFORMP.com

**Email comments to
(preferred method):**

UFORMP@blm.gov

Mail comments to:

**RMP Project Manager
2465 S. Townsend Ave
Montrose, CO 81401**

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES IN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS

The Draft RMP/EIS has four potential management alternatives. It also considers one subset to an alternative. These are:

Alternative A is the No Action alternative. This alternative continues current management direction and prevailing conditions derived from existing planning documents. Goals, objectives allowable uses and restrictions for BLM-administered lands and mineral estate would not change.

Alternative B emphasizes improving, rehabilitating, and restoring resources and sustaining the ecological integrity of habitats for all priority plant, wildlife, and fish species, while allowing appropriate development scenarios for allowable uses (such as mineral leasing, locatable mineral development, recreation, communication sites, and livestock grazing). Alternative B also has a partial alternative (B.1) within it, which is specific to oil and gas leasing and development in the North Fork and Smith Fork drainages of the Gunnison River.

Alternative C has a mix of uses and restrictions that emphasize maximizing utilization of resources while mitigating impacts on land health. The appropriate development scenarios for allowable uses would emphasize maximizing resource production in an environmentally responsible manner, while maintaining the basic protection needed to sustain resources.

Alternative D is the agency-preferred alternative, which emphasizes balancing resources and resource use among competing human interests, land uses, and the conservation of natural and cultural resource values, while sustaining and enhancing ecological integrity across the landscape, including plant, wildlife, and fish habitat. This alternative incorporates a balanced level of protection, restoration, enhancement, and use of resources and services to meet ongoing programs and land uses.

The **Proposed RMP** could be a mix of uses, allocations and restrictions from the alternatives; it does not need to be a complete alternative identified in the Draft RMP/EIS. The Final RMP could have actions from a combination of the alternatives.

2.2

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE **RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET** *Preliminary Planning Criteria*

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SETTING THE STAGE TO PLAN

BLM staff developed preliminary resource management planning criteria prior to working on the RMP. Planning criteria establish constraints, guidelines, and standards for the planning process. They help planners define the scope of the process and estimate the extent of data collection and analysis.

Planning criteria are based on standards prescribed by applicable laws and regulations, agency guidance, results of consultation and coordination with the public, other federal, state and local agencies, Indian tribes, analysis of information pertinent to the planning area, and professional judgment.



THE PLANNING CRITERIA...

The proposed RMP will be in compliance with FLPMA and all other applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

Impacts from the management alternatives considered in the revised RMP will be analyzed in an EIS developed in accordance with regulations at 43 CFR 1610 and 40 CFR 1500.

Lands covered in the RMP will be public land and split estates managed by BLM. No decisions will be made relative to non-BLM administered lands.

For program specific guidance of land use planning level decisions, the process will follow the Land Use Planning Manual 1601 and Handbook H-1601-1, Appendix C.

Broad-based public participation will be an integral part of the planning and EIS process.

The planning team will work cooperatively with the State of Colorado, tribal governments, county and municipal governments, other federal agencies, the South West RAC, cooperating agencies and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals.

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Decisions in the plan will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, and federal agencies as long as the decisions are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law, and regulations applicable to public lands.

BLM will consult with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). The RMP will recognize the State's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife.

The RMP will recognize the Office of Surface Mining's responsibility and authority to regulate coal activities.

BLM will recognize the State's responsibility for permitting related to oil and gas activities and in regulating air quality impacts.

BLM will recognize the State's responsibility for permitting related to uranium, coal, and sand and gravel activities, and in regulating water quality impacts.

The National Sage-grouse Strategy requires that impacts to sagebrush habitat and sagebrush-dependent wildlife species be analyzed and considered in BLM land use planning efforts for public lands with sagebrush habitat in the planning area.

The RMP will recognize valid existing rights.

The planning process will incorporate Colorado's Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

Wilderness Study Areas will continue to be managed under the Interim Management Policy (IMP) for Lands under Wilderness Review until Congress either designates all or portions of the WSA as wilderness or releases the lands from further wilderness consideration. It is no longer the policy of the BLM to make formal determinations regarding wilderness character, to designate additional WSAs through the RMP process, or to manage any lands other than existing WSAs in accordance with the Wilderness IMP.

The planning process will involve American Indian tribal governments and will provide strategies for the protection of recognized traditional uses.

Any location-specific information pertaining to cultural resources (either map, description, or photo) is proprietary to the BLM and will not become the property of any contractors working on the EIS or attached to any document (paper or electronic), nor is this information subject to any public release or FOIA requests (36CFR 7.18).

The RMP will include adaptive management criteria and protocol to deal with future issues.

A reasonable foreseeable development scenario for fluid minerals, and reports for uranium and coal, will be developed from analysis of past activity, production, and other sources, which will aid in developing alternatives and in the environmental consequences analysis.

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3.1

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET

Recreation and Visitor Services

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RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES ABOUND

Public lands within the planning area support a variety of land, water, and snow activities, including camping, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, rock climbing, off-road vehicle driving, and target shooting.



Local rivers and streams offer ample opportunities for boating and cold water fishing, and attract

high visitation from across the state and nationally. Migrating and resident wildlife provide plentiful opportunities for observation, photography, and hunting, when visitation in the area peaks.

VISITATION AND LAND USE

The greatest numbers of recreational visits occur on BLM lands adjacent to communities. The cities and towns of Montrose, Delta, Norwood, Paonia, Crawford, Hotchkiss, Cedaredge, Orchard City, Olathe, Ridgway, Telluride, Naturita, and Nucla are all near public lands commonly used as "backyard" recreation areas by local residents. This use continues to grow exponentially, along with growth in the communities themselves. The communities benefit directly from the visitation and tourism associated with public lands.

In fact, recreation has emerged as the predominant activity on local BLM lands and national forests. Most data on public land use and activities is a statistical approximation, relying heavily on field observations and the professional judgment of recreation staff. It is estimated that the UFO receives around 472,050 visits per year (2012 data).

RECREATION MANAGEMENT AREAS

BLM land use plans designate *Special Recreation Management Areas* (SRMAs) and *Extensive Recreation Management Areas* (ERMAs). The number and type of RMA varies by alternative in the Draft RMP/EIS.

SRMAs are areas where recreation is the principle management focus, and BLM management is directed toward fulfilling the commitment to provide high quality recreation opportunities and specific types of experiences.

ERMAs are areas where the BLM protects recreational activities and associated recreational settings but not the quantity or quality of opportunities (e.g., the number of trails or how desirable they are). This type of custodial or "dispersed" recreation management offers little in the way of visitor services or developed recreational facilities.

In areas not designated as SRMAs or ERMAs, the BLM does not protect either recreational opportunities or recreational settings.

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DEVELOPED RECREATION FACILITIES

In certain locations, the BLM has constructed recreation sites and facilities in order to enhance recreation opportunities, protect resources, manage activities, and reduce user conflicts. These infrastructure developments range from campgrounds to simple bulletin boards at trailheads.

Developed recreation sites occur mainly along the San Miguel River SRMA and in the Dolores River SRMA. There are several campsites along the San Miguel River corridor which have boat ramps, changing rooms, cabanas and picnic tables, grills, kiosks, parking areas, and toilets. The Dolores River SRMA has picnic tables, cabanas, parking area, boat ramp and a visitor informational kiosk site.

There are other dispersed staging areas and trailheads in the planning area that consist of kiosks, picnic tables and parking areas as well as one developed site along the Uncompahgre River with cabanas and picnic tables, informational signs, benches, toilet and a non-motorized paved trail.



SPECIAL RECREATION PERMITS

The BLM requires special recreation permits (SRPs) for commercial uses, competitive events, organized groups, and recreation use within certain special areas in the UFO, including rivers, backcountry, and camping areas. Most SRPs issued by the UFO are for river activities and upland hunting outfitting.

The UFO currently has approximately fifty commercial permits issued, which include guided fishing, white water rafting, vehicle shuttles, big and small game hunting, mountain lion hunting, horseback trail rides, jeep and motorcycle tours, camping, archery tournaments and mountain bike rides. Fifteen percent of SRP fees are expended on program administration, with the remainder going toward visitor services, monitoring, and maintenance.

The BLM wants your input...

Which of the areas identified within the draft alternatives should be designated and managed as SRMAs and which as ERMAs?

Should the BLM develop recreation facilities in association with SRMAs and improve access to recreational opportunities?

The Draft RMP identifies management and restrictions on SRPs. Which of these are appropriate?

Should the BLM prohibit target shooting in specific areas? If so, where?

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3.2

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET

Travel Management

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A VITAL LINK FOR MANY

Travel and transportation are an integral part of virtually every activity that occurs on BLM-administered public lands. Recreation, management of livestock, wildlife, and commodity resources, rights-of-way, access to private inholdings, maintenance of electronic sites, and the day-to-day management and monitoring of the UFO all rely on effective travel management planning.



Motorized travel in the UFO ranges from standard passenger vehicles driving on maintained roads to off-highway vehicles (OHVs) operating on primitive roads and trails. OHVs include off-road motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, utility terrain vehicles, jeeps, specialized 4x4 trucks, and snowmobiles. Mountain bikes are the predominant mechanized vehicle, while other modes of travel include cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, pack animal driving, hiking, boating, hang-gliding, paragliding, ballooning, and wheelchairs.

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT DESIGNATIONS

Consistent with BLM policy, the Draft RMP/EIS designates areas within the UFO as *open, limited to designated roads and trails*, and *closed to mechanized and/or motorized use*. The Draft RMP/EIS also has seasonal closures in combination with the travel designations.

The type travel designation in a particular area varies by alternative, and is driven by the theme of the alternative, and goals or objectives for each of the resources and uses. The Draft RMP/EIS has management guidance for areas that are limited to existing routes until comprehensive travel management planning has been completed, which will occur after the RMP is approved.

The Draft RMP/EIS does not have route-by-route travel management decisions except for plans that have already been completed). The UFO has route designations on over ~120,000 acres; these decisions will be carried forward in the preferred alternative. The Draft RMP/EIS identifies travel management planning areas and provides a planning sequence, as well as criteria and constraints for road and trail selection and identification.

BLM

3.2—Travel Management



WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANNING?

Comprehensive travel management is the proactive planning and on-the-ground management of road and trail travel networks. It addresses all resource aspects (recreational, traditional, casual, agricultural, industrial, educational, cultural, etc.) and accompanying modes and conditions of travel on the public lands, including motorized, mechanized, and muscle-powered uses.

WHAT IS BLM COLORADO'S OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE POLICY?

Both Executive Order 11644 and the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR Part 8340) require the BLM to designate all public lands as **open**, **closed**, or **limited** for OHV use. It is now BLM Colorado policy (CO-IM-2007-20) to restrict all OHV use within limited areas to **designated routes**, rather than designating areas as limited to existing routes.

As a result of policy, the BLM is tasked with identifying specific route designations in the planning area, along with accompanying modes of travel. When defining or delineating the travel management network during the land use planning process is not practical due to controversy, incomplete data, the size or complexity of the area, or other restraints, a preliminary network must be identified and a process established to select a final travel management network.

There will be no motorized cross-country travel except in areas designated as "open". Open areas will be limited to a size that is geographically identifiable and realistically manageable, but is large enough to offer participants a high quality motorized riding/driving experience.

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT TRAVEL MANAGEMENT IN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS

The Alternatives Matrix in Chapter 2 ("Alternatives"), beginning on page 2-300, describes comprehensive travel and transportation management decisions, including travel area designations.

Appendix M ("Travel Management") describes the process for future comprehensive travel management planning, including public participation, use and concerns of routes, environmental concerns, and other factors for consideration, including guidelines for designation.

Appendix A has maps of area travel restrictions.

Chapter 4, Impacts Analysis, section 4.4.5 (Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management), beginning on page 4-323, describes the impacts of proposed travel management decisions. Travel management impacts are also described in several resource and resource use sections of Chapter 4.

The BLM wants your input...

Where, if at all, should the BLM leave areas "open" for OHV use? Where should BLM close areas to OHV use?

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www.UFORMP.com

Email comments to (preferred method):
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3.3

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Visual Resource Management*

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WHAT IS VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT?

The BLM's *visual resource management* (VRM) system provides a way to inventory and analyze scenic values in order to determine appropriate levels of management. VRM serves as a tool to identify and map essential landscape settings in line with public preferences and recreation-related experiences now and in the future. The VRM system helps to ensure that actions taking place today will benefit the visual qualities associated with BLM landscapes, while protecting those visual resources for the future.

Management classes are assigned based upon the visual resource inventory, as well as consideration for other land uses.

BLM VISUAL RESOURCE INVENTORY CLASS OBJECTIVES

Class I: Preserve existing character of landscape; level of change to characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.

Class II: Retain existing character of landscape; level of change to characteristic landscape should be low.

Class III: Partially retain existing character of landscape; level of change to characteristic landscape should be moderate.

Class IV: Provide for management activities which require major modification of existing character of landscape. Level of change to characteristic landscape can be high.

The inventory consists of 1) a Scenic Quality Evaluation, 2) a Sensitivity Level Analysis, and 3) a Delineation of Distance Zones. BLM lands are assigned one of four classes based on these three components.



THE LAY OF THE LAND

The planning area falls within two physiographic provinces (the Colorado Plateau and Southern Rocky Mountains), and as a result, has diverse topography, geology, soil, flora, and fauna. The topography ranges from lowland riparian along the Dolores River (4,706 feet) to red rock desert to pinyon-juniper woodland up to sub-alpine forest on Storm King Mountain (11,449 feet).

The area features extensive stretches of rugged terrain, deep canyons, spectacular river valleys, dramatic cliffs and mesas, and other prominent geologic features, and supports a variety of vegetative communities, including desert scrub, riparian, sagebrush parks, pinyon-juniper woodlands, mountain shrub, and ponderosa pine and fir-spruce forests.



AN INCREASE IN VISUAL IMPACTS

Impacts to visual resources in the planning area are increasing because of increased use of the planning area's resources.

Growing pressure is being placed on visual resources as a result of activities such as fire management, utility corridors, roads and trails, communication sites, pipelines, mineral development, livestock grazing, water tanks, and subdivisions. Public concern is also on the rise regarding preservation of visual and scenic qualities for open space, recreation, and as a backdrop for residential areas.



VISUAL RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

In response to increasing concerns from local communities, as well as with outdated and incomplete data in the existing RMPs, a VRM inventory and assessment of the planning area has been completed with input from adjacent communities and local, state, and federal agencies. The assessment is currently available to review at the Montrose Public Lands Center.

MANAGEMENT ADEQUACY

Current visual resource classes were prescribed in the 1985 and 1989 UFO RMPs. The classes are now insufficient to be used as a management tool because of data inconsistencies and the outdated nature of the class designations. With increases in land use and tourism, scenic values and visual open space has become more important. Current VRM objectives have been maintained in some areas, while other areas are experiencing degradation.

Preservation of sensitive viewsheds will continue to compete with other land use allocations and impacts, including urban and energy development, infrastructure needs, recreation, and various other surface activities.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Because of the Uncompahgre RMP revision, all land within the planning area was reevaluated and assigned a Visual Resource Inventory Class. While visual values are important, they will not be the only element considered when establishing management direction.

The Draft RMP/EIS assigns VRM objectives and boundaries that vary between alternatives, while maintaining the scenic quality and natural aesthetics of river canyons, open space landscapes, cultural landscapes, and other areas with high-quality visual resources that are considered important as social, economic, and environmental benefits. Resources and uses would be managed in accordance with VRM classifications.

In accordance with the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1), VRM classes should correspond to recreation management objectives and setting prescriptions for recreation management zones within Special Recreation Management Areas. In addition, the RMP revision will need to address BLM guidance requiring all wilderness study areas to be managed as VRM Class I areas.

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3.4

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Cultural & Paleontological Resources*

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CULTURAL RESOURCES IN THE PLANNING AREA

Public lands within the Uncompahgre planning area contain a multitude of cultural resource sites. These special places include prehistoric habitation camps, rock art sites and proto-historic Ute wikiup camps. In addition, historic mining camps, homestead settlements, and town sites can be found throughout the Uncompahgre Plateau.

CULTURAL SITE VISITS AND EDUCATION

Hikers and other recreational users make the greatest number of visits to cultural resource sites. Many of these visitors have learned something about the prehistory of a site prior to their visit, through a variety of educational resources.

Educational and public outreach opportunities are critical in helping to preserve for future generations the rich cultural heritage that cultural sites offer. It has been proven that vandalism of sites is less likely to occur following educational exposure, as the public begins to take ownership in and value cultural resources, rather than accidentally or intentionally damaging or destroying them.



BLM

3.4—Cultural & Paleontological Resources





DEVELOPED CULTURAL RESOURCE FACILITIES

The BLM has created repositories for collections of cultural materials. These facilities support public education and awareness of our rich cultural heritage. The Anasazi Heritage Center in Dolores, Colorado welcomes visitors and research scholars to view the museum and collections housed there.

The planning area has several cultural sites with trail guides and information brochures to enhance the public's awareness of the cultural history and prehistoric sites within the canyons and river drainages.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Public lands within the planning area are well known for preserving fossil-bearing sites. Several "World Class" fossil localities are found here, including the Bedrock dinosaur exposure and the San Miguel fossil fish locality. Recent inventories have detailed more than a dozen new fossil sites, including both dinosaur bones and preserved trackways. Public participation is vital to help preserve these irreplaceable scientific treasures for future generations.

FOSSIL APPRECIATION FACILITIES

The BLM currently has no developed sites for viewing fossils, and there are no sites with ongoing excavations. There are several known fossil exposures and trackways being considered for public interpretation.

CULTURAL RESOURCE STEWARDS

The BLM need volunteers to serve as site stewards, helping to protect fragile cultural and paleontological resources. For hikers and backcountry travelers, there are many sites that need monitoring for suspicious behavior, vandalism and looting. Please consider signing up for a short training and put your name on the list of site stewards to help protect your public land and its cultural resources.

CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS

The Draft RMP identifies management that will preserve and protect significant cultural resources to ensure that they are available for appropriate purposes by present and future generations (i.e., for research, education, traditional uses and preservation of cultural heritage). Similarly, management of paleontological resources would identify, protect, and manage these resources for the preservation, interpretation, and scientific uses by present and future generations.

The BLM wants your input...

Does the identified management provide for protection and appropriate use allocation of cultural and paleontological areas and sites?

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4.1

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Wilderness and WSAs*

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The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) is revising the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Uncompahgre planning area. The Uncompahgre RMP will set forth a plan of action for managing resources and uses for the next twenty years under the BLM's dual mandate of *multiple use* and *sustained yield*. The Draft RMP/EIS is now available for your review and comment.

WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS (WSAs)

Under the *Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)*, wilderness preservation is part of the BLM's multiple use mandate, and wilderness is recognized as part of a spectrum of resource values to be considered during land use planning. Under the wilderness review program, existing designated WSAs are managed in accordance with the BLM Manual 6330. The status of these WSAs will not change as a result of the Uncompahgre RMP revision.



WSAs contain wilderness characteristics and are managed to preserve those values until Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them for other uses. This applies to the five WSAs in the UFO: Camel Back (10,402 acres), Adobe Badlands (10,425 acres), Dolores River Canyon (13,354 acres within the UFO), Sewemup (1,803 acres within the UFO), and Tabeguache Creek Area (7,748 acres).

THE BLM ENTERS THE WILDERNESS ARENA

In 1964, the United States Congress passed the *Wilderness Act* in order to preserve a representative sample of public lands containing ecosystems in their natural state for the benefit of future generations. Until 1976, most lands considered for and designated as wilderness were managed by the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service.

With the passage of FLPMA in 1976, Congress directed the BLM to inventory, study, and recommend public lands under its jurisdiction for wilderness designation. In 1991, the BLM issued a Record of Decision that included wilderness recommendations for WSAs throughout the state of Colorado. Through this process, the Camel Back and Adobe Badlands WSAs were recommended as not suitable, and the Dolores River Canyon WSA, Tabeguache Creek Area (WSA), and almost all of the Sewemup WSA were recommended as suitable.

Under the 1993 Colorado Wilderness Act (H.R. 631), the "Tabeguache Area" became a "congressionally designated management area." The BLM is mandated to manage the area to protect its wilderness values. The area is closed to mineral entry, and mechanized and motorized travel is prohibited.

BLM

4.1—Wilderness and WSAs



What characteristics are found in a WSA?

A WSA has characteristics described in The Wilderness Act:

Naturalness: The area generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

Outstanding Opportunities: The area has either outstanding opportunities for solitude, or outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

Size: The area is at least 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

Supplemental Values: The area may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

FLPMA PROVISIONS FOR INTERIM MANAGEMENT OF WSAs

- WSAs must be managed so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness.
- Activities that are permitted in WSAs must be temporary uses that create no new surface disturbance, nor involve permanent placement of structures.
- Grazing, mining, and mineral leasing uses that existed on October 21, 1976 may continue in the same manner and degree as on that date, even if this would impair wilderness suitability of the WSAs.
- WSAs may not be closed to appropriation under the mining laws to preserve their wilderness character.
- Valid existing rights must be recognized.
- WSAs must be managed to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

Established under the authority of sections 603(c) and 202 of FLPMA, the UFO's five WSAs are being managed to preserve their wilderness values according to the BLM Manual 6330, and will continue to be managed in that manner until Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them for other uses. Activities that would impair wilderness suitability are prohibited in WSAs.

MANAGEMENT IDENTIFIED IN THE DRAFT RMP

The Draft RMP identifies management for Wilderness Study Areas, which varies somewhat between alternatives while meeting the objectives of FLPMA provisions and maintaining characteristics described in the Wilderness Act. The Draft RMP also identifies management if Congress releases any Wilderness Study Area from wilderness consideration.



The BLM wants your input...

If congress releases any Wilderness Study Area from wilderness consideration, how should it be managed?

UFO Planning Webpage:
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4.2

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Lands with Wilderness Characteristics*

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LANDS WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

Lands with wilderness characteristics, while a seemingly new concept to many people, have been recognized as a distinct resource since the passage of the ***Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976***, and should be considered equally along with all other resources present in a Field Office.

The FLPMA requires the BLM to maintain, on a continuing basis, an inventory of all public lands and their resources and other values, including wilderness characteristics.

Wilderness characteristics consist of:

- Sufficient size – the area is ¹roadless, has over 5,000 acres of contiguous BLM lands, or areas adjacent to wilderness areas or WSAs that are less than 5,000 acres;
- Naturalness -- Lands and resources exhibit a high degree of naturalness and the imprint of human activity is substantially unnoticeable;
- Outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.
- Supplemental values -- ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. These values are not required to be present in order for an area to possess wilderness characteristics.

¹Roadless is defined as the absence of roads which have been improved and maintained by mechanical means to insure relatively regular and continuous use. A way maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road.

INVENTORY

The Uncompahgre Field Office inventoried public lands to determine if they have wilderness characteristics. Inventoried in 2010 and updated the inventory in 2015.

Assessment:

- The BLM assessed public lands outside of designated wilderness, existing WSAs, and the Tabeguache Area;
- The BLM reviewed original 1980 wilderness inventories as well as lands proposed by the public and BLM staff.

INVENTORY REPORT

The 2015 inventory report (*Uncompahgre Planning Area Wilderness Characteristics Inventory: 2015 Update*) is available on the Planning web site at http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/ufo/uncompahgre_rmp.html, or at uformp.com.



Camel Back WSA Adjacent

BLM

4.2—Lands with Wilderness Characteristics



CONSIDERED IN DRAFT RMP/EIS

Management of lands with wilderness characteristics is considered in each of the action alternatives (B, C, and D). The first table shows the number of areas and the number or acres within each alternative.

Alternative	A	B	C	Preferred (D)
Number of areas managed for wilderness characteristics	0	7	0	3
Total acres	0	42,150	0	18,320
Percent of BLM Surface		6.2		2.7

The second table shows the areas and associated acres within each alternative.

A	B	C	Preferred (D)
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Camel Back WSA Adjacent (6,950 acres) ▪ Dry Creek Basin (7,030 acres) ▪ Roc Creek (5,480 acres) ▪ Adobe Badlands WSA Adjacent (6,180 acres) ▪ Dolores River Canyon WSA Adjacent (550 acres) ▪ Lower Tabeguache/Campbell Creek (11,060 acres) ▪ Shavano Creek (4,900 acres) 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Camel Back WSA Adjacent (6,950 acres) ▪ Dry Creek Basin (7,030 acres) ▪ Roc Creek (4,340 acres)



Roc Creek



Dry Creek Basin

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4.3

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Wild and Scenic Rivers*

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WHEN IS A STREAM A RIVER?
In the WSR Act, a river refers to a flowing body of water or estuary or a section, portion, or tributary thereof, including rivers, streams, creeks, runs, kills, rills, and small lakes.

Congress authorized the National Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) Act in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Act safeguards the special character of these rivers, while allowing for their appropriate use and development, and encouraging river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in river protection.

What is the WSR study process?

The Act requires the BLM to assess river segments under its management

as part of its resource management planning process. The study and designation of rivers consists of a multi-step process: **eligibility** → **suitability** → **congressional action**. Only Congress or (under certain circumstances) the Secretary of the Interior may designate a river for inclusion in the WSR system. The UFO currently does not manage any WSR-designated segments.

What makes a segment eligible for WSR consideration?

The first step in the WSR study process is to determine which river segments meet eligibility criteria. To be eligible, a river segment must be **free-flowing** and possess one or more **outstandingly remarkable values** (ORV).

ORVs may be scenic, recreational, geological, fish or wildlife related, historic, cultural, botanical, hydrological, or paleontological. ORVs must be of a quality or scarcity that makes them unique, rare, or exemplary within the region. In addition, rivers must have sufficient water quality to support those values.

What did the UFO study determine?

During the inventory phase, BLM identified 174 river segments for review.

After evaluating these segments, 28 segments were determined to be free-flowing and possessed one or more ORVs necessary to meet WSR eligibility requirements. In addition, one segment of the Dolores River was deemed eligible by a neighboring field office (Tres Rios). The northernmost portion of this segment is managed by the UFO, resulting in 29 eligible UFO river segments.

PRELIMINARY RIVER CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES

Wild: Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted.

Scenic: Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.

Recreational: Those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

BLM

4.3—Wild and Scenic Rivers



The suitability phase addresses several management considerations, including:

- Should the river’s free- flowing character, water quality, and ORVs be protected, or are one or more other uses important enough to warrant doing otherwise?
- Is protection of identified ORVs within management control? River segments with adjacent private lands may not be appropriate for WSR designation.
- Will historical or existing rights be adversely affected?
- Will the river’s free-flowing character, water quality, and ORVs be protected through designation? Is it the best method for protecting the river corridor? The benefits and impacts of WSR designation must be evaluated, and alternative protection methods considered.
- Is there a demonstrated commitment to protect the river by any non-federal entities who may be partially responsible for implementing protective management?

What is meant by “free-flowing”?

Free-flowing means that there are no dams or diversions along a river segment that impound a significant amount of water for extended periods. It is not necessary for a river to have a completely natural flow regime to be considered free-flowing. For example, Congress has designated WSR segments immediately below major water storage projects.

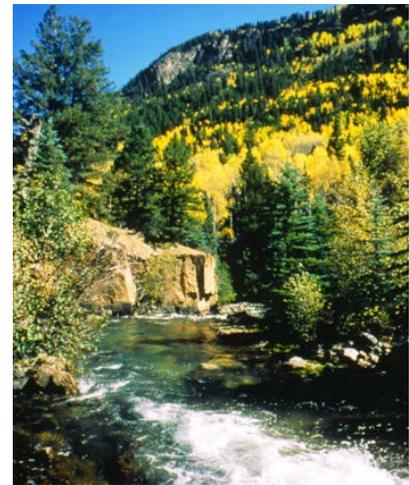
Suitability Evaluation:

The BLM evaluated *suitability* as part of the RMP. During the suitability phase stakeholders helped BLM to:

- analyze the positive and negative impacts of various designations for each segment;
- identify how stream-related values can best be protected and enhanced;
- consider potential impacts to other values such as water supply;
- consider alternatives to WSR designation for managing water-related values.

How WSR was Considered in the Draft RMP:

Alternative	A	B	C	Preferred (D)
29 Eligible Segments (154.1 miles)				
Suitable Segments	-	29	0	16
Total Miles of Suitable	-	154.1	0	104.6



Q & A:

Do the BLM’s WSR determinations create any federal water rights to protect the ORVs?

No. A federal water right is not created unless Congress designates a stream segment and identifies the need for a federal water right.

Where can I get more in-depth information?

The website www.rivers.gov is an excellent resource for detailed information related to the National WSR System, including the WSRA, the eligibility and suitability processes, and agency guidance.

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4.4

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Areas of Critical Environmental Concern*

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Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, commonly known as **ACECs**, are public lands where special management is required in order to protect the area’s values. To be eligible for designation as an ACEC, an area must meet criteria for both **relevance** and **importance**. An ACEC possesses significant historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish or wildlife resources (including habitat, communities, or species), natural processes or systems, or natural hazards. In addition, the significance of these values and resources must be substantial in order to satisfy the importance criteria.

ACECs IN THE PLANNING AREA

The Uncompahgre planning area currently contains five ACECs, which were designated in the two existing RMPs:

PROTECTING SIGNIFICANT VALUES

Restrictions arising from ACEC designation are proposed during the final RMP revision and are part of the final decision process. Restrictions are designed to protect the values and/or serve the purposes for which the designation was made. Management prescriptions are developed expressly to protect the important and relevant values of an area. Such measures would not be necessary or prescribed if the critical and important features were not present.

ACEC	AREA (ACRES)	VALUES
Fairview	210	Large population of a listed endangered plant species and significant populations of a candidate plant species.
Needle Rock	80	A volcanic geologic structure with high-value scientific, interpretive, and scenic characteristics.
Adobe Badlands	6,370	Consists of Mancos Shale hills and flats which, through wind and water erosion, have formed unique scenic formations. The area also contains known and potential habitat for several endangered and threatened plant species.
San Miguel River	22,780	Managed for unique, high quality riparian vegetation resources, the scenic values of the corridor, and preservation of relic riparian communities.
Tabeguache Creek	560	Has important archaeological sites that show a relationship between the Fremont and Anasazi cultures.

BLM

4.4—Areas of Critical Environmental Concern



REVIEW OF EXISTING AND NEW ACECS

As part of the RMP revision, the BLM reevaluated existing ACECs to determine whether the ACEC’s relevant and important values are still present and require special management attention to protect these values from irreparable damage, and whether current management is sufficient to protect the values. In addition, new ACECs nominated during the public scoping period, or proposed by BLM, have been evaluated for relevance and importance.

RESULTS OF THE ACEC EVALUATION

The BLM considered 24 areas. External sources (other agencies and the public) submitted 12 nominations, BLM specialists submitted 9 nominations (2 are the same as from external sources), and 5 are the existing ACECs. There were 23 areas found to meet the relevance and importance criteria. Each area meeting the criteria is considered within one or more of the alternatives.

ACEC CONSIDERATION IN THE DRAFT RMP

Alternative	A	B	C	Preferred (D)
# of Existing	5	4	4	4
# of New	-	11	-	4
Total Number of ACECs	5	15	4	8
Total Acres % of BLM Surface	30,000 (4.4%)	215,840 (31.9%)	29,440 (4.4%)	51,320 (7.6%)

The existing Tabeguache Creek ACEC was dropped from B, C, and D. The Tabeguache Area is Congressionally-designated, and has protections sufficient to protect the ACEC values.



A report, *Evaluation of Existing and Proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern for the Uncompahgre Planning Area*, is available on the RMP web site.

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT ACECS IN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS

The Alternatives Matrix in Chapter 2 (“Alternatives”), beginning on page 2-326, describes which proposed or existing ACEC is in each of the alternative(s). It also describes the proposed management for the ACECs.

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5.1

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Managing Special Status Plant & Wildlife Species*

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Special status species are those plants or animals that have been officially listed, proposed for listing, or are candidates for listing as threatened or endangered under provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as well as those listed by a state in a category implying potential endangerment or extinction, and those designated by a BLM State Director as sensitive.

PRIMARY CAUSES OF SPECIES DECLINE

Habitat loss, competition, predation, disease, and other factors are the primary causes of species decline and imperilment. Habitat loss and modification due to human activities are the greatest threats to ecosystems, particularly for species that are adapted to specific ecological niches. BLM land management practices are intended to sustain and promote species that are legally protected and sustain species not yet protected. Data on numerous special status species is tracked by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Natural Heritage Program, and other partners. The BLM regularly assists with these studies.



A FOCUS ON HABITAT

While our partners' chief interest is population status and trends, the BLM focuses its efforts on habitat maintenance and enhancement. The quantity and quality of preferred and suitable habitat, as well as the ability to support prey species are evaluated. The BLM also tracks conditions and restricts certain activities in critical breeding, foraging, and wintering areas and migration corridors.

PROTECTING FEDERALLY LISTED SPECIES



The ESA mandates the protection of species listed as threatened or endangered of extinction, and the habitats on which they depend. Section 7 of the ESA clarifies the responsibility of federal agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of listed species. In addition, federal agencies must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to insure that any action authorized, funded or carried out by an agency is "...not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of habitat of such species...".

The UFO analyzes the effects of proposed actions on threatened, endangered and candidate species and designated critical habitat for these species. Fourteen federally protected plant and animal species potentially occur in the planning area.

Federally designated critical habitat for four of these species also occurs in the planning area.

BLM

5.1—Special Status Plant & Wildlife Species



A SHARED GOAL WITH THE USFWS

Federally listed threatened and endangered species and designated critical habitat are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in cooperation with other federal agencies, with the ultimate goal of species recovery and viability. The BLM cooperates with the USFWS to identify and manage habitat for listed species that have not had critical habitat identified and designated. Consultation is required on any action proposed by the BLM or other federal agency that “may affect” a listed species or critical habitat.



OTHER NON-LISTED, NON-STATUS SPECIES (E.G., BIG GAME, MIGRATORY BIRDS, GAME FISH, ETC.)

While the BLM is responsible for managing fish and wildlife habitats in a condition that will sustain desired levels of a species, the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) is directly responsible for managing wildlife population levels. Population data on game animals is tracked by the CDOW, and increasingly for key non-game species.

COOPERATION BETWEEN STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

The BLM assists the CDOW with collection of this information for certain species. While the CDOW is interested primarily in population dynamics and demographics, the BLM's principle responsibility is habitat condition and quality based on plant community attributes, as well as a site's capacity to sustain native wildlife species. Within this framework, the BLM focuses on key animal species and their habitats.



BLM SENSITIVE AND CANDIDATE SPECIES

Candidate species are managed to maintain viable populations in order to avoid listing. Colorado State and BLM sensitive species are treated similarly. The BLM, USFWS, and the State of Colorado have developed formal and informal agreements to provide guidance on species management.

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES IN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS

The Alternatives Matrix in Chapter 2 (“Alternatives”), beginning on page 2-82, describes management for special status species and their habitats.



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6.1

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET

Vegetation and Land Health

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A HEALTHY COMMUNITY IS A PRODUCTIVE ONE

BLM's Land Health Standards require the UFO to manage for healthy plant communities. Health is measured by a community's productivity, diversity, number of native and desirable species, absence of weeds, functional use of sunlight and water, and nutrient cycling. The UFO manages vegetation to achieve land health, while supporting a variety of human uses and natural values.

In the planning area, healthy plant communities are achieved through:

- Implementing protective and mitigation measures identified through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process in response to potentially harmful activities and developments
- Targeting carefully designed fuel reduction and wildlife habitat improvement projects
- Restoring communities through activities such as weed management, native species seeding in burned or disturbed areas, and re-treating former chaining areas
- Leaving communities alone to function as naturally as possible.

In turn, a healthy plant community can provide:

- Forage for grazing animals
- Products for harvest, such as firewood, pinyon nuts, and Christmas trees
- Values that benefit people, such as clean water, wildlife habitat, ecosystem resilience, and beautiful vistas.



STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH

The UFO is mandated to manage public lands in accordance with five BLM Colorado Standards for Public Land Health:

- **Standard 1** - Upland soils are healthy with respect to water absorption, erosion, organic matter, and groundcover
- **Standard 2** - Riparian systems and wetlands function properly and can recover from disturbance
- **Standard 3** - Plant and animal communities are healthy, made up of native and desirable species, sustain viable populations in suitable habitat, and are resilient to disturbances
- **Standard 4** - Threatened, endangered, and sensitive species are maintained and enhanced by healthy native plant and animal communities
- **Standard 5** - Water quality on BLM lands meets or exceeds Colorado Water Quality Standards.

BLM

6.1—Vegetation and Land Health



UFO LAND HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

Landscape Unit	Year Assessed	Next Assessment	Land Health Rating	% of Landscape unit by Land Health Standard (excludes undetermined lands)				
				1	2	3	4	5
Escalante	1999	2010	Meets	57	58	43	100	68
			Meets but w/ problems	23	35	28	0	30
			Doesn't Meet	15	0	24	0	0
East Paradox	2000	2011	Meets	90	36	79	100	24
			Meets but w/ problems	8	55	10	0	76
			Doesn't Meet	2	8	11	0	0
Gunnison Gorge	2001	2012	Meets	70	37	43	76	89
			Meets but w/ problems	21	62	44	24	6
			Doesn't Meet	0	0	5	0	5
North Delta	2002	2013	Meets	53	52	13	100	72
			Meets but w/ problems	40	23	70	0	28
			Doesn't Meet	2	23	13	0	0
Mesa Creek	2004	2016	Meets	53	58	53	100	65
			Meets but w/ problems	44	33	36	0	35
			Doesn't Meet	1	9	9	0	0
Roubideau	2005	2017	Meets	44	80	17	100	74
			Meets but w/ problems	43	19	64	0	20
			Doesn't Meet	9	0	16	0	7
Norwood	2006	2018	Meets	80	89	65	100	71
			Meets but w/ problems	15	9	24	0	17
			Doesn't Meet	0	2	8	0	12
North Fork	2007	2019	Meets	48	79	29	84	74
			Meets but w/ problems	43	12	41	6	23
			Doesn't Meet	2	5	24	10	3
Colona	2008	2020	Meets	71	58	31	32	50
			Meets but w/ problems	16	22	52	53	37
			Doesn't Meet	4	14	8	4	13
West Paradox	2009	2021	Meets	47	64	70	87	49
			Meets but w/ problems	50	36	24	10	30
			Doesn't Meet	0	0	3	0	21

ASSESSING LAND HEALTH

UFO public lands are divided into ten landscape units. Every year, one unit is evaluated for land health. The evaluation is documented with a detailed analysis of **lands meeting standards**, **lands meeting standards, but with problems**, and **lands not meeting standards**. Where problems are identified, recommendations are made to fix them and address the cause.

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT VEGETATION AND LAND HEALTH IN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS

The Alternatives Matrix in Chapter 2 (“Alternatives”) describes goals, objectives and management actions to help maintain or achieve land health standards (beginning on page 2-25), and to manage vegetation (beginning on page 2-49). Other resources, including wildland fire management, forestry and woodlands products, and livestock grazing also have objectives and management actions to help maintain or achieve land health standards and healthy vegetation.

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6.2

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Managing For Livestock & Against Weeds*

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LIVESTOCK GRAZING IN THE PLANNING AREA

Currently 658,540 acres (97%) of BLM-administered public land within the Uncompahgre planning area are open to livestock grazing. The public range is permitted at a level of 38,364 animal unit months (AUMs) of forage.

Over the past five years, billed use has averaged 65% of total permitted use. This difference can be attributed to a number of variables. Seasonal variations in precipitation and temperature result in more or less available forage from one year to the next. Drought conditions have required a reduction in grazing use in order to maintain good range conditions. Permittees may also opt for voluntary non-use for a variety of reasons, resulting in AUMs that are available but not used. In addition, grazing is typically deferred in an area for two years following land treatments and fire rehabilitation projects, accounting for lower use levels.

Animal Unit Month (AUM)
The amount of forage needed to sustain one cow, five sheep, or five goats for a month



There are 17,260 acres (7%) of BLM-administered public land within the planning area unavailable for livestock grazing. In addition, a small number of permits have been voluntarily relinquished and the allotments are considered vacant.

Within the planning area, there are 203 allotments and 135 permittees. The allotments vary in size from 40 to 92,198 acres, with grazing allocations ranging from one to 4,800 AUMs in each allotment. In 2013, 85% of the allotment permits were for cattle, with sheep and horse grazing accounting for the remaining 15%. Individual operators graze animals on 188 allotments, while the remaining fifteen are common allotments grazed by two or more operators.

Grazing within the planning area occurs throughout the year, with much of the use concentrated during spring and fall months. Spring and fall allotments are typically located adjacent to U.S. Forest Service land, and are utilized for short periods prior to “on” dates and after “off” dates for higher elevation summer allotments on national forest land. Summer use allotments are commonly found at higher elevations in the North Fork of the Gunnison River area. Winter use allotments are primarily located in the west end of Montrose and San Miguel Counties, at lower elevations associated with a semi- arid climate.

BLM

6.2—Managing For Livestock & Against Weeds



MANAGING FOR GRAZING

All grazing permits include terms and conditions regarding management of the allotment. In some cases, allotment management plans (AMPs) have been developed, which provide greater detail about the location, amount, and timing of permitted grazing use, and incorporate allotment-specific planned grazing systems.

Most allotments in the planning area contain portions that are only slightly used or not used at all by livestock due to topography, distance from water, limitations caused by natural barriers, or for other reasons. Rangeland improvement projects, water developments in particular, have been implemented within the UFO to better distribute livestock grazing.

Within UFO grazing allotments there are many other uses such as recreation, wildlife, energy development, mining, and utility easements. Resources such as threatened and endangered species, Special Recreation Management Areas, wilderness areas, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern also occur within grazing allotments, and require special management attention.

INFORMATION ABOUT LIVESTOCK GRAZING AND WEED MANAGEMENT IN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS

The Draft RMP has a range of alternatives for acres available for livestock grazing and AUMs allowed. The authorized amount of livestock use varies between alternatives, according to objectives. The Alternatives Matrix in Chapter 2 (“Alternatives”), beginning on page 2-163, has objectives and actions related to livestock grazing.

The Draft RMP also identifies actions to prevent the introduction of weeds and priorities for treatment, with objectives and actions beginning on page 2-61.

CONTROLLING NOXIOUS WEEDS

Integrated Weed Management (IWM)

The use of all suitable weed control methods to keep weed populations below the economic/ecological injury level

Preventing the introduction of noxious and invasive species is the first line of defense against noxious weed establishment. The UFO applies Integrated Weed Management principles and Early Detection/Rapid Response strategies to curtail damage to ecosystems by noxious weeds.

IWM utilizes a combination of control strategies which will hopefully result in the most effective control of target noxious species. IWM methods include cultural practices, use of biological, physical, and the selective use of

herbicides. Following the use of control measures, monitoring is conducted to determine which treatments are working, and on which species.



Early detection and rapid response efforts increase the likelihood that invasions will be addressed successfully while populations are still localized and population levels are not beyond that can be contained and

eradicated. Once populations are widely established, all that might be possible is the partial mitigation of negative impacts. In addition, the costs associated with such efforts are typically far less than those of long-term invasive species management programs.

Surveying for noxious species is important and is focused on high-priority targets, such as high-risk locations, high-value resources, important pathways, and populations and species of specific concern. More remote backcountry areas are also surveyed and monitored, although at longer intervals.

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6.3

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Water Quality and Soils*

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The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) is revising the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Uncompahgre planning area. The Uncompahgre RMP will set forth a plan of action for managing resources and uses for the next twenty years under the BLM's dual mandate of *multiple use* and *sustained yield*. The Draft RMP/EIS is now available for your review and comment.

SOIL STABILITY PROMOTES GOOD WATER QUALITY

Mesozoic (Cretaceous, Jurassic, and Triassic) sedimentary rocks throughout the planning area erode exposing gypsum and selenium minerals. Dissolved concentrations of these minerals in local rivers can create water quality concerns for humans, animals, and plants.

Wind and precipitation erode sediments and salts from hill slopes. Wind erosion can move fine-grained salts to ephemeral and intermittent stream channels, and summer storms then flush those accumulated salts into rivers. Research has found that disturbance of soil surfaces can cause increases in these sediment and salt yields.

BLM RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SALINITY CONTROL

The BLM maintains a salinity control program in the Upper Colorado River Basin to reduce salt inflow. A 1984 amendment (Public Law 98-569) to the **Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act** directs the BLM to implement a comprehensive program to minimize salt loading in the Colorado River Basin. The BLM must implement effective salt-loading control on public lands. Most projects are integrated, and land management efforts often have multiple objectives such as riparian health, habitat enhancement for threatened and endangered species, rangeland health, minimization of impacts from energy development, and route designation plans for recreational vehicles.

More direct salinity control projects include seedings, plugging saline-flowing wells, proper road construction, and sediment retention dams. BLM land use plans are key to setting up management measures for areas that contain saline/seleniferous soils. In addition to our on-the-ground implementation and planning projects, the BLM conducts science studies in collaboration with other agencies to understand transit-source mechanisms and potential of salts to reach rivers, identify source areas, and quantify loads.

SECTION 202 OF THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL ACT

The Secretary (of the Interior) is directed—

(1) in the investigation, planning, construction, and implementation of any salinity control unit involving control of salinity from irrigation sources, to cooperate with the Secretary of Agriculture in carrying out research and demonstration projects and in implementing on-the-farm improvements and farm management practices and programs which will further the objective of this title;

(2) to undertake research on additional methods for accomplishing the objective of this title, utilizing to the fullest extent practicable the capabilities and resources of other Federal departments and agencies, interstate institutions, States, and private organizations.

BLM

6.3—Water Quality and Soils



USE OF GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

Erosion-control measures enacted on public lands can stabilize soils containing gypsum (calcium sulfate) and selenium and thereby enhance water quality. In the planning area, these sensitive soils can be identified through Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis and allow management measures to be developed according to the predominant resource use.

Impacts from natural disturbances can also be tracked through GIS analysis. Salt loading is usually worse during episodic events, such as during summer monsoon rain events. GIS base layers for analysis would include elevation (used for determining percent of slope and aspect), geology, soils, water networks, and types of public land use. Zonal analysis of the overlying base layers illustrates geomorphology, spatial extent of salt-contributing soils, types of activity, and proximity to water.

Management erosion control measures can be better directed with GIS, because it allows planners and resource specialists to locate, examine, and quantify the extent of an area with the concentration of salts in that area (i.e., develop a potential load to a water body).



SENSITIVE SOILS

Sensitive soils include a wide variety of soil types and characteristics, but all have one or more limiting characteristics that would make them difficult to reclaim if they are disturbed. Limiting soil chemical features include sodium, soluble salts, gypsum, and selenium. Limiting soil physical characteristics include soils that are susceptible to wind and/or water erosion, and soils that are protected by biological soil crusts.

Sensitive soils can be identified using information from published soil surveys, ecological site descriptions, local monitoring records, and field data, and research studies. Once identified, the areas containing sensitive soils can be used in site-specific planning to help determine whether additional BMPs or mitigation measures would be required to protect them.

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT WATER QUALITY AND SOILS IN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS

The Draft RMP has objectives to minimize the yield of sediment, salt and selenium contributions to water resources; maintain or improve water quality; manage land within public water supply areas to provide clean drinking water; provide sufficient water quantity for multiple use management; and to protect groundwater resources and recharge areas. The alternatives have differing methods to achieve these objectives, consistent with the theme of the alternative. The Alternatives Matrix in Chapter 2 (“Alternatives”) describes the goals, objectives and management actions to help manage water quality and soils (beginning on page 2-28).

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7.1

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Coal, Oil & Gas Resources*

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The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) is revising the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Uncompahgre planning area. The Uncompahgre RMP will set forth a plan of action for managing resources and uses for the next twenty years under the BLM's dual mandate of *multiple use* and *sustained yield*. The Draft RMP/EIS is now available for your review and comment.

LAND OF VALUABLE RESOURCES

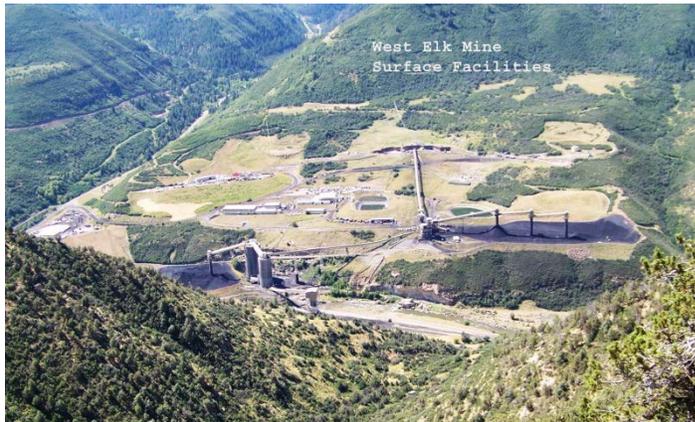
The BLM's dual mandate of multiple use and sustained yield means that BLM-administered lands are available for the exploration and development of energy resources. An RMP establishes which areas are open or closed to coal, oil, and gas leasing. The Mineral Leasing Act, as well as many other federal, state, and local laws and regulations, guide land use planning, leasing, bonding, operations, and reclamation associated with all development of federal coal, oil, and natural gas resources.

Many of the impacts associated with these activities can be reduced or eliminated through site-specific stipulations identified and developed through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. These measures include reclamation, the use of best management practices, and avoiding critical wildlife habitat.

COAL IN THE PLANNING AREA

The UFO manages several active federal coal leases related to three coal mines located in the North Fork valley of the Gunnison River near Paonia, Colorado. There is one active underground coal mine on federal mineral estate (West Elk), one that is idle (Bowie No. 2), and one in full reclamation (Elk Creek).

While each mining operation controls coal reserves with a mix of federal and fee and/or state coal, about 90% of local production is federal. As mining progresses, only federal coal will be available in the reserve base. While some federal coal leases have a 5% royalty due to difficult geologic and engineering conditions, most of the coal is mined at an 8% royalty. The resulting revenue to the federal treasury from coal production within the planning area approaches \$5 million each year. Half of that revenue is returned to the state of Colorado.



In March, Secretary Jewell instituted a pause of new federal coal leases while a review of the federal coal program continues and directed the Department to launch a series of good government reforms to improve transparency and administration of the federal coal program. The pause does not apply to existing coal production activities and leases that have already been approved. There will also be limited, common sense exceptions to the leasing pause to allow for the leasing of metallurgical coal (typically used in steel production); small lease modifications; and emergency leasing when there is a demonstrated safety need or insufficient reserves under lease to maintain production.

BLM

7.1—Coal, Oil & Gas Resources



GAS RESOURCES IN THE PLANNING AREA

Much of the natural gas resource is generally located north of U.S. Highway 133, across from the Delta County towns of Hotchkiss, Paonia and Bowie, the Gunnison County town of Somerset, and the area north of Paonia Reservoir. Natural gas resources occur in sedimentary strata associated with the Mancos Shale, and with coal seams in rock formations of the Mesa Verde Group. Coal and gas resources are also present in the west end of Montrose County and in San Miguel County, where they have been developed to a lesser extent.



CURRENT OIL AND GAS LEASES

According to Colorado State historic records, 116 gas well permits have been issued in the North Fork area on federally managed oil and gas leases, including split estate lands. The North Fork area is bordered by the following: Colorado State Highway 50 on the west, Colorado State Highway 133 on the south to Paonia Reservoir, then directly north and east to the UFO boundary. Of these permitted wells, 23 are presently producing natural gas, 9 are shut-in and either capable of production or awaiting completion, 2 are converted for water disposal, 28 have been plugged, 15 are

approved permits awaiting drilling and 39 permits have expired with no drilling. On federally managed oil and gas leases in the rest of the planning area, including split estate lands, 98 gas wells permits have been issued. Of these, two wells remain operational but are presently shut-in, 63 have been plugged and abandoned and 33 permits have expired with no drilling.

WHAT IS SPLIT ESTATE?

In split estate situations, the surface and subsurface rights (such as the right to develop minerals) for a piece of land are owned by different parties.

Mineral rights are considered dominant, meaning that they take precedence over other property rights, including those associated with surface ownership. However, the mineral owner must show due regard for the interests of the surface estate owner, and occupy only those portions of the surface that are reasonably necessary to develop the mineral estate.

The BLM's split estate policy only applies to situations where the surface rights are in private ownership and the rights to development of the mineral resources are publicly held and managed by the federal government.

For more information about how the BLM manages split estate, please view the following slide show:

Split Estate: Private Surface/Public Minerals—What Does it Mean to You?

www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/MINERALS_REALTY_AND_RESOURCE_PROTECTION_/bmps.Par.41235.File.dat/Split%20Estate%20Presentation%202006.pdf

For a detailed explanation of oil and gas leasing, development, and split estate issues, visit the following websites:

BLM Colorado Oil and Gas Program
www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Programs/oilandgas.html

Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
www.cogcc.state.co.us/

UFO Oil and Gas activity can be tracked at:
www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/nepa/ufo.html

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7.2

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET

Mineral Resources

(Locatable Minerals,
Mineral Materials,
Non-energy Leasable Minerals)

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The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) is revising the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Uncompahgre planning area. The Uncompahgre RMP will set forth a plan of action for managing resources and uses for the next twenty years under the BLM's dual mandate of *multiple use* and *sustained yield*. The Draft RMP/EIS is now available for your review and comment.

LAND OF VALUABLE RESOURCES

The BLM's dual mandate of multiple use and sustained yield means that BLM-administered lands are available for the exploration and development of mineral resources. The Mining Law of 1872 provides the legal framework for citizens to acquire mineral rights to a variety of hard rock minerals, including uranium and vanadium. Mining claimants are required to get BLM authorization before conducting any significant surface-disturbing activities. Miners are also required to get various permits from state and local governments in addition to putting in place financial guarantee bonds to insure completion of reclamation to meet various agency standards.



MAJOR MINERAL RESOURCES IN THE PLANNING AREA

Uranium and placer gold are the primary mineral resources found in the Uncompahgre planning area. The uranium-rich Salt Wash Member of the Morrison Formation outcrops in numerous locations associated with the UraVan Mineral Belt as it passes through western Montrose County.

Placer gold deposits occur in the San Miguel River where they are often worked by recreational panning and dredging groups on several active placer mining claims after the seasonal spring runoff has a chance to replenish the resource.

BLM

7.2—Uranium and Other Mineral Resources



OTHER MINERAL RESOURCES

Other mineral resources include the potential for leasable phosphate deposits associated with the Paradox Member of the Hermosa Group Formation in Paradox Valley. The Mineral Leasing Act guides land use planning, leasing, bonding, operations, and reclamation associated with all development of federal non-energy leasable mineral resources.

In addition, sand and gravel deposits located throughout the planning area are primarily extracted for use as road base.



URANIUM LEASING PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Legacy Management currently administers the Department's Uranium Leasing Program (ULP), managing 32 lease tracts containing approximately 25,000 acres, all located within the Uravan Mineral Belt in southwestern Colorado.

These public lands are withdrawn to the DOE for the management of uranium and vanadium resources. DOE has the jurisdiction for these resources, and the surface management of other resources like grazing and recreation is under the BLM jurisdiction. The DOE ULP is managed under the authority and in accordance with Title 10, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 760 in cooperation with the BLM and the State of Colorado.

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT MINERALS IN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS

The Draft RMP has an objective to facilitate environmentally responsible exploration and development of locatable minerals (e.g. uranium and gold), mineral materials (e.g. sand and gravel), and non-energy solid leasable minerals (e.g. sodium and potassium). The DRMP has recommendations for withdrawal from locatable minerals, areas open and closed to sale of mineral materials, and areas open and closed to development of non-energy solid leasable minerals. The areas vary by alternative, consistent with the theme of the alternative. The Alternatives Matrix in Chapter 2 ("Alternatives") describes the goals, objectives and management actions to help manage the various types of minerals (beginning on page 2-208).

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7.3

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Renewable Energy Resources*

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As part of RMP planning, a renewable energy potential report has been completed that identifies the potential for renewable energy development and the potential location of such development on BLM land within the planning area.

Renewable energy resources include biomass, wind, geothermal, and solar.

BIOMASS ENERGY

Biomass includes food crops, grassy and woody plants, residues from agriculture or forestry, and the organic component of municipal and industrial wastes, utilized to produce energy. It can be used for biofuels (i.e. ethanol and biodiesel), biopower (electricity generation), and bioproducts (i.e. plant-based plastics). Biomass can be collected and harvested from BLM lands through stewardship, timber sales, and hazardous fuels reduction.

The Department of Energy evaluates biomass resources for the U.S. in thousand tonnes/year, with a range of below 50 (low) to above 500 (high).

Most locations in the planning area fall below 50 thousand tonnes/year.

However, a 2005 BLM Renewable Energy Assessment using NASA vegetation data indicates that the area may have some potential for biomass production.

WIND ENERGY

Wind is a form of solar energy caused by irregular heating of the atmosphere by the sun. Earth's terrain and rotation of the earth also effect wind and modify it. Wind power uses wind turbines to harvest the energy of moving air and convert to mechanical energy or electricity. It is the world's fastest growing energy source.



Wind energy developments are granted as rights-of-way. BLM completed the *Wind Energy Development Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)* in 2005 to determine the potential associated with wind energy development on BLM lands in the western U.S. Using data generated by TrueWind and validated by the

National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the BLM created maps showing low, medium, and high potential areas, and developed a maximum potential development scenario on public lands for the next 20 years.

The following screening criteria determine high potential areas:

- Wind power class of 3 and above
- Within 25 miles of transmission lines (69-345 kV)
- Within 50 miles of major roads.

Based on this assessment, there appear to be few economically developable lands within the planning area.

BLM

7.3—Renewable Energy Resources



GEOTHERMAL ENERGY

Access to BLM geothermal resources is granted through a formalized leasing process. There are two types of geothermal use:

- **Direct Use** – Utilization of geothermal resources for commercial, residential, agricultural, public facilities, or other energy needs other than the commercial production of electricity
- **Indirect Use** - Commercial electrical generation

A **Geothermal Programmatic EIS** completed in 2008 indicates that 593,600 acres in the planning area are open to leasing. and may have geothermal development potential.

There are currently no geothermal facilities or pending applications for geothermal facilities in the planning area. Three existing hot springs are located on private land in the southern part of the planning area:

- Orvis Hot Springs located approximately two miles south of Ridgway, Colorado
- Ouray (Radium) Hot Spring located less than one mile north of Ouray, Colorado
- Lemon Hot Spring located in the town of Placerville, Colorado.

SOLAR ENERGY

Solar radiation is the most abundant source of energy on Earth. (The sun radiates more energy in one second than the world has used since time began.) Solar radiation is converted to energy through various technologies. Solar energy developments are granted as right-of-ways.

The BLM and DOE completed in 2012 a Solar Programmatic EIS that analyzes the environmental impacts of utility-scale solar energy facilities in six western states: Colorado, Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

Nationwide, 24 tracts of BLM-administered lands were considered for in-depth study of solar development. In Colorado, four study areas have been identified: Antonito SE, De Tilla Gulch, Fourmile East, and Los Mongotes East. None are located within the planning area. The lands identified:

- contain at least 2,000 acres
- have excellent solar resources
- have suitable slope
- are in proximity to roads and transmission lines

A BLM/Department of Energy Renewable Energy Assessment conducted in 2003 made use of available GIS data, and developed screening criteria in order to identify high potential areas in the Western U.S. Based on this assessment, no high-potential resource area for concentrating solar power is available in the planning area. However, some areas have good potential for photovoltaic resources.

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8.1

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Land Tenure*

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In managing nearly 700,000 surface acres of public land within the planning area, the BLM provides for land use, purchase, exchange, donation, and sale; determines federal land boundaries; and maintains historic records for these ownership transactions.

LAND TENURE ADJUSTMENTS

Land ownership transfer is an important component of the BLM's land management strategy. The BLM completes ownership transactions involving land and interests in land when such transactions are in the public interest and consistent with publicly-approved land use plans.

LAND TENURE PROGRAM GOALS

The BLM's Land Tenure program is designed to:

- Improve management of natural resources through consolidation of federal, state and private lands
- Increase recreational opportunities and preserve open space
- Secure key property necessary to protect endangered species and promote biological diversity
- Preserve archaeological and historical resources
- Implement specific acquisitions authorized by Acts of Congress
- Allow for expansion of communities and consolidation of non-federal land ownership.

BLM

8.1—Land Tenure



LAND TENURE ADJUSTMENT TOOLS

The Federal Lands Policy Management Act provides the BLM with the following land tenure adjustment tools:

Exchanges: Land exchanges are considered on a case-by-case basis. An exchange must be in the public interest, and lands proposed for acquisition must contain higher resource or public values than the public lands being disposed.

Acquisitions: Acquisitions, including access easements, can be completed through purchases, including Land and Water Conservation Fund purchases, and donations or receipts from Federal Land Transaction Facilitations Act (FLTFA) sales. FLTFA acquisitions are limited to lands adjacent to public lands with special designations, such as National Monuments and National Conservation Areas.



Sales: Public lands have potential for disposal when they are isolated and difficult to manage. Land sales are typically accomplished through competitive bid at fair market value. Lands must be identified for disposal in the RMP prior to being offered for sale.

Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP): The R&PP Act of 1926 provides a means for state or local governments or non-profit organizations to acquire public lands at reduced or no cost, subject to BLM approval. The conveyed land must be used for a specific public need or recreational purpose such as a hospital, school, or park.

UTILITY CORRIDORS

Utility corridors for oil, gas, and hydrogen pipelines and electricity transmission facilities on federal lands were approved in January 2009 in the **Resource Management Plan Amendments/Record of Decision for Designation of Energy Corridors on Bureau of Land Management Administered Lands in the 11 Western States.**

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT LAND TENURE AND REALTY ACTIONS IN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS

The Alternatives Matrix in Chapter 2 (“Alternatives”) describes goals, objectives and management actions for land use authorizations (beginning on page 2-311), and land tenure (beginning on page 2-319). Goals, objectives and management vary across alternatives, consistent with the theme of the alternative.

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8.2

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Wildland-Urban Interface*

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WHAT IS WUI?

The **Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI)** is defined as a geographical area where two diverse systems meet and affect each other, giving rise to conflicts between societal values and expectations concerning the management of natural resource systems. Many people think of WUI exclusively as it pertains to wildfire, and the zone where structures and other human developments meet or intermingle with vegetative fuels. However, while wildfire is the most significant WUI issue, it is not the only one. Both recreation and land health are impacted by WUI dynamics.



WUI AND THE PLANNING AREA

The planning area has numerous areas of rapidly expanding wildland-urban interface due to increased population, changing demographics, and visitation to the western slope. Examples of these include subdivisions, ranches, electrical transmission lines, communication sites, and recreation sites.



Preliminary planning issues related to WUI include:

Fire Management— Fighting wildfires, as well as managing fuels in order to prevent wildfires, is a complex, costly, and hazardous undertaking. Every year hundreds of homes and outbuildings are lost and lives are endangered throughout the United States due to wildfires in the WUI.

The BLM aggressively manages wildfires to protect the WUI's valuable resources. In addition, prescribed burning and mechanical fuel reduction treatments are used to modify current fuel conditions and future fire behavior.



BLM

8.2—Wildland-Urban Interface

Recreation— Population growth in local communities increases demand for recreational opportunities and facilities in the planning area. The BLM responds in part by providing additional signs, kiosks, picnic areas, parking areas, boat ramps, toilets, campgrounds, trails, and administrative sites.

Land Health— While generally in good condition, WUI lands are more susceptible to land health problems than other areas. Common concerns include higher levels of weeds, erosion, and bare ground, increased selenium and salinity effects, reduced native species diversity and abundance, and lower plant vigor. These problems can often be attributed to greater levels of human disturbance from casual recreation use, right-of-way developments, livestock trespass, adjacent agricultural lands, and altered wildlife usage patterns.

RMP planning will address how the BLM can accommodate foreseeable growth in the planning area, while balancing the wants and needs of surrounding communities.



The BLM wants your input...

- Under what conditions should fire suppression or fuel reduction activities occur?
- How should recreation in the WUI be managed?

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