
Appendix P

Summary of Draft Wild and Scenic River
Suitability Report

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APPENDIX P

SUMMARY OF DRAFT WILD AND SCENIC RIVER SUITABILITY REPORT

P.1 INTRODUCTION

This appendix provides summary information about Wild and Scenic River (WSR) suitability for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Uncompahgre Resource Management Plan (RMP) Planning Area (planning area). The Wild and Scenic River Suitability Report (February 2013) provides more detail as well as maps of each segment found to be suitable or unsuitable. The Wild and Scenic River Suitability Report is available on the Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) Wild and Scenic River Studies web page (http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/ufo/wild_and_scenic_river.html).

The Wild and Scenic River Suitability report presents an analysis of and recommendations regarding the suitability of 28 eligible river segments within the planning area for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS). An 11.88-mile segment of the Dolores River within the planning area was identified as eligible in the San Juan Public Lands Draft Land Management Plan and is among the 28 segments evaluated for this report.

After considering information, comments, and recommendations from BLM resource staff, the BLM Southwest Resource Advisory Council (SWRAC), cooperating agencies, stakeholder groups, landowners, and other interested parties, the BLM identified 16 of the 28 segments as suitable for NWSRS consideration. The findings are used to develop the preferred alternative for the Uncompahgre RMP and to make NWSRS recommendations to Congress.

P.1.1 The Study Area

The UFO manages public land in Delta, Mesa, Montrose, Gunnison, Ouray, and San Miguel counties in southwestern Colorado. The planning area for the RMP consists of over 675,000 acres of BLM-administered land within the UFO, excluding the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Areas (NCA) and the Dominguez-Escalante NCA, which operate under separate RMPs.

The BLM completed an evaluation of 174 river segments in the planning area and released the ***Final Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Report for the BLM Uncompahgre Planning Area*** in July 2010. The report identifies 28 segments within the Uncompahgre Planning Area as eligible for inclusion in the NWSRS.

P.2 WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY PROCESS

Section 5(d)(1) of the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSR Act) requires federal agencies to evaluate potential wild and scenic rivers when preparing resource management plans: “In all planning for the use and development of water and related land resources, consideration shall be given by all federal agencies involved to potential national wild, scenic, and recreational river areas.”

The Wild and Scenic River (WSR) study process consists of evaluating segments for ***eligibility*** and ***suitability***. Both studies are conducted in accordance with the WSR Act, BLM Manual 835 I and the recently revised BLM Manual 6400: *Wild and Scenic Rivers—Policy and Program Direction for Identification, Evaluation, and Management* (1992 and 2012), and *The Wild and Scenic River Study Process Technical Report* (1999) issued by the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council.

P.2.1 Eligibility Analysis

Field Surveys

Extensive field inventories were conducted throughout the planning area between 2006 and 2009. An interdisciplinary team of BLM employees identified 174 river and stream segments from within seven hydrologic units.

Analysis

The team evaluated each segment to determine whether it meets the two criteria required for NWSRS eligibility: the stream (1) is free-flowing and (2) possesses any of several outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) adopted and specifically tailored for application within the planning area prior to the assessment. As shown in **Table P-1** (Eligible Segments by Hydrologic Unit), below, 28 segments within five hydrologic units were found to possess the eligibility criteria. In addition, one Upper Dolores segment within the planning area was identified as eligible in the San Juan Public Lands Draft Land Management Plan. No eligible segments were identified within either the Upper Gunnison or Uncompahgre hydrologic units.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

While values must be river-related, eligible ORVs may be scenic, recreational, geologic, fish, wildlife, cultural, historic, vegetation, or other similar value (such as paleontological). In addition, in order to be considered outstandingly remarkable, a value must be unique, rare, or exemplary, as well as significant within a defined region of comparison.

Regions of Comparison

A region of comparison is used to compare the special values for which a river is being considered against comparable elements within a defined geographic area. The area, region, or scale used for comparison is not fixed, and should be that which best serves as a basis for

**Table P-1
Eligible Segments by Hydrologic Unit**

| Hydrologic Unit | Eligible Segments |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Upper Gunnison | 0 |
| Lower Gunnison | 5 |
| Uncompahgre | 0 |
| North Fork of the Gunnison | 2 |
| San Miguel | 11 |
| Lower Dolores | 2 |
| Upper Dolores ¹ | 8 |
| Total Segments | 28 |

¹Includes one reach of the Dolores River determined eligible in the San Juan Public Lands Draft Land Management Plan.

meaningful analysis—it might vary, depending on the value being considered. The scale of a region could consist of a portion of a state or other appropriately scaled geographic area or hydrologic unit (Interagency WSR Coordinating Council 1999).

The following standards and regions of comparison for each ORV category were developed by UFO resource specialists, and used to evaluate the WSR eligibility of UFO rivers:

1. Scenic

Standard - The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors must result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions within the geographic region. The BLM Visual Resource Inventory Handbook (H8410-1) may be used to assess visual quality and evaluate the extent to which development impacts an area’s scenic values. The area must have a Scenic Quality Classification of A, as defined in H8410-1. When analyzing scenic values, additional factors such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and length of time negative intrusions are viewed may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over the majority of the river segment length and not common to other rivers in the geographic region.

Region of Comparison - The landscape has a Scenic Quality Classification of A within either the Southern Rockies or Colorado Plateau ecologic region.

2. Recreational

Standard - Recreational opportunities are or have the potential to be unusual enough to attract visitors to the geographic region. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. Recreation-related opportunities could include, but are not be limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting, and boating. Interpretive opportunities may be exceptional and attract or have the potential to attract visitors from outside the geographic area. The river may provide or have the potential to

provide settings for national or regional commercial usage or competitive events. In addition, the river may be eligible if it is determined to provide a critically important regional recreation opportunity, or be a significant component of a regional recreation opportunity spectrum setting.

Region of Comparison - The area possesses recreational opportunities popular enough to attract visitors from throughout or beyond the state of Colorado, and/or that are unique or rare within either the Southern Rockies or Colorado Plateau ecologic region. Opportunities could include Gold Medal fisheries, rafting, and others.

3. Geologic

Standard - The river or the area within the river corridor contains one or more examples of a geologic feature, process, or phenomenon that is rare, unusual, or unique to the geographic region. The feature or features may be in an unusually active stage of development, represent a textbook example and/or represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial, and other geologic structures).

Region of Comparison - The feature is unique or rare within either the Southern Rockies or Colorado Plateau ecologic region.

4. Fish

Standard - Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of either fish populations or habitat, or a combination of these river-related conditions.

- a) Populations: The river is nationally or regionally one of the top producers of resident, indigenous, and/or anadromous fish species. Of particular significance may be the presence of wild or unique stocks, or populations of Colorado State and/or federally listed or candidate threatened and endangered species.
- b) Habitat: The river provides exceptionally high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region. Of particular significance is habitat for Colorado State and/or federally listed or candidate threatened and endangered species.

Region of Comparison - Distribution of native species across their entire range, within either the Southern Rockies or Colorado Plateau ecologic region.

5. Wildlife

Standard - Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either wildlife populations or habitat, or a combination of these conditions.

- a) Populations: The river or area within the river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of resident or indigenous wildlife species dependent on the river environment. Of particular significance may be species considered to be unique or populations of Colorado State and/or federally listed or candidate threatened and endangered species.

- b) **Habitat:** The river or area within the river corridor provides exceptionally high quality, occupied habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance, or may provide a unique or critical habitat link for special status species known to occur in the area. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met.

Region of Comparison - Distribution of native species across their entire range, within either the Southern Rockies or Colorado Plateau ecologic region.

6. Cultural

Standard - The river or area within the river corridor contains one or more sites where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Americans. Sites must be rare, have unusual characteristics, or exceptional human interest values. Sites may have national or regional importance for interpreting prehistory, may be rare, may represent an area where culture or cultural period was first identified and described, may have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups, or may have been used by cultural groups for rare, sacred, tribal, or spiritual purposes.

Region of Comparison - A site that is on, or could be eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

7. Historic

Standard - The river or area within the corridor contains one or more sites or features associated with a significant event, person, or cultural activity of the past that was rare or unusual in the region. Historic and/or Native American sites or features in most cases are 50 years old or older. Sites or features listed in, or eligible for inclusion in, the NRHP may be of particular significance.

Region of Comparison - A site that is unique or rare within the state of Colorado, and is on or could be eligible for the NRHP (as shown in **Table P-2** [National Register of Historic Places Evaluation Criteria]).

**Table P-2
National Register of Historic Places Evaluation Criteria**

| The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and: | |
|---|--|
| Criterion | Description |
| A | Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history |
| B | Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past |
| C | Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction |
| D | Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory |

8. Vegetation

Standard - The river or stream segment supports a riparian vegetation community that is a superior occurrence or is rare on a global basis:

- a) Superior occurrence: For this standard, a superior community is defined as having received an Element Occurrence Ranking of A by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). An A ranking denotes that a community has excellent estimated ecological integrity based on size, condition, and landscape context.
- b) Rare on a global basis: For this standard, rareness is defined as a ranking of G1 or G2 (as determined by CNHP and described in **Table P-3**, Colorado Natural Heritage Program Element Imperilment Ranks).

Riparian vegetation that is located in a Potential Conservation Area (as determined by CNHP) has enhanced value because it has been identified as highly important for conserving regional and global biodiversity.

**Table P-3
Colorado Natural Heritage Program Element Imperilment Ranks**

| Rank | Description |
|------|--|
| G1 | Critically imperiled globally because of rarity (5 or fewer occurrences in the world or 1,000 or fewer individuals), or because some factor of its biology makes it especially vulnerable to extinction. |
| G2 | Imperiled globally because of rarity (6 to 20 occurrences or 1,000 to 3,000 individuals), or because other factors demonstrably make it very vulnerable to extinction throughout its range. |
| G3 | Vulnerable through its range or found locally in a restricted range (21 to 100 occurrences or 3,000 to 10,000 individuals). |
| G4 | Apparently secure globally, though it may be quite rare in parts of its range, especially at the periphery. Usually more than 100 occurrences and 10,000 individuals. |
| G5 | Demonstrably secure globally, though it may be quite rare in parts of its range, especially at the periphery. |

Region of Comparison - The river or area within the river corridor provides exceptional vegetative species or communities of significance within either the Southern Rockies or Colorado Plateau ecologic region. Consideration should be given to habitats and rare plants identified by CNHP as being of global importance (such as exceptional riparian areas and hanging gardens).

The element imperilment ranks shown in the table above are assigned in terms of an element's imperilment over its entire range (its Global-rank or G-rank).

9. Other Similar Values

Standard - While no specific evaluation guidelines have been established for the "other similar values" category, additional values deemed relevant to the eligibility of the river segment should be considered in a manner consistent with the foregoing guidance including, but not limited to, paleontologic, and scientific study opportunities.

Region of Comparison - Unique or rare within the Southern Rockies or Colorado Plateau ecologic region. For paleontological resources, these regions would be defined based on geological associations.

Preliminary Classification

The eligible segments were then assigned a preliminary classification of **wild, scenic, or recreational** based upon the amount of access to, and level of shoreline and water resource development within, the corridor, as defined in the WSR Act.

For a complete description of the segments analyzed and methods used, the eligibility report is available for review at the Montrose Public Lands Center in Montrose, Colorado and on the UFO Wild and Scenic River Studies webpage (http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/ufo/wild_and_scenic_river.html).

P.2.2 Suitability Analysis

During the suitability process, the BLM weighed protective measures for eligible river segments and the corresponding corridor in relation to current and potential identified uses. Possible environmental and economic consequences of, management issues resulting from, and reasonable alternatives to WSR designation were considered. Preliminary segment boundaries and classifications were reevaluated in response to public input. Geographic information systems data was recalculated, at times resulting in modified segment lengths and land ownership measures.

The portions of the eligible stream segment that are not included within the suitable stream segment boundaries, both in terms of stream miles and acreage within the eligible stream corridor, are found to be not suitable.

According to the Interagency WSR Coordinating Council (1999), a suitability evaluation should address three primary considerations:

- 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?
- Will the river's free-flowing character, water quality, and ORVs be protected through designation? Is designation the best method for protecting the river corridor? In answering these questions, 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 nonfederal entities partially responsible for implementing protective management?

UFO Suitability Criteria

Criteria used to evaluate eligible planning area segments for suitability were derived from BLM Manual 8351, *Wild and Scenic Rivers - Policy and Program Direction for Identification, Evaluation, and Management* (1992), as well as from guidelines issued by the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council (1999). Suitability criteria in the recently revised 8351 manual (now BLM Manual 6400 [2012]) were also considered. The following suitability criteria were formulated to elicit focused responses from BLM staff and the public useful in analyzing individual segments:

1. Characteristics which might or might not qualify this segment for WSR designation, including this segment's contribution to the integrity of a river system or basin.
2. Known federal, state, regional, tribal, local, or other public interests in designation or non-designation.
3. ORVs that could be affected by designation or non-designation.
4. Status of land and mineral ownership for this segment and the associated river corridor, including historical or existing rights that could be adversely affected by designation or lack of designation.
5. Compatibility or incompatibility of designation with current land and water uses and development.
6. Reasonably foreseeable potential land and water development and uses that could be affected by designation.
7. Ability to manage and protect this segment as a WSR, including any existing and potential mechanisms for protecting this segment's ORVs other than WSR designation.
8. Consistency of designation with other BLM plans, programs, and policies and regional objectives.
9. Issues that might make administering this segment difficult.
10. Adequacy of local zoning and other land use controls and ability of state/local government to manage and protect this segment's ORVs on nonfederal lands.

BLM Interdisciplinary Team

For each eligible segment, an interdisciplinary team of BLM resource specialists ((listed in the WSR Suitability Report) compiled information from within their particular area(s) of expertise. The specialists met as a group to evaluate the segments in relation to the suitability criteria. Following their preliminary review, the team collected additional data to fill information gaps.

Information Sources

BLM staff utilized a variety of resources to analyze and make recommendations for each segment, including:

- Geographic Information Systems data
- U.S. Geological Survey stream gauge data and minerals maps
- Land status maps

- State and federal agency agreements and management plans
- Local and county government land use plans and zoning documents
- Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) project data
- Published books and reports
- River guides
- Water rights tabulations

Public Participation

The suitability comment period was announced through a press release issued July 15, 2010. Letters inviting participation and requesting input regarding eligible segments were mailed to potential interested parties. Response forms were disseminated at public meetings and via mail and email, and available through the UFO Wild and Scenic River Studies webpage.

Public Comments

The UFO received hundreds of forms and letters containing unique comments, as well as numerous form letters. Substantive comments received during the formal suitability comment period (ending August 20, 2010) were summarized by segment and suitability criteria and considered in the suitability analysis. Comments received during the stakeholder process ending January 24, 2011 were also considered when they provided new information. In addition, comments received during the eligibility period that pertained more closely to suitability were included. Eligibility-related comments were not considered during the suitability analysis. Original comments are on file at the UFO administrative headquarters in Montrose, Colorado.

Stakeholder Groups

Input from public stakeholder groups was critical in evaluating the suitability of each segment. Separate stakeholder processes were initiated for segments in the Gunnison River Basin and those in the Dolores and San Miguel river basins. Stakeholder groups held public meetings during late 2010 and early 2011. BLM staff participated in the meetings to provide information and data and answer questions pertaining to the WSR process and specific segments, but did not offer recommendations. Results of both stakeholder processes were forwarded to the BLM for consideration.

Gunnison Basin Stakeholder Process

The Gunnison Basin stakeholder process was initiated by the Colorado River Water Conservation District. The stakeholder group contracted with a team of co-facilitators and held nine public meetings pertaining to Gunnison Basin segments outside of the Dominguez-Escalante NCA. The stakeholder group was unable to reach a consensus and two sets of recommendations were forwarded to the BLM for consideration.

Dolores and San Miguel Basin Stakeholder Process

The Dolores-San Miguel process was coordinated by the RMP Subgroup for the SWRAC. The subgroup contracted with a facilitator early in the process and held ten public meetings. In addition, the subgroup opened a second public comment period to gather additional suitability input.

The subgroup considered BLM analysis and public input and developed recommendations for each of the Dolores-San Miguel segments. The full BLM Colorado SWRAC reviewed and adopted the subgroup recommendations at the Colorado Statewide RAC meeting held on February 25, 2011.

Cooperating and Other Public Agency Input

State and federal agencies were invited to participate as cooperating agencies in the RMP process, providing information and reviewing preliminary findings during and between monthly meetings. Agencies opting not to serve as cooperating agencies provided input through correspondence and during public meetings.

P.2.3 Actions in Response to Recommendations

Results of the suitability analysis were used to formulate a range of alternatives for the Draft RMP/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The range of alternatives consists of a no action alternative that would maintain all rivers at the eligible stage, an alternative that would find all eligible rivers suitable, an alternative that would find all segments not suitable, and an alternative that would find some or portions of some eligible rivers suitable. Following publication of the Draft RMP/EIS, the public has 90 days to comment on the draft suitability determinations. The final suitability determinations will be documented in the Approved RMP/Record of Decision. Segments found not suitable will be dropped from further consideration and revert to management according to objectives and prescriptions in the RMP.

NWSRS Congressional Consideration

Neither the suitability evaluation nor the RMP planning process result in designation of a river segment as part of the NWSRS. Following completion of the Uncompahgre RMP, the findings are forwarded to Congress for consideration. Congress (or the Secretary of the Interior upon application by a state governor) has the final authority to designate waterways. Members of Congress craft the legislative language for designated segments and develop water protection strategies and measures in support of the WSR Act.

Interim Management of Suitable Segments

The WSR Act and BLM guidelines require the BLM to develop and implement interim management to protect the free-flowing nature, water quality, ORVs, and recommended classification of suitable segments until Congress takes formal action regarding NWSRS designation. Table 4 provides interim guidelines for managing suitable rivers, as adapted by the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council from the WSR Act. Once final determinations have been made, the BLM will draft protective management measures for each suitable segment.

While congressionally authorized study rivers are protected under the WSR Act, agency-identified rivers receive protection through other authorities, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. For example, potential effects on the free-flowing condition, water quality, and ORVs of eligible river segments would be considered when proposing federal or federally permitted actions subject to the National Environmental Policy Act.

Following release of the Approved RMP/Record of Decision, suitable segments will be managed to maintain their free-flowing character and ORVs in support of the selected alternative until designated or released from consideration by Congress.

**Table P-4
Interim Protection for Suitable Segments**

| Issue | Protection Under Suitable Designation |
|--|---|
| Study Boundary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corridor width is generally one-quarter mile from ordinary high water mark on both sides of active channel • Boundary may include adjacent areas needed to protect identified values |
| Preliminary Classification WSR Act Section (2b) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild, Scenic, and Recreational classes as defined by statute (classification criteria described in Interagency Guidelines) • Manage segment at recommended classification |
| Study Report Review Procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice of study report/Draft EIS published in <i>Federal Register</i> • Comments/responses from federal, state, and local agencies, and public included in study report/Final EIS transmitted to President and Congress |
| Private Land: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration • Acquisition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affects private land uses only through voluntary partnerships with state/local governments and landowners • No regulatory authority over private land • Evaluation of local zoning and land use control adequacy is typically a component of suitability determination¹ • BLM has no authority to acquire interest in land under WSR Act prior to designation |
| Water Resources Project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River's free-flowing condition protected to the extent of other BLM authorities and not under the WSR Act |
| Land Disposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency discretion to retain lands within river corridor in federal ownership |
| Mining and Mineral Leasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect free flow, water quality, and ORVs through other BLM authorities |
| Actions of Other Agencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affect actions of other agencies through voluntary partnerships |
| Protect Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No regulatory authority conferred by WSR Act; agency protects through other authorities • Section 11(b)(1)²: Limited financial or other assistance to encourage participation in acquisition, protection, and management of river resources |

¹Agency-identified study rivers that include private land typically require an evaluation of existing state and local land use controls and the willingness of state and local governments to protect river values.

²Section 11(b)(1) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture, or the head of any other federal agency to provide for "limited financial or other assistance to encourage participation in the acquisition, protection, and management of river resources." This authority "applies within or outside a federally administered area and applies to rivers which are components of the NWSRS and to other rivers." Recipients of federal assistance include states or their political subdivisions, landowners, private organizations, or individuals. Examples of assistance under this section include riparian restorations, riparian fencing to protect water quality and riparian vegetation, and vegetative screening to enhance scenery and/or the recreation experience.

Source: Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council (1999)

P.3 SUITABLE SEGMENTS: ASSESSMENT AND SUITABILITY DETERMINATION

P.3.1 7: Monitor Creek – Suitable Segment

Classification: Wild

ORVs: Fish, Vegetation

Suitable Length: 9.4 miles

BLM-administered: 9.4 miles

Key Considerations:

- Protecting a stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes needed to sustain a healthy riparian vegetation community within the segment might only be achieved through federal WSR designation.
- Water yield through the segment contributes significantly to the proper hydrologic function of Potter and Roubideau creeks.
- The small percentage of private land is primarily consolidated near the upper terminus and predominantly outside of areas containing the Vegetation ORV.

Monitor Creek was found to be suitable for WSR consideration, with a classification of *Wild*. The stream corridor is natural and rugged, with no substantial evidence of human alteration. The suitability finding will protect the continued health of fish and plant communities identified within the segment.

Public Input

Public support for suitability focused on providing a reliable and enduring form of protection for the continued health of rare plant communities and the riparian ecosystem extending from USFS lands upstream, as well as citing values not considered for suitability (such as wilderness character and recreation opportunities).

Public comments opposing suitability cited existing protections, including a proposed conservation easement for adjacent land and a citizen-proposed wilderness area designation.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Fish

A recent fish survey conducted by the BLM indicates that Monitor Creek is likely to support viable populations of both bluehead sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*) and flannelmouth sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*), warranting the addition of a Fish ORV.

Vegetation

This segment supports a superior (A-ranked) occurrence of the common coyote willow riparian shrubland (*Salix exigua/mesic graminoids*). Monitor Creek is within the Roubideau Creek Potential Conservation Area designated by the CNHP.

Water Rights and Uses

Monitor Creek is a small, intermittent headwater drainage managed primarily by the BLM and USFS, making the potential for future water development low. The segment has no existing instream flow water right protection.

Flow from Monitor Creek contributes heavily to Potter and Roubideau creeks downstream, providing spring spawning habitat for native warm water fishes. Protecting a streamflow regime that mimics the natural seasonal changes needed to sustain a healthy riparian vegetation community within this segment might only be secured through federal WSR designation.

There are no absolute or conditional water rights or impoundments in this segment, and absolute water rights upstream would not be affected by designation. A couple of small reservoirs (totaling 184 acre-feet of storage) occur above the upper terminus and have a slight potential to influence the flow regime through the segment.

Land Ownership and Uses

The BLM manages all of the land within the corridor, with private land primarily consolidated adjacent to the upper terminus. Because of the limited amount of adjacent private land and remote location, non-restrictive zoning in the area is not expected to have much of an impact on the segment. Travel along Monitor Creek is restricted to non-motorized vehicles on designated roads and trails.

Special Designations

The segment is within a proposed Special Recreation Management Area, as well as two potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) being considered within separate alternatives for the Uncompahgre RMP.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

No existing oil and gas leases or mining claims occur within the segment.

Administration

WSR designation would be consistent with actions pertaining to the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*) and would complement the BLM Colorado Public Land Health Standard for riparian vegetation.

Because of the predominance of public land, few additional resources and facilities would be needed to effectively manage and support the ORV.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORV, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional

funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

ACEC designation would provide some protection for the segment, but would not confer the flow needed to support the Vegetation ORV. BLM staff determined that a state-based instream flow water right would likely be sufficient to protect the Fish ORV, but would likely not be able to protect the peak flows necessary to sustain the Vegetation ORV.

P.3.2 8: Potter Creek – Suitable Segment

Classification: Wild

ORV: Fish, Vegetation

Eligible Length: 9.8 miles

BLM-Administered: 9.8 miles

Key Considerations:

- Most private land is relatively consolidated in one parcel near the lower terminus and predominantly outside of areas containing the Vegetation ORV. The segment would require few additional resources and facilities to manage effectively and support the ORV.
- Protecting a stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes needed to sustain a healthy riparian vegetation community might only be secured through federal WSR designation.
- Water yield through the segment contributes significantly to the proper hydrologic function of Roubideau Creek and the Gunnison River downstream.

Potter Creek was found to be *suitable* for WSR consideration, with a classification of *Wild*. The stream corridor is natural and rugged, with no substantial evidence of human alteration. The suitability finding will protect the continued health of the fish and plant communities identified within the segment.

Public Input

Public support for suitability focused on providing a reliable and enduring form of protection for the continued health of the riparian ecosystem extending from USFS lands upstream, as well as outstanding opportunities for solitude and a primitive and unconfined form of recreation.

Public comments opposing suitability cited existing protections, including a proposed conservation easement for adjacent lands and a citizen-proposed wilderness area designation.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Fish

A recent fish survey conducted by the BLM indicates that Potter Creek supports viable populations of both bluehead sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*) and flannelmouth sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*), warranting the addition of a Fish ORV.

Vegetation

This segment supports areas of narrowleaf cottonwood/ strapleaf willow/silver buffaloberry riparian forest (*Populus angustifolia/Salix ligulifolia/Shepherdia argentea*). While the CNHP lowered the rarity ranking to G3, the BLM determined that the quality and extensiveness of the plant community warrants retaining the Vegetation ORV until a review determines whether or not the occurrence is superior (A-ranked). This segment is included in the Roubideau Creek Potential Conservation Area designated by the CNHP.

Water Rights and Uses

There are no absolute or conditional water rights or impoundments on or upstream of this segment. The CWCB holds an instream flow water right structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable extent. The water right is decreed for 1.8 cfs (from March 1 to March 31), 4 cfs (from April 1 to June 15), 1.8 cfs (from June 16 to July 31), and 1.4 cfs (from August 1 to February 28), helping to sustain the Vegetation ORV.

Flow from Potter Creek contributes to the proper hydrologic function of Roubideau Creek and the Gunnison River downstream. Protecting a streamflow regime that mimics the natural seasonal changes needed to sustain a healthy riparian vegetation community might only be secured through federal WSR designation.

Land Ownership and Uses

All land within the corridor is managed by the federal government. One parcel of private land is adjacent to the lower terminus.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are no existing oil and gas leases or mining claims within the segment.

Administration

WSR designation would be consistent with actions pertaining to the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*) and would complement the BLM Colorado Public Land Health Standard for riparian vegetation.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitable finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORV, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary

depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The segment is within a proposed Special Recreation Management Area and two versions of a potential Area of Critical Environmental Concern being considered during development of the Uncompahgre RMP.

P.3.3 I0: Roubideau Creek, Segment I – Suitable Segment

Classification: Wild

ORVs: Recreational, Wildlife, Cultural, Vegetation

Suitable Length: 9.9 miles

BLM-Administered: 9.9 miles

Key Considerations:

- The segment contains a wide array of ORVs.
- The segment is within the Camel Back Wilderness Study Area.
- Private land is consolidated into one parcel near the upper terminus.
- Protection of a streamflow regime that mimics the natural seasonal changes needed to sustain a healthy riparian vegetation community for this segment might only be protected through WSR designation.
- Roubideau Creek contributes significant flow to the proper hydrologic function of Lower Roubideau Creek and the Gunnison River downstream.

Roubideau Creek, Segment I was found to be *suitable* for WSR designation, with a classification of *Wild*. The segment lies almost entirely within the Camel Back Wilderness Study Area and possesses a wild and primitive character and range of ORVs.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Recreational

The perennial creek flows within a highly scenic, wilderness-quality canyon, offering superior opportunities for non-mechanized recreation in a primitive setting. Activities include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, photography, nature study, and other non-mechanized uses, with vehicle access at the lower terminus.

Wildlife

The area has been designated as a potential conservation area for the northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*), a species currently under review by the Fish and Wildlife Service. This segment

also provides regionally important habitat for desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis Canadensis*), which use the lower end of the creek extensively as a water source and the cliffs above for lambing.

Cultural

The stream flows past an inscription panel of extreme historic significance. The site has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under *Criteria A, B, and D*. In 1769, Juan Maria Rivera visited the site at the behest of the king of Spain and carved his name and a date into a rock face. The panel also contains a prehistoric mountain sheep figure.

Vegetation

The segment lies within the CNHP-designated Roubideau Creek Potential Conservation Area, supporting areas of globally imperiled (G2) skunkbush sumac/sandbar willow riparian shrubland (*Rhus trilobata/Salix exigua*).

Water Rights and Uses

The entire stream channel is federally managed. There are no absolute or conditional water rights or impoundments within the segment. In the headwaters, a water diversion known as Spruce Spring Ditch (decreed for up to 9.3 cfs) transfers water from Roubideau Creek to the Dry Creek drainage (typically limited to the snowmelt period). The diversion diminishes spring and early summer flow through the segment.

The CWCB holds an instream flow water right decreed for 5 cfs (from March 1 to March 31), 21 cfs (from April 1 to June 15), 5 cfs (from June 16 to July 31), and 1.9 cfs (from August 1 to February 28) and structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable extent. The instream flow provides some protection to sustain the ORVs. Protecting a streamflow regime that mimics the natural seasonal changes needed to sustain a healthy riparian vegetation community for this segment might only be accomplished through WSR designation.

This section of Roubideau Creek in turn contributes flow to the proper hydrologic function of Lower Roubideau Creek and the Gunnison River downstream, providing habitat for native warm water fishes consistent with actions in the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*).

Land Ownership and Uses

The entire corridor is managed by the BLM. One parcel of private agricultural land is adjacent to the corridor's upper terminus.

Special Designations

The segment lies almost entirely within the Camel Back Wilderness Study Area.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are no existing oil and gas leases or mining claims within the segment.

Administration

WSR designation would complement the BLM Colorado Public Land Health standard for riparian vegetation. The segment would require few additional resources and facilities to effectively manage in support of the ORV.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

Although the segment is within a WSA, the designation is provisional and may not offer the long-term flow protection necessary for sustaining the Vegetation ORV. In addition, the segment is within two versions of a potential Area of Critical Environmental Concern being considered within separate alternatives for the Uncompahgre RMP.

P.3.4 14: Beaver Creek – Suitable Segment

Classification: Recreational

ORV: Vegetation

Suitable Length: 14.3 miles

BLM-Administered: 14.2 miles

Key Considerations:

- Beaver Creek provides value-added flow for the proper hydrologic function of the San Miguel River system and river-dependent resource values (including aquatic and riparian plant and animal species).
- A stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community for this segment might only be achieved through WSR designation.
- The principal private landowner within the corridor has expressed support for WSR designation.

Beaver Creek was found to be suitable for WSR designation, with a classification of Recreational. It was thought that the classification would allow for protection of the Vegetation ORV, while providing reasonable certainty that future water development projects would receive consideration and could move forward with minimal difficulty. There was strong public support for the finding.

Public Interest in Designation

There was strong public support for suitability, including from the primary private landowner and San Miguel County, with protection of riparian vegetation and predominance of federal ownership most commonly cited as the bases.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Value

Vegetation

This segment supports an occurrence of narrowleaf cottonwood/blue spruce/thinleaf alder riparian forest (*Populus angustifolia/ Picea pungens/Alnus tenuifolia*) along several miles of the corridor ranked as superior (A) by the CNHP. The BLM has designated an area that includes this segment as part of the San Miguel ACEC, primarily in order to protect this outstanding riparian community.

Water Rights and Uses

Beaver Creek provides flow for the proper hydrologic function of the San Miguel River system and river-dependent resource values (including aquatic and riparian plant and animal species). While there are no absolute or conditional water rights or impoundments within the segment, ditch diversions totaling 28 cfs and decreed storage rights totaling 203 acre-feet upstream of the segment and on tributaries diminish flow through the segment, primarily during irrigation season.

Conditional water rights for direct flow totaling 10 cfs and 6,043 acre-feet of storage rights occur upstream of the segment and on tributaries. If developed, these water rights would be senior to the instream flow water right. The Norwood Water Commission has a conditional water right on the San Miguel River.

The Naturita Canal presently diverts water from Beaver Creek upstream of the segment. The diversion is presently limited to a portion (approximately 60%) of the full decree due to water conveyance limitations of the canal system. As the infrastructure is improved to increase the water carrying capacity of the canal, more of the decree will be diverted, further depleting flows through the segment (based upon personal communication with Colorado Division of Water Resources Water Commissioner Aaron Todd). This water right is senior to both the existing state instream flow and any federal water right associated with WSR designation. In the 2004 Statewide Water Supply Initiative, the CWCB identified upper Beaver Creek as a potential dam site to help supply future water needs in the San Miguel River Basin.

A streamflow regime that mimics the natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community within the segment might only be achieved through WSR designation. The CWCB holds an instream flow water right along a portion of the segment decreed for 5 cfs (from May 1 to June 30) and 2.5 cfs (from July 1 to April 30), which is structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable extent. The instream flow provides some protection to sustain the Vegetation ORV. A 2.7-mile portion of the segment from the upper terminus to the confluence with Goat Creek has no water right.

Land Ownership and Uses

Land ownership is primarily federal within an approximately one quarter-mile buffer of the creek. Approximately 13% of land in the San Miguel County portion of the corridor is private. Private lands on the east side of Beaver Creek are in the Forestry, Agriculture, and Open Zone District, which is intended to preserve large, relatively remote areas of the county for resource, agricultural, open space, and recreational purposes. These areas currently have minimal public facilities and services and are considered inappropriate for substantial development. Development and/or special uses are encouraged to be located away from environmentally sensitive land.

Private lands on the west side of the corridor are within the Wright's Mesa Zone District. The district is intended to preserve the rural and agricultural character of Wright's Mesa while encouraging compatible, diverse economic opportunities that complement the rural landscape. Wright's Mesa has a history of coexisting agricultural, ranching, residential, and small business uses that comprise its rural character. The district discourages sprawl patterns typically created by 35-acre lots by offering reasonable alternatives and incentives to cluster buildings, retain open lands, and keep large parcels intact.

The Beaver Creek corridor is closed to OHV use. If developed, a conditional water right on the San Miguel River could require an ROW along portions of Beaver Creek.

ROWs

Numerous BLM ROW authorizations cross or run adjacent to the creek, including distribution and Western Area Power Administration (WAPA)/Tri-State transmission powerlines, a gas pipeline, a Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) highway, and a county road. These ROWs are primarily concentrated near the confluence of Beaver Creek with the San Miguel River.

Energy and Mineral Resources

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the segment corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

Although compatible with WSR designation, neither the existing ACEC and Special Recreation Management Area designations, nor the state instream flow water right secure sufficient instream flow to sustain the Vegetation ORV.

Segment access is somewhat restricted by limited existing roads and trails. WSR designation would complement the BLM Colorado Public Land Health standard for riparian vegetation.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORV, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Costs for administering and managing this segment for the Vegetation ORV are not likely to increase much above current funding levels. Factors that assist in protecting the ORV include: remoteness of the segment, limited trail access, and the predominance of federal land managed as an ACEC for riparian protection. It is unlikely that additional facilities would be needed to enhance management.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

WSR designation would provide the highest level of protection for the Vegetation ORV by necessitating acquisition of a federal water right that produces a flow rate mimicking natural, seasonal variation. Several existing authorities and segment features provide a lesser level of ORV protection, including an ACEC designation that protects riparian values, an existing state-based instream flow water right, environmentally supportive San Miguel County land use codes, and a high percentage of federally managed land within the corridor.

P.3.5 17: Saltado Creek – Suitable Segment

Classification: Wild

ORV: Vegetation

Suitable Length: 5.6 miles

BLM-Administered: 4.1 miles

Key Considerations:

- A stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian community might only be achieved through designation.
- Saltado Creek provides value-added flow for the proper hydrologic function of the San Miguel River system and river-dependent resource values (including aquatic and riparian plant and animal species).
- San Miguel County and a local homeowners association have expressed support for WSR designation.
- The majority of the segment is comprised of contiguous BLM-administered land, allowing for efficient management if designated.
- There are no roads or water right diversions within the segment.

Saltado Creek was found to be *suitable* for WSR designation, with a classification of *Wild*. The finding will help to protect the area's primitive character and vulnerable plant community.

Public Interest in Designation

There was strong public support for suitability, including from a local homeowners association and San Miguel County, with the protection of riparian vegetation and stream-related values most commonly cited as the bases for designation.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Value

Vegetation

This segment supports an occurrence of narrowleaf cottonwood/blue spruce/thinleaf alder riparian forest (*Populus angustifolia/Picea pungens/Alnus incana ssp. tenuifolia*) along several miles of its length ranked as superior (A) by the CNHP. The BLM has designated an area that includes this segment as part of the San Miguel ACEC, primarily in order to protect this outstanding riparian community.

Water Rights and Uses

A streamflow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community might only be achieved through federal designation. The CWCB holds an instream flow water right along the entire segment decreed for 2 cfs (from May 1 to June 30) and 1 cfs (from July 1 to April 30) and structured to protect the natural environment (including the Vegetation ORV) to a reasonable extent. Water yield through the segment contributes to the proper hydrologic function of the San Miguel River.

There are no water diversions or impoundments within the segment. Absolute water rights upstream of the segment include ditch diversions totaling 39 cfs and storage rights totaling 11.4 acre-feet. These water rights cause some depletion of streamflow through the segment, especially during the irrigation season.

Conditional water rights above the upper terminus include flow diversions totaling 5 cfs and storage rights totaling 15 acre-feet. If developed, these water rights would have seniority over the existing instream flow and any water right established as part of WSR designation, and could further diminish flow through the segment.

Land Ownership and Uses

Approximately 18% of the corridor consists of private land within the Forestry, Agriculture, and Open Zone District of San Miguel County. The district is intended to preserve large, relatively remote areas of the county for resource, agricultural, open space, and recreational purposes. These areas currently have minimal public facilities and services and are considered inappropriate for substantial development. Development and special uses are encouraged to be located outside of environmentally sensitive areas.

Special Designations

The segment is within the San Miguel Special Recreation Management Area and ACEC. The area is closed to OHV use.

ROWs and Withdrawals

Numerous BLM ROW authorizations cross or briefly run adjacent to the creek, including distribution and telephone lines, a CDOT highway, two WAPA transmission lines, and the Tri-State Nucla-Sunshine 115 kV transmission project.

While portions of the segment are within an area identified as a Powersite Classification, the classification does not preclude WSR designation. The federal government acquired public access easement across private lands adjacent to the creek in the southern upper reach of the segment.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

The northern lower reach of the segment has contiguous public land and lack of development, while along the southern upper reach, land ownership is split. WSR designation would be consistent with the BLM Colorado Public Land Health standard for riparian vegetation.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORV, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Administering and managing this segment for the Vegetation ORV would require a moderate increase in funding over current levels. The segment is remote, has no developed access, and 82% of the corridor is federal land managed as an ACEC for riparian protection, factors that assist in protecting the ORV.

It is unlikely that additional facilities would be necessary as a result of WSR designation. If available for purchase from willing sellers, private land parcels within the corridor would have added value for ORV protection.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

WSR designation would provide the highest level of protection for the Vegetation ORV by necessitating acquisition of a federal water right that produces flow rates mimicking natural, seasonal variation. However, several existing authorities and segment features provide a lesser level of ORV protection, including: an ACEC designation intended to protect riparian values, an existing state-based instream flow water right, environmentally supportive San Miguel County land use codes, and a high percentage of federally managed land within the corridor.

P.3.6 18: San Miguel River, Segment I – Suitable Segment

***Classification:* Recreational**

***ORV:* Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, Historic, Vegetation, Paleontology**

***Suitable Length:* 27.2 miles**

***BLM-Administered:* 17.3 miles**

Key Considerations:

- The segment contains a wide array of ORVs.
- A stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community for this segment might only be achieved through WSR designation.
- Over 80% of land within the segment is public. Most of the segment is within San Miguel County, which has expressed support for WSR designation. A small portion of the segment is within Montrose County, which opposes designation.

San Miguel River, Segment I was found to be *suitable* for WSR designation, with a classification of *Recreational*. Suitability would allow for protection of the multitude of ORVs within the corridor. While concerns were raised regarding uranium and recreational placer mining within the segment, the RAC Subgroup believed that a *Recreational* classification would allow for the continuation of these activities.

Public Interest in Designation

The segment received much support for and opposition to suitability, with supporters (including San Miguel County) citing the unparalleled scenery and natural and cultural features within the corridor and opponents (including the Montrose County Board of Commissioners) expressing concern over potential restrictions on historic uses.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenic

An interdisciplinary BLM field inventory team evaluated and assigned this section of the San Miguel a *Scenic Quality Classification* of A. The river here is boulder-strewn, with a strong and constant gradient. The energetic, splashy flow is the keystone to the scenic quality of the reach. The color and contrast provided by steep canyon walls and interesting erosional patterns add to the visual appeal. Thick, diverse riparian vegetation provides additional scenic interest, changing in color and density throughout the growing season. From Deep Creek to Leopard Creek, stunning views of the San Juan mountain range enhance the landscape. A few modifications, including power lines and roads, are a minor detraction from the scenery.

Recreational

This entire segment of the San Miguel is within the San Miguel River Special Recreation Management Area and provides superior opportunities for river-related recreation. The river is easily accessed via paved highway and contains a number of high-quality BLM recreation sites, including six developed boat launches, six picnic areas, a campground, and an interpretive center. During snowmelt, whitewater rafters and kayakers are challenged by the swift currents and complex hydraulics of this boulder-strewn river. Outside of the snowmelt season, the river provides excellent opportunities for trout fishing on complex pocket water. Fishing enthusiasts may access the river via foot or raft.

The river's reputation for outstanding recreation, combined with the availability of commercial guide services, consistently draws visitors from around the world. This section also offers exceptional opportunities for sightseeing and photography along the Unaweep-Tabeguache Byway. The byway is marketed to visitors both within and outside of Colorado by the Unaweep-Tabeguache Byway Committee and the Colorado Office of Tourism.

Wildlife

Portions of the river corridor in this segment represent one of the finest protected Southwest Canyon Riparian Habitat sites in the United States. The Southwest Canyon Riparian Habitat is recognized as the richest terrestrial bird habitat type in North America, providing breeding sites for a wide variety of species, and primary migratory routes for nearly all songbirds throughout the western United States. According to the National Audubon Society, more than 300 bird species have been observed in the San Miguel River corridor.

Historic

Remnants of an old railroad grade follow along much of this section. The Rio Grande Southern Railroad operated a fleet of seven unusual railcars along a narrow gauge track from the 1930s until service ended in 1952, at which point the line was decommissioned. The rail line was known as the Galloping Goose. Built from car, truck, and bus parts, the lightweight "motors" proved to be an economical method for transporting mail and passengers between Durango and Ridgway.

The remains of historic uranium ore processing loadout areas are also present along this stretch. The site qualifies for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under *Criterion A*.

Vegetation

This reach supports occurrences of four riparian communities, river birch/mesic graminoid riparian shrubland (*Betula occidentalis/mesic graminoids*), narrowleaf cottonwood/blue spruce/thinleaf alder riparian forest (*Populus angustifolia/Picea pungens/Alnus incana ssp. tenuifolia*), narrowleaf cottonwood/ thinleaf alder riparian woodland (*Populus angustifolia/Alnus incana ssp. tenuifolia*), and thinleaf alder/mesic graminoid riparian shrubland (*Alnus incana ssp. tenuifolia/mesic graminoids*), ranked as Superior (A) by the CNHP. The reach falls within the Middle San Miguel Potential Conservation Area and the BLM has designated an area which includes this segment as part of the San Miguel ACEC, primarily to protect these outstanding riparian communities.

Paleontology

For many miles, the canyon formed by the San Miguel River exposes chunks of the Morrison Formation, remnants of a one hundred million-year old river bed. This Jurassic-age river meandered eastward from the ancestral Rocky Mountains into immense inland seas. Many fossils, including rare fish, plants, and fragmentary dinosaur bones, can be found along this stretch.

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes to the proper hydrologic function of the lower San Miguel River and Dolores River downstream. The CWCB holds two instream flow water rights structured to protect the natural environment and sustain the ORVs to a reasonable

extent. Instream flow from Deep Creek to Fall Creek provides for a year-round flow of 20 cfs, while the flow from Fall Creek to the lower terminus calls for 93 cfs from May 1 to October 14 and 61 cfs for the remainder of the year. Flow needed to support some recreational boating activities and riparian protection might only be secured through water rights associated with WSR designation.

Approximately six water diversions scattered along the segment are not prominent features in the corridor and do not detract from the natural character of the river. Impoundments upstream of the segment include Trout Lake and Hope Lake on the Lake Fork tributary. There are a few off-channel impoundments within the segment associated with Cascabel Ranch near the lower terminus.

According to a draft BLM San Miguel instream flow assessment, senior water rights on the mainstem of the San Miguel River between Horsefly Creek and Naturita Creek divert water downstream of the segment. Much of this water demand is conveyed through the segment, but is limited primarily to the irrigation season.

Estimates from the Colorado HydroBase Decision Support System indicate that there are more than 160,000 acre-feet of conditional storage water rights on either the mainstem or tributaries within and upstream of the segment. If developed, these rights could influence flow through the segment.

Much of the water needed to meet future demands would come from conservation practices and development of existing water rights, including some conditional water rights in the San Miguel Basin. Most of these rights are senior to existing instream flow water rights or any instream flow created through WSR designation. Dam sites identified on the mainstem may be very difficult to develop, given current construction costs and concerns over environmental impacts.

Any new water right or change to existing rights is limited by the instream flow water right. Authorization for any new structures on BLM lands would contain conditions to ensure compliance with WSR Act.

Land Ownership and Uses

Zoning

A portion of the segment within Montrose County is zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses requiring a special use permit. Many of these uses are not related to agriculture and have the potential to conflict with the intent of the WSR Act.

Portions of the corridor downstream of Beaver Creek and on the southwest side of the San Miguel River are within the Wright's Mesa Zone District in San Miguel County. The district is intended to preserve the rural and agricultural character of Wright's Mesa while encouraging diverse economic opportunities compatible with the rural landscape. Wright's Mesa has a history of coexisting agriculture, ranching, residential, and small business uses that comprise its

rural character. The district discourages large-lot patterns of sprawl (typically created through 35-acre developments) by offering alternatives and incentives to cluster buildings, retain open lands, and keep large parcels intact.

The remaining portions of the corridor within San Miguel County are primarily in the Forestry, Agriculture, and Open Zone District. The district is intended to preserve large, relatively remote areas of the county for resource, agricultural, open space, and recreational purposes. These areas currently have minimal public facilities and services and are considered inappropriate for substantial development. Development and/or special uses are encouraged to be located away from environmentally sensitive land.

The incorporated town of Placerville is zoned into two districts: The Placerville Residential Zone District provides areas and design standards for single-family residences surrounding the Placerville Commercial Zone District. The Placerville Commercial Zone District provides standards for commercial establishments located on Front Street in Placerville and at the southwest corner of the intersection of State Highways 62 and 145 west of Placerville. The size of the district cannot be increased.

There are a few planned unit developments along the San Miguel River in the vicinity of the incorporated town of Sawpit. The allowed uses within the planned unit developments are primarily single family housing on large lots (with a minimum of 35 acres). Other uses, such as multi-family housing and neighborhood commercial development, are allowed upon approval from the Board of County Commissioners.

ROWs and Withdrawals

ROWs within the segment include four power and nine telephone lines, gas pipelines, private access roads, county roads, a highway, an historic ditch, two WAPA 345-kilovolt power lines, the McKeever drift fence to the USFS boundary, and C-64335 river diversion weirs.

While portions of the segment are within an area identified by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as having potential for hydropower development, classification as a Power Site does not preclude WSR designation.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. According to the State of Colorado Oil and Gas Commission electronic well records database, there is an abandoned oil and gas well within the corridor.

Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

Several private land parcels are scattered throughout the corridor. A small portion of the segment is within Montrose County, which has adopted a resolution opposing WSR designation.

WSR designation would complement BLM Colorado Public Land Health standards for riparian vegetation and wildlife.

Special Designations

Most of the segment is within a Special Recreation Management Area and an ACEC.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

The costs for managing this segment for the Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, Historic, Vegetation, and Paleontologic ORVs would be moderately higher than current funding levels. The segment is within an existing Special Recreation Management Area and an ACEC from Placerville downstream, both of which have resulted in additional funding and resource protection actions along the river corridor.

A state highway parallels most of this reach, providing for easy access and use of the river and riparian area.

The segment includes several scattered parcels of private land. The BLM would pursue land acquisition from willing sellers as funding and opportunities arose, which would add value toward management and protection of the ORVs.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

While WSR designation would provide the most comprehensive protection for the ORVs, several existing authorities and segment features provide some lesser level of ORV protection:

- ACEC and Special Recreation Management Area designations emphasize management for riparian and recreation values.
- An existing state-based instream flow water right in the San Miguel River helps to sustain the water-dependent ORVs.
- Development objectives on private lands in most of the segment are within the San Miguel County Land Use Code, which promotes preserving large remote areas for resource, agricultural, open space, and recreational purposes.
- A large portion of private land within the corridor is managed by The Nature Conservancy, which supports a finding of suitability.

In addition, conservation easements could be pursued on select private portions of the corridor, which would be value added in providing protection for the ORVs.

P.3.7 19: San Miguel River, Segment 2 – Suitable Segment

Classification: Wild

ORVs: Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, Vegetation

Suitable Length: 4.0 miles

BLM-Administered: 4.0 miles

Key Considerations:

- The segment contains a wide array of ORVs.
- The segment is comprised entirely of public lands.
- A stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community for this segment might only be achieved through WSR designation.

San Miguel River, Segment 2 was found to be *suitable* for WSR designation, with a classification of *Wild*. The segment length was shortened to end at the Bennett property in order to protect landowner interests at Horsefly Creek, and the natural topography of the canyon rims will be used to delineate the corridor.

The RAC Subgroup considered overall land health within the segment to be of primary concern. While the impact of grazing on the Vegetation ORV is addressed to some extent through the current ACEC and Special Recreation Management Area designations, it was determined that WSR designation would provide longer-lasting protections.

Public Interest in Designation

The segment received much support for and opposition to suitability, with supporters identifying the outstanding canyon setting and stream-related values within the corridor and opponents expressing concern over potential restrictions on historic and future uses of water and the corridor.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenic

An interdisciplinary BLM field inventory team evaluated the area and assigned a *Scenic Quality Classification of A*. The San Miguel River flows clear and is a dominant element in this section. Complex erosional patterns combine with a diverse riparian plant community to form a varied landscape in contrasting hues of green, red, yellow, orange, gray, tan, and blue. This section of river is boulder-strewn and has a consistent gradient. The constant, energetic, splashy flow creates visually pleasing hydraulic features that are rare in the region of comparison. Adjacent scenery contributes to the setting.

Recreational

This section of the San Miguel River offers a rare and extraordinary opportunity for primitive river recreation, as the riparian surroundings transition from the Rocky Mountain physiographic region of the upper San Miguel to the Colorado Plateau physiographic region of the lower San Miguel. With no roads or developments, this section appears primitive and natural. River recreation in this section includes rafting, kayaking and trout fishing, as part of long day or multi-day trips. This and the adjacent downstream segment support the best population of self-sustaining trout in the San Miguel. There are several primitive BLM campsites along the reach. The entire reach lies within the San Miguel Special Recreation Management Area, used by private and commercial river runners and trout fishers.

Wildlife

Portions of the river corridor in this segment represent one of the finest examples of protected Southwest Canyon Riparian Habitat in the United States. The Southwest Canyon Riparian Habitat is recognized as the richest terrestrial bird habitat type in North America, providing breeding sites for a wide variety of bird species and primary migratory routes for nearly all songbirds throughout the western United States. According to the National Audubon Society, more than 300 bird species have been observed in the San Miguel River corridor.

Vegetation

This segment supports five distinct and outstanding riparian communities. These include four superior (A-ranked) occurrences of communities classified as globally vulnerable (G3) thinleaf alder/mesic graminoid riparian shrubland (*Alnus incana ssp. tenuifolia/mesic graminoids*), narrowleaf cottonwood/blue spruce/thinleaf alder riparian forest (*Populus angustifolia/Picea pungens/Alnus incana ssp. tenuifolia*), narrowleaf cottonwood/thinleaf alder riparian woodland (*Populus angustifolia/Alnus incana ssp. tenuifolia*), and river birch/mesic graminoid riparian shrubland (*Betula occidentalis/mesic graminoids*). In addition, a superior (A-ranked) occurrence of blue spruce/red osier dogwood riparian forest (*Picea pungens/Cornus sericea*), ranked as apparently secure (G4), occurs here as well. The site is included within the CNHP-designated San Miguel River, Clay Creek to Horsefly Creek Potential Conservation Area. The BLM has also designated an area that includes this segment as part of the San Miguel ACEC, primarily in order to protect these outstanding riparian communities.

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes to the proper hydrologic function of the lower San Miguel River and Dolores River downstream.

The CWCB holds an instream flow water right along the entire segment decreed for 93 cfs from May 1 to October 14 and 61 cfs the remainder of the year structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable extent. The instream flow provides some protection to sustain the ORVs.

There are no absolute or conditional water rights or impoundments within the segment.

If developed, conditional water rights upstream of the segment could influence flow through the segment. Colorado Decision Support System HydroBase estimates indicate that there are more

than 160,000 acre-feet of conditional storage water rights upstream of the segment, on either the mainstem or tributaries.

There are a few impoundments upstream of the segment, including Trout Lake and Hope Lake (on the Lake Fork tributary), and a few off-channel impoundments associated with Cascabel Ranch immediately upstream of the segment.

Any new water right or change to existing rights is limited by the instream flow water right. Authorization for any new structures on BLM lands would contain conditions to ensure compliance with WSR Act.

Senior rights on the mainstem of the San Miguel River divert water in the reach between Horsefly Creek and Naturita Creek downstream of this segment (based upon San Miguel legal and institutional analysis). Much of the water demanded by these diversions is conveyed through the segment, primarily limited to the irrigation season.

Much of the water needed to meet future demand in the San Miguel River Basin would come from conservation practices and development of existing water rights, including some of the existing conditional water rights in the San Miguel Basin. Most of these rights are senior to both the existing instream flow water rights and any instream flow created through WSR designation.

According to San Miguel legal and institutional analysis, potential dam sites on the San Miguel River (downstream of Leopard Creek near the confluence with Beaver Creek and above Horsefly Creek) and major tributaries (including Horsefly Creek and Maverick Draw) identified in the 2004 Statewide Water Supply Initiative are unlikely to be developed, given current costs and concern over environmental impacts. Saltado Reservoir (with a conditional fill and refill right totaling over 140,000 acre-feet on the San Miguel River downstream of Specie Creek) is included in this assessment.

Land Ownership and Uses

Approximately 1.7% of the corridor consists of private land zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses requiring a fee or special use permit. Many of the uses are not related to agriculture and have the potential to conflict with the intent of the WSR Act.

Special Designations

The segment is within an ACEC, as well as a Special Recreation Management Area. WSR designation is compatible with these existing designations.

Withdrawals

While portions of the segment are within an area classified as having potential for Waterpower and

Energy and Mineral Resources

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

River flow needed to support some recreational boating activities and provide adequate protection for the riparian vegetation might only be secured through water rights associated with WSR designation. Designation would complement BLM Colorado Public Land Health standards for riparian vegetation and wildlife. There is no road access within the segment.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Estimated costs for administering and managing this segment for the Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, and riparian Vegetation ORVs would be slightly higher than current funding levels. The river corridor is remote, has limited trail access, and is entirely comprised of federal land, most of which is managed as both an ACEC (for riparian protection) and a Special Recreation Management Area. These designations provide some additional funding necessary for managing and protecting the ORVs.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The segment is within an ACEC, as well as a Special Recreation Management Area.

Current instream flow water rights held by the CWCB provide some protection for flows necessary to support the ORVs.

The area is identified in the Colorado Citizens Wilderness Proposal and the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2009 (H.R. 4289) introduced by Congresswoman Diana DeGette. WSR designation would be compatible with wilderness designation and wilderness characteristics.

P.3.8 20: San Miguel River, Segment 3 – Suitable Segment

***Classification:* Recreational**

***ORVs:* Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, Vegetation**

***Suitable Length:* 4.5 miles**

***BLM-Administered:* 4.5 miles**

Key Considerations:

- The segment contains a wide array of ORVs.
- A stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community within the segment might only be achieved through WSR designation.

- Sufficient flow for certain recreational boating activities might only be secured with water rights acquired through WSR designation.

San Miguel River, Segment 3 was found to be *suitable* for WSR designation, with a classification of *Recreational*. Based on a recommendation by the RAC Subgroup, the eligibility classification was changed (from *Scenic*) due to the presence of the CC Ditch, two BLM campgrounds, and many mining claims along this stretch, as well as a dirt road running parallel to the river. In addition, the segment is popular for recreational gold mining. The Bennett property, as well as private land at the lower end of the segment, was excluded from the suitability recommendation.

Public Interest in Designation

The segment received much support for and opposition to suitability, with supporters identifying the outstanding setting and stream-related values within the corridor and opponents expressing concern over potential restrictions on historic and future uses of water and the corridor.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Recreational

This San Miguel River segment offers a rare and extraordinary opportunity for primitive river recreation, as the riparian surroundings transition from the Rocky Mountain physiographic region of the upper San Miguel to the Colorado Plateau physiographic region of the lower San Miguel. River recreation in this section includes rafting, kayaking and trout fishing, as part of long day or multi-day trips.

With few developments and one minor dirt road not visible from the river, this section appears mostly primitive and natural. Several primitive BLM campsites dot the shoreline, and two developed campgrounds with boat ramps, toilets and picnic facilities are located along the lower third of the reach. Exceptionally good “play waves” form in the Ledges area during spring runoff and are sought by kayakers, who consider them to be some of the best natural features of their kind in the state.

This and the adjacent upstream segment support the San Miguel’s best population of self-sustaining trout. The entire reach lies within the San Miguel Special Recreation Management Area, used by private and commercial river runners and trout fishers.

Fish

This segment harbors exemplary populations of three BLM and Colorado sensitive species: flannelmouth suckers (*Catostomus latipinnis*), bluehead suckers (*Catostomus discobolus*), and roundtail chubs (*Gila robusta*).

Wildlife

Portions of the river corridor in this segment represent one of the finest areas of protected Southwest Canyon Riparian Habitat in the United States. The Southwest Canyon Riparian Habitat is recognized as the richest terrestrial bird habitat type in North America, providing

breeding sites for a wide variety of bird species and primary migratory routes for nearly all songbirds throughout the western United States. More than 300 bird species have been observed in the San Miguel River corridor. The expanding Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*) population has been moving up the San Miguel River, as evidenced by a nest found at the Highway 90 Bridge at Piñon (National Audubon Society 2010).

Vegetation

This reach supports a superior (A-ranked) occurrence of sandbar willow (*Salix exigua/mesic graminoids*) riparian shrubland, ranked as secure globally (G5). The segment is included in the San Miguel River at Cottonwood Creek Potential Conservation Area.

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes to the proper hydrologic function of the lower San Miguel River and Dolores River downstream. There is no instream flow water right on the segment, so changes or enlargements to existing water rights or new water rights on private property could further diminish flow.

Four absolute water rights within the segment divert up to 153 cfs for irrigation and municipal use. An instream flow right associated with WSR designation could limit the ability to change points of diversion on existing water rights.

The Highline Canal diversion (decreed for 145 cfs) is located downstream of the upper terminus and parallels the San Miguel River for most of the segment. The canal is senior to most other water rights and is primarily used for crop irrigation downstream in late summer, when irrigation demand is high and snowmelt has diminished.

While there are no existing impoundments within the segment, Trout Lake and Hope Lake impound water upstream on the Lake Fork tributary. In addition, there are a few off-channel impoundments associated with Cascabel Ranch.

Colorado Decision Support System HydroBase estimates indicate that there are more than 204,000 acre-feet of conditional water storage rights upstream of the segment, on both the mainstem and tributaries. Much of the water needed to meet future demand is likely to come from conservation practices and development of existing water rights, including conditional rights in the San Miguel Basin. Most of these rights would be senior to any instream flow created through WSR designation.

Given current construction costs and concerns over environmental impacts, dam sites identified on the mainstem may be difficult to develop. One such site is the Saltado Reservoir on the San Miguel River downstream of Specie Creek, with a conditional water right for fill and refill totaling over 140,000 acre-feet.

Land Ownership and Uses

This 4.5-mile stretch of the San Miguel River consists entirely of BLM-administered land.

Special Designations

WSR designation would be consistent with the existing Special Recreation Management Area designation.

ROWs and Withdrawals

Transco and Rocky Mountain Natural Gas pipelines, two Tri-State transmission lines, and one distribution powerline cross the segment. The Highline Canal, telephone lines, and a county road parallel the segment. There is a private access road one-quarter to one-half mile to the west and a water pipeline within one-quarter mile to the north.

While portions of the segment are within an area classified as having Waterpower and Reservoir Resources the Powersite Classification does not preclude WSR designations.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

According to a State of Colorado Oil and Gas Commission electronic well records database, there are existing oil and gas leases within the segment, as well as two abandoned oil and gas wells. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

A streamflow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community for this segment might only be achieved through WSR designation. Designation would complement BLM Colorado Public Land Health Standards for riparian vegetation, special status species, and wildlife.

River flow needed to support certain recreational boating activities might only be secured through water rights associated with WSR designation.

This segment of the San Miguel supports habitat for native warm water fish, making WSR designation consistent with actions in the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*). Depletion of flow by the Highline Canal might inhibit the ability to sustain the Fish ORV, as well as the Vegetation ORV.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Costs associated with administering and managing this segment for the Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, and Vegetation ORVs are estimated to be moderately higher than current funding levels. The segment is managed as a Special Recreation Management Area, which has provided some funding for facilities and maintenance to protect the ORVs.

With easy access to the river corridor provided by a county road running parallel to the river, visitor use could increase if designated and additional funding for facilities would likely be needed. If purchased from willing sellers, private land parcels within the corridor would have added value for ORV protection.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

While WSR designation would provide the most comprehensive protection for the ORVs, existing authorities provide some level of protection, including the Special Recreation Management Area designation, which emphasizes management for riparian and recreation values. Conservation easements for select private portions of the corridor could be pursued, potentially increasing protection for ORVs. Appropriation of a state-based instream flow water right through the segment would also help to sustain the ORVs.

P.3.9 21: San Miguel River, Segment 5 – Suitable Segment

Classification: Recreational

ORVs: Recreational, Fish, Historic, Vegetation

Suitable Length: 7.5 miles

BLM-Administered: 1.3 miles

Key Considerations:

- Water yield contributes significantly to the proper hydrologic function of the Lower Dolores River downstream.
- A stream flow regime that mimics the natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community might only be attainable through WSR designation.
- The Nature Conservancy is the principal landowner and has expressed strong support for WSR designation of the segment.
- The CWCB has declared its intent to appropriate a state instream flow for the lower San Miguel River.

San Miguel River, Segment 5 was found to be *suitable* for WSR designation, with a classification of *Recreational*. Based on recommendations by the RAC Subgroup, the segment was reduced from its eligible length to begin downstream from the Richards property, run the length of The Nature Conservancy property, and terminate at the confluence with Tabeguache Creek. In addition, the boundaries of the protective corridor were delineated to extend rim to rim, using existing developments and natural barriers.

Public Interest in Designation

The segment received much support for and opposition to suitability, with supporters highlighting the important river-related values within the corridor and opponents expressing concern over potential restrictions on access and historic and future uses of water and the corridor.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Recreational

This section of the San Miguel River provides exceptional opportunities for sightseeing and photography along the Unaweep-Tabeguache Byway. The byway is marketed to visitors from within Colorado, out of state, and internationally by the Unaweep-Tabeguache Byway Committee and by the Colorado Office of Tourism. This section of the byway focuses on the San Miguel River and its associated historic sites and surrounding landscape.

Fish

This segment supports exemplary populations of three BLM and Colorado sensitive species: flannelmouth sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*), bluehead sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*). This segment contains an intact native fishery and is regionally one of the best examples of a remnant native fishery. In addition, this segment was historically occupied by Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*), a federally endangered species.

Historic

This stretch of river marks the beginning of the historic Hanging Flume, one of the premier 19th century engineering accomplishments in the west. The thirteen-mile flume was constructed above the Dolores and San Miguel rivers over a three-year period in the late 1800s to supply water to a hydraulic placer gold mining operation. The structure was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980, and was listed as one of Colorado's Most Endangered Places in 1999. In addition, the flume is listed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties, the World Heritage Fund list of most endangered places and the 2006 World Monument Fund Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites.

Vegetation

The segment lies within the San Miguel River at Tabeguache Creek Potential Conservation Area and supports New Mexico privet riparian shrubland (*Forestiera pubescens*), Fremont cottonwood/skunkbush sumac riparian woodland (*Populus deltoides* ssp. *wislizenii*/*Rhus trilobata*), and skunkbush sumac riparian shrubland (*Rhus trilobata*), all ranked as globally imperiled (G2).

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through San Miguel River, Segment 5 contributes to the proper hydrologic function of the Lower Dolores River. In January 2011, the CWCB announced its intention to appropriate an instream flow for the lower San Miguel River (from the confluence of Calamity Draw to the confluence with the Dolores River) of 325 cfs (from April 15 to June 14), 170 cfs (from June 15 to July 31), 115 cfs (from August 1 to August 31), 80 cfs (from September 1 to February 28), and 115 cfs (from March 1 to April 14) structured to benefit the propagation of three native warm water fish species. The appropriation was upheld at a hearing on September 13, 2011.

While no existing impoundments occur within the segment, there are a few small impoundments upstream (including Trout Lake and Hope Lake on the Lake Fork tributary), and a few off-channel impoundments associated with Cascabel Ranch.

The segment contains approximately six water diversions, at least two (San Miguel Power Company Canal and Johnson Ditch) of which were owned by Umetco Minerals Corporation and donated to the CWCB for other than decreed uses. Decision on the fate of these water rights is pending, but potential future uses include conveying a portion to Montrose County or local governments within the San Miguel Basin, and donating a portion to an instream flow right in the lower San Miguel River. Future use of these rights could result in changes to existing points of diversion.

According to Colorado Decision Support System HydroBase estimates, there are over 349,000 acre-feet of conditional storage water rights upstream of the segment, on either the mainstem or tributaries of the San Miguel River. If developed, these water rights would be senior to any instream flow or federal water right and could further diminish flow.

Much of the water needed to meet future regional demand would be derived through conservation practices and development of existing water rights, including conditional water rights in the San Miguel Basin. Most of these conditional water rights are senior to both existing instream flow water rights and any instream flow created through WSR designation.

The 2004 Statewide Water Supply Initiative identified future potential dam sites on the San Miguel River (downstream of Leopard Creek near the confluence with Beaver Creek and above Horsefly Creek) and major tributaries, including Horsefly Creek and Maverick Draw. According to a draft BLM San Miguel Instream Flow Assessment, dam sites identified on the mainstem are unlikely to be developed, given current costs and concerns with environmental impacts. The assessment included Saltado Reservoir on the San Miguel River downstream of Specie Creek, with a fill and refill right totaling over 140,000 acre-feet.

An instream flow or federal water right associated with WSR designation could restrict new water rights or changes to existing water rights.

Land Ownership and Uses

ROWs and Withdrawals

ROWs within the corridor include Colorado State Highway 141, several county roads, telephone and power lines, an historic irrigation ditch, and a water pipeline.

A bat maternity roost withdrawal is located in an abandoned uranium mine along the river.

While portions of this segment are within an area classified as having Waterpower and Reservoir Resources the Powersite Classification does not preclude WSR designation.

Energy and Mineral Resources

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

WSR designation would complement the public land health standard for riparian vegetation and special status species. This segment supports habitat for native warm water fishes, and

designation would be consistent with actions in the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*).

The Nature Conservancy is the principal landowner within the corridor and supports WSR designation and working with the BLM to manage the segment ORVs.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

The segment is paralleled by State Highway 141, part of the Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway. The highway provides easy access to the river corridor, and if designated, visitor use along the byway could be expected to increase somewhat.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

While WSR designation would provide the most comprehensive protection for the ORVs, The Nature Conservancy ownership affords protections. If confirmed by the water court, an instream flow water right appropriated by the CWCB in September 2011 would help sustain the Fish and Vegetation ORVs.

P.3.10 22: San Miguel River, Segment 6 – Suitable Segment

Classification: Recreational

ORVs: Recreational, Fish, Historic, Vegetation

Suitable Length: 2.1 miles

BLM-Administered: 2.1 miles

Key Considerations:

- A stream flow regime that mimics the natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community might only be attainable through WSR designation.
- Water yield contributes significantly to the proper hydrologic function of the Lower Dolores River downstream.
- The CWCB has declared its intent to appropriate a state instream flow for the lower San Miguel River.

San Miguel River, Segment 6 was found to be *suitable* for WSR designation, with a classification of *Recreational*. Based on a recommendation from the RAC Subgroup, the segment was

redelineated to begin downstream of Umetco Minerals Corporation property and terminate at the confluence with the Dolores River.

Public Interest in Designation

The segment received substantial support for and opposition to suitability, with supporters highlighting protection of the riparian ecosystem and river-related values within the corridor and opponents expressing concern over potential restrictions on historic and future uses of water and the corridor.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Recreational

This section of the San Miguel River provides exceptional opportunities for sightseeing and photography along the Unaweep-Tabeguache Byway. The byway is marketed to visitors from within Colorado, as well as out of state and internationally by the Unaweep-Tabeguache Byway Committee and by the Colorado Office of Tourism. This section of the byway focuses on the river and surrounding landscape, as well as associated historic sites.

Fish

This river segment contains exemplary populations of Bluehead sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), flannelmouth sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*), and roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*), all BLM and Colorado sensitive warm water fish species. The species are regionally important within the reach due to population numbers and the lack of non-native fish. In addition, the reach was historically occupied by the Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*), a federally endangered species.

Historic

One of the premier engineering accomplishments of the 19th century in the west, remnants of the historic Hanging Flume dot the canyon walls along this stretch of the San Miguel. The thirteen-mile flume was built in the late 1800s to supply water to a hydraulic placer gold mining operation on the Dolores River near Roc Creek. The structure was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980, and was listed as one of Colorado's Most Endangered Places in 1999. In addition, the flume is listed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties, the World Heritage Fund's list of most endangered places and the 2006 World Monument Fund Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites.

Historic uranium mining buildings and shafts can also be found along this stretch, many of which have been evaluated and found to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under *Criterion A*.

Vegetation

This riparian zone contains New Mexico privet riparian shrubland (*Forestiera pubescens*), which is currently ranked as globally imperiled (G2). The reach is included within the Uravan West Potential Conservation Area and is considered by CNHP to have outstanding significance.

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through San Miguel, Segment 6 contributes to the proper hydrologic function of the Lower Dolores River.

In January 2011, the CWCB announced its intention to appropriate an instream flow for the lower San Miguel River (from the confluence of Calamity Draw to the confluence with the Dolores River) of 325 cfs (from April 15 to June 14), 170 cfs (from June 15 to July 31), 115 cfs (from August 1 to August 31), 80 cfs (from September 1 to February 28), and 115 cfs (from March 1 to April 14) structured to benefit the propagation of three native warm water fish species. The appropriation was upheld at a hearing on September 13, 2011.

While there are no existing impoundments within the segment, there are a few small impoundments upstream (including Trout Lake and Hope Lake on the Lake Fork tributary) and a few off-channel impoundments associated with Cascabel Ranch.

There are a few small impoundments upstream of the segment (including Trout Lake and Hope Lake) located on the Lake Fork tributary.

According to Colorado Decision Support System HydroBase estimates, there are more than 349,000 acre-feet of conditional storage water rights upstream of the segment, on either the mainstem or tributaries of the San Miguel River. If developed, these water rights would be senior to any instream flow or federal water right on this segment and could further diminish flow through this reach.

Much of the water needed to meet future demand would come from conservation practices and development of existing water rights, including some of the existing conditional water rights in the San Miguel Basin. Most of these conditional water rights are senior to both existing instream flow water rights and any instream flow created through WSR designation.

2004 Statewide Water Supply Initiative identified future potential dam sites on the San Miguel River (downstream of Leopard Creek near the confluence with Beaver Creek, and above Horsefly Creek) and major tributaries, including Horsefly Creek and Maverick Draw. Given current construction costs and concerns over environmental impacts, dam sites identified on the mainstem may be difficult to develop. This assessment includes Saltado Reservoir on the San Miguel River downstream of Specie Creek, with a conditional water right totaling over 140,000 acre-feet.

An instream flow or federal water right associated with WSR designation could restrict new water rights or changes to existing water rights.

Land Ownership and Uses

ROW and Withdrawals

ROWs within the corridor include Colorado State Highway 141, several county roads, telephone and powerlines, and an historic irrigation ditch and water pipeline.

While portions of the segment are within an area classified as having Waterpower and Reservoir Resources, the Powersite Classification does not preclude WSR designation.

Energy and Mineral Resources

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

WSR designation for this segment complements BLM Colorado Public Land Health standards for riparian vegetation and, by supporting habitat for native warm water fishes, is consistent with the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*).

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Costs associated with administering and managing this segment for the Recreational, Fish, Historic, and Vegetation ORVs would be moderately to much higher than current funding levels. With easy access to the river corridor provided by the paralleling county road, visitor use would be expected to increase if designated. As a result, additional funding for facilities would likely be needed.

A county road currently infringes on the stream channel and riparian zone along portions of this reach. With future county plans to possibly widen the road, costly measures would be necessary to avoid additional impacts to the river corridor. If purchased from willing sellers, private lands in the upper reaches of the segment would add value for ORV protection.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

While WSR designation would provide the most comprehensive protection for the ORVs, conservation easements on select private portions of the corridor would offer added value toward protecting the ORVs. If confirmed by the water court, an instream flow water right appropriated by the CWCB in September 2011 would help sustain the Recreation, Fish, and Vegetation ORVs.

P.3.11 23: Tabeguache Creek, Segment I – Suitable Segment

Classification: Wild

ORV: Vegetation

Suitable Length: 3.4 miles

BLM-Administered: 3.4 miles

Key Considerations:

- Existing designation as a Special Management Area offers significant protection to sustain the Vegetation ORV.
- Limited water development in the upper Tabeguache Basin results in a flow regime that mimics natural conditions.
- A contiguous 3.7-mile upstream portion of Tabeguache Creek managed by the USFS is identified as eligible in the Proposed Land Management Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (2007), based upon Scenic and Cultural ORVs.

Tabeguache Creek, Segment I was found to be suitable for WSR designation, with a classification of *Wild*. Based on the recommendation of the RAC Subgroup, the segment was redelineated to begin at the USFS boundary and end one-quarter mile from private property. The classification complements existing protections in the area, including designation as a specially managed “area,” and provides the BLM with an effective tool for managing the segment in support of the Vegetation ORV.

Public Interest in Designation

The segment received balanced support for and opposition to suitability, with supporters highlighting protection of the wild and natural values within the corridor and opponents expressing concern over impacts to private property and potential restrictions to use.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Value

Vegetation

This segment contains a superior (A-ranked) occurrence of narrowleaf cottonwood/skunkbush sumac riparian woodland (*Populus angustifolia/Rhus trilobata*), classified as vulnerable globally (G3). There is also a superior (A-ranked) occurrence of common sandbar willow/barren riparian shrubland (*Salix exigua/barren*). The entire segment lies within the CNHP-designated San Miguel River at Tabeguache Creek Potential Conservation Area.

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes to the proper hydrologic function of lower Tabeguache Creek and the lower San Miguel River downstream. An instream flow water right appropriation has been finalized for the segment. The instream flow would provide some protection to sustain the Vegetation ORV.

An irrigation diversion known as Skees Ditch was decreed for 1.92 cfs in 1939 by the State of Colorado, but no records are available indicating if and when it was constructed. A field assessment conducted by BLM personnel in May 2009 found no physical sign of a diversion or ditch. Although the Skees Ditch has not been developed, it is considered an absolute water right by Colorado and would be senior to both the pending state instream flow and any federal instream flow resulting from WSR designation.

Glencoe Ditch in the Tabeguache headwaters is presently decreed to divert up to 17 cfs, and would have seniority over any instream or federal water right established as part of WSR designation. Changing the diversion point on an existing water right within the segment could be limited in the future by any instream flow right associated with WSR designation.

There are no impoundments or conditional water rights within the segment. Diversions totaling 22.18 cfs are decreed upstream of this segment. Conditional water rights upstream of the segment include 2.0 cfs for diversion and 30 acre-feet for storage.

Land Ownership and Uses

A contiguous 3.7-mile upstream portion of Tabeguache Creek managed by the USFS is identified as eligible in the Proposed Land Management Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (2007), based upon Scenic and Cultural ORVs.

Special Designations

This segment and the contiguous USFS segment are within the Tabeguache Area, an area withdrawn by Congress and managed to protect wilderness values. Due to the designation, the only foreseeable actions within the segment are likely to be BLM-proposed projects. Access is limited to non-mechanized and non-motorized use.

Administration

The source water area upstream of this segment is primarily managed by the USFS. Existing authorities provide adequate management capability to protect the streamflow and sustain the ORV.

WSR designation would be consistent with policies and authorities afforded by designation as a Special Management Area and would complement the BLM Colorado Public Land Health standard for riparian vegetation.

Tabeguache Creek contributes flow to the Lower San Miguel and Dolores Rivers, supporting habitat for native warm water fish. WSR designation would be consistent with actions in the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*).

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORV, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Administrative costs associated with managing this segment for the Vegetation ORV would not likely increase much above current levels. The segment is remote, has limited access along undeveloped trails, and the riparian zone is completely under federal management, factors that assist in protecting the ORV. Additional facilities would not be needed if designated. A small amount of additional funding would be needed for signage, public education, ranger patrolling, and maintenance.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The existing Tabeguache Area congressional designation and a state-based instream flow water right provide protection to sustain the Vegetation ORV. In addition, the watershed upstream of this segment is dominated by USFS lands also within the congressionally designated Area and having a state-based instream flow water right, both of which would aid in future management, administration, and preservation of the area.

P.3.12 25: Lower Dolores River – Suitable Segment

Classification: Scenic

ORVs: Scenic, Recreational, Geologic, Fish, Wildlife

Suitable Length: 4.2 miles

BLM-Administered: 4.2 miles

Key Considerations:

- Flow through the segment is significantly diminished by the operation of McPhee Dam upstream.
- The segment contains a wide array of ORVs.
- The remaining suitable portion of the segment consists of BLM- administered public land with exceptional redrock canyon scenery.

The Lower Dolores River segment was found to be *suitable* for WSR designation, with a classification of *Scenic*. Based on recommendations of the RAC Subgroup, the segment was shortened from its eligible length to end at and exclude the private Weimer property. In addition, the corridor boundary was modified to protect mining claims and delineated on the east side by the highway and on the west side by natural topographic features such as the canyon rim.

Public Interest in Designation

The segment received support for and moderate opposition to suitability, with supporters identifying the outstanding scenery and wild and natural setting and opponents (including the Montrose County Board of Commissioners) expressing concern over potential restrictions on historic and future uses of water and the corridor.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenic

An interdisciplinary BLM field inventory team evaluated the area and assigned a *Scenic Quality Classification of A*. The following observations were derived from their field notes: A highly varied landscape marked by prominent cliffs, strong vertical relief and interesting erosional patterns, make the Dolores River a visually remarkable area. Exceptional views of adjacent scenery

complete the stunning scene. The colors in the area, consisting of greens, yellows, oranges, tans, reds, browns and grays, are rich and varied. Cultural modifications consist of power lines, a recreation site, and Colorado Highway 141 that do not detract greatly from the scenery.

From the mouth of the San Miguel River downstream to the confluence with Red Canyon, the river meanders through a narrow canyon bounded by sheer red rock walls. The scenic value created by the river flowing within the canyon is rare in the region of comparison. The section downstream from the confluence with Red Canyon opens to broken ledges and slopes, and does not merit the same outstandingly remarkable scenic quality.

Recreational

This section of the Dolores River provides exceptional opportunities for sightseeing and photography along the Unaweep-Tabeguache Byway. The byway is marketed to visitors from within Colorado, out of state, and internationally by the Unaweep-Tabeguache Byway Committee and by the Colorado Office of Tourism. This section of the byway focuses on the Dolores River and its associated historic sites and surrounding landscape. The river provides extraordinary opportunities for rafting, kayaking and canoeing in a spectacular redrock canyon. With only a handful of comparable opportunities spread across the entire Colorado Plateau, this is an outstanding section of water.

Geologic

The Dolores River has a well-defined entrenched meander channel pattern through this area, with exposures of Triassic-age Chinle, Wingate, and Kayenta formations. The river has been superimposed upon the Colorado Plateau geology as the region has undergone uplifting. Initially the river established a meandering pattern and as the area rose, the river cut down in this channel until the pattern became well entrenched. Now the river cannot easily cut across the meander bends to create oxbow lakes, as many unentrenched rivers do. Over time, as the river downcuts, it exposes underlying rock formations, usually in the form of resistant redrock sandstone cliffs. The Chinle, Wingate, and Kayenta formations all exhibit this cliff-forming erosional characteristic.

Fish

This segment harbors exemplary populations of three BLM and Colorado sensitive species: flannelmouth suckers (*Catostomus latipinnis*), bluehead suckers (*Catostomus discobolus*), and roundtail chubs (*Gila robusta*). In addition, this segment was historically occupied by Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*), a federally endangered species.

Wildlife

This river segment provides exceptionally high quality habitat for peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*), and is considered a regionally important area for this rare BLM sensitive species. In 1999, the peregrine was delisted from threatened status under the Endangered Species Act. The BLM monitors the status of peregrine populations to ensure their continued recovery. Peregrine falcons are closely associated with steep-walled canyons and often nest near perennial water sources that support prey populations such as waterfowl, songbirds, and shorebirds. Peregrine pairs were observed along this segment as recently as 2008 and 2009, and breeding/nesting activity has been confirmed along this segment. Several established peregrine territories also occur in the vicinity.

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes to the proper hydrologic function of the Lower Dolores River downstream (within the Grand Junction Field Office). There is no instream flow water right protection on the segment. An instream flow right associated with WSR designation could restrict the ability to change points of diversion on existing water rights within the segment.

There are no conditional water rights or impoundments within the segment. Two small diversions along the lower reaches of the segment do not detract from the natural character of the river.

Flow through the segment is greatly diminished by the operation of the McPhee Dam upstream. A large portion of natural water yield entering the reservoir is transferred out of the basin, primarily for agricultural uses. Water rights associated with the McPhee Reservoir are senior to the instream flow water right on the downstream reach.

Most future water demand will be met through conservation practices and development of existing water rights. According to the 2004 Statewide Water Supply Initiative, between 400,000 and 500,000 acre-feet of conditional storage water rights upstream throughout the San Miguel and Upper Dolores basins predate any future state or federal instream flow right. As rights are perfected to meet future water demand, flows through the segment could be diminished. Additional water developments for uses such as irrigation are likely to increase along with the growing population.

The 2004 Statewide Water Supply Initiative identified reservoir sites on Beaver Creek and Plateau Creek flowing into the McPhee Reservoir that could be operated to increase flows in the Dolores River below the McPhee Reservoir. Beaver Creek and Plateau Creek reservoir sites are a high priority for the Southwest Basins Roundtable of Colorado Interbasin Compact Committee.

Land Ownership and Uses

ROWs and Withdrawals

ROWs within the segment include telephone lines, powerlines, a highway, county roads, private access roads, and a gravel pit.

While public lands adjacent to the river are withdrawn to the Department of Energy as a potential Power Site, the Powersite classification does not preclude WSR designation.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

Because of limited unappropriated water, it is unlikely that the high flows needed to sustain recreational activities could be secured through WSR designation.

Managing this segment to sustain native warm water fish is consistent with actions in the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*).

WSR designation would complement BLM Colorado Public Land Health standards for special status species and wildlife.

The BLM Grand Junction Field Office has identified the Dolores River segments within its jurisdiction as eligible, but will not make any decisions regarding suitability until its draft resource management plan is published.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

The costs for administering and managing this segment for the Scenic, Recreational, Geologic, Fish, and Wildlife ORVs would be substantially higher than current funding levels. The lower portion of this segment is paralleled by State Highway 141, providing diffuse access points to this portion of the river corridor. If designated, the potential increase in visitor use, especially in the lower portion of the corridor, would require additional funding for facilities, public education, signage, additional weed control, and ranger patrolling. Visitor use in the upper portion of the segment would be limited to mostly river-based recreation activities which would require a small amount of additional funding for maintenance and primitive camp and day use site development.

If purchased from willing sellers, private land parcels within the corridor would have added value for ORV protection.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

Warm water fish would receive protection by acquiring a state-based instream flow water right for this segment.

The Visual Resource Management classification of the segment could be upgraded to protect the Scenic ORV.

The Hanging Flume receives protection through listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

P.3.13 27: Dolores River, Segment 2 – Suitable Segment

Classification: Recreational

ORVs: Scenic, Recreational, Geologic, Fish, Wildlife, Vegetation

Suitable Length: 5.3 miles

BLM-Administered: 5.3 miles

Key Considerations:

- A series of alluvial water wells adjacent to the river are managed by the BOR as part of the Paradox Valley Unit, Salinity Control Project.
- The segment contains a wide array of ORVs.
- The upstream portion of the segment is dominated by private land, while the downstream portion is comprised primarily of public land with little development.
- A stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community for this segment might only be achieved through WSR designation.

Based upon providing protection for the numerous and varied ORVs, the 5.3-mile downstream public land portion of Dolores River, Segment 2 was found to be *suitable* for WSR consideration, with a classification of *Recreational*. Suitability was not supported for the 6.2-mile private land portion upstream. In addition, the protective corridor was modified to exclude the Buck Shot Mine and associated ROW and to follow the cliff line if less than one-quarter mile from the river center.

Public Interest in Designation

The segment received much support for and moderate opposition to suitability, with supporters identifying the segment as the core of a regionally important river and opponents (including the Montrose County Board of Commissioners) expressing concern over potential restriction of water rights.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenic

An interdisciplinary BLM field inventory team evaluated the area and assigned the lower portion of this segment from where the river leaves the Paradox Valley downstream to the mouth of the San Miguel River a *Scenic Quality Classification of A*. The following observations were derived from field notes: A highly varied landscape marked by prominent cliffs, strong vertical relief, and interesting erosional patterns, make the Dolores River a visually remarkable area. Exceptional views of adjacent scenery complete the stunning scene. Spectacular landforms, water, and vegetation of rich and varied color combine to create one of the most dramatic canyons in

Western Colorado. A small, dirt road paralleling the river in the lower section detracts only minimally from the scenic quality.

Recreational

When releases from McPhee Dam allow, the lower five miles of this reach offer rare and outstanding opportunities for rafting, kayaking, and canoeing in a deep, meandering redrock canyon. With only a handful of rivers on the Colorado Plateau possessing such qualities, the Dolores River attracts boaters from across the western United States.

Geologic

The Paradox Basin is a northwest, southeast trending geologic structural anticline that has at its core the Pennsylvanian-age Paradox Formation, a halitic evaporite. Over time, water has partially dissolved the salt core, causing the axis of the anticline to collapse and creating a valley with walls that dip away in either direction. The Dolores River has carved a channel across and perpendicular to this collapsed valley, forming the geological paradox for which the valley is named.

After traversing the Paradox Valley and exiting toward the north, the Dolores River follows a well-defined and exemplary entrenched meander channel. Initially the slow-moving river established its meandering pattern. As the Colorado Plateau uplifted, the accelerated flow continued to downcut within this same channel until the pattern became entrenched. Now the river cannot easily cut across these meander bends to form oxbow lakes, as many unentrenched rivers do. As the river carves slowly downward through Triassic-age strata of the Chinle Group, Wingate Sandstone, and Kayenta Formation, it exposes resistant red sandstone cliffs.

Fish

This river segment supports populations of three BLM and Colorado sensitive species: flannelmouth suckers (*Catostomus latipinnis*), bluehead suckers (*Catostomus discobolus*), and roundtail chubs (*Gila robusta*). In addition, this segment was historically occupied by Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*), a federally endangered species.

Wildlife

This river segment provides exceptionally high quality habitat for peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*), and is considered a regionally important area for this rare BLM sensitive species. In 1999, the peregrine was delisted from threatened status under the Endangered Species Act. The BLM monitors the status of peregrine populations to ensure their continued recovery. Peregrine falcons are closely associated with steep-walled canyons and often nest near perennial water sources that support prey populations such as waterfowl, songbirds, and shorebirds. Peregrine breeding/nesting activity has been confirmed along this segment. Active territories and nests occur within this reach. In addition, the BLM sensitive canyon treefrog (*Hyla arenicolor*) occupies portions of this stretch.

Vegetation

This segment contains areas of New Mexico privet riparian shrubland (*Forestiera pubescens*), which is classified as globally imperiled (G2).

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes greatly to the proper hydrologic function of the Lower Dolores River downstream. The CWCB holds a year-round 78 cfs instream flow water right along the entire segment, structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable degree, which also provides some protection to sustain the ORVs.

There are no conditional water rights within the segment. The only withdrawals are a series of alluvial wells along the corridor that are operated as part of Paradox Valley Unity, Deep Well Injection Salinity Control Project.

Flow is greatly diminished by the operation of the McPhee Dam upstream. A large portion of natural water yield entering the reservoir is transferred out of the basin, primarily for agricultural uses. Water rights associated with McPhee are senior to the instream flow water right.

The 2004 Statewide Water Supply Initiative identifies potential dam sites on Beaver Creek and Plateau Creek that flow into McPhee Reservoir and could be operated to increase flows below McPhee Reservoir. The Beaver Creek and Plateau Creek sites are a high priority for the Southwest Basins Roundtable of the Colorado Interbasin Compact Committee.

According to the initiative, most future water demand would come from conservation practices and development of existing water rights, including some 141,000 acre feet of conditional water rights in the basin. Many conditional rights are senior to both existing instream flow water rights and any instream flow resulting from WSR designation.

Land Ownership and Uses

ROWs and Withdrawals

BLM ROWs within the corridor include a Montrose County road, telephone and powerlines, and the Bureau of Reclamation Paradox Valley Salinity Control Project, including an evaporative salt disposal pond.

While portions of the segment are within an area classified as having Waterpower and Reservoir Resources, the Powersite Classification does not preclude WSR designation.

Energy and Mineral Resources

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

A streamflow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community for this segment might only be achieved through WSR designation.

A Montrose County road located within the corridor may need to be upgraded and enlarged in the future.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Costs associated with administering and managing this segment for the Scenic, Recreation, Geologic, Fish, Wildlife, and riparian Vegetation ORVs would be moderately to much higher than current funding levels. With easy access to the river corridor provided by the paralleling county road, visitor use would be expected to increase if designated. Additional funding would likely be needed for facilities and increased weed control.

A county road currently infringes on the stream channel and riparian zone along portions of this reach. With future county plans to possibly widen the road, costly measures would need to be employed to avoid additional impacts to the river corridor.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The current state-based instream flow water right for 78 cfs provides limited protection for the ORVs.

The Dolores River Working Group is proposing that the area be designated as a National Conservation Area.

The area is being proposed as a Special Recreation Management Area in one RMP alternative and as an Extensive Recreation Management Area in the preferred alternative. In addition, portions of the corridor are being proposed as an ACEC in one alternative.

P.3.14 30: La Sal Creek, Segment 2 – Suitable Segment

Classification: Recreational

ORVs: Fish, Vegetation

Suitable Length: 3.3 miles

BLM-Administered: 3.3 miles

Key Considerations:

- A stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community might only be achieved through WSR designation.
- Both the river segment and corridor consist primarily of public lands.

La Sal Creek, Segment 2 was found to be *suitable* for WSR consideration, with a classification of *Recreational*. Based on recommendations from the RAC Subgroup, the eligibility classification was changed from *Scenic* to *Recreational* in order to accommodate potential future mining

activities and road improvements and the segment length was reduced to end at and exclude the Cashin Mine.

Public Input

The segment received much support for and limited opposition to suitability, with supporters highlighting the healthy riparian ecosystem and opponents (including the Montrose County Board of Commissioners) expressing concern over potential restriction of water and mining uses.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Fish

This segment harbors exemplary populations of three BLM and Colorado sensitive species: flannelmouth suckers (*Catostomus latipinnis*), bluehead suckers (*Catostomus discobolus*), and roundtail chubs (*Gila robusta*). This is one of a very few spawning tributaries for these species within the Dolores River Basin. The segment is largely intact, with native fish predominant over introduced species, and includes populations of native speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus*) and mottled sculpin (*Cottus bairdii*).

Vegetation

The entire length of this segment supports boxelder/river birch riparian woodland (*Acer negundo/Betula occidentalis*), which is currently ranked as globally imperiled (G2). The segment is included within the CNHP-designated La Sal Creek Potential Conservation Area.

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes to the proper hydrologic function of Lower La Sal Creek downstream.

The CWCB holds an instream flow water right along the entire segment decreed for 3 cfs (from December 15 to March 14), 5.1 cfs (from March 15 to June 14), and 1.2 cfs (from June 15 to December 14) and structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable degree. The flow would also provide some protection to sustain ORVs by limiting future water right actions within and upstream of the segment.

No absolute or conditional water rights occur within the segment. No impoundments occur within or upstream of the segment to the Colorado-Utah state line. Four ditch diversions are located upstream of the segment within La Sal Creek, Segment I.

Land Ownership and Uses

The suitable portion of the corridor consists of BLM-administered public land.

ROWs

Numerous BLM ROW authorizations cross or run adjacent to the creek, including transmission powerlines, telephone lines, a CDOT highway, and a Montrose County road.

Energy and Mineral Resource

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

WSR designation would complement BLM Colorado Public Land Health standards for riparian vegetation and special status species.

A streamflow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community might only be achieved through WSR designation.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Costs for administering and managing this segment for the Recreation, Fish, and riparian Vegetation ORVs would be moderately higher than current funding levels. With easy access to the river corridor provided by a parallel-running county road, visitor use would be expected to increase if designated. Thus, additional funding would be needed for facilities, public education, signage, ranger patrolling, and maintenance.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The current state-based instream flow water right provides for some protection of the Fish and Vegetation ORVs.

An area encompassing the segment is being considered for ACEC designation in one RMP alternative.

P.3.15 31: La Sal Creek, Segment 3 – Suitable Segment

***Classification:* Wild**

***ORVs:* Scenic, Recreational, Fish, Cultural, Vegetation**

***Suitable Length:* 3.4 miles**

***BLM-Administered:* 3.4 miles**

Key Considerations:

- The entire segment is comprised of public land within the Dolores River Canyon Wilderness Study Area, facilitating effective management.
- The segment contains a wide array of ORVs.

- A stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community within the segment might only be accomplished through WSR designation.

La Sal Creek, Segment 3 was found to be *suitable* for WSR designation, with a classification of *Wild*. The segment was reclassified due to the pristine, wild, and remote character of the area and the critical habitat the creek provides for warm water fish.

Public Input

The segment received considerable support for and limited opposition to suitability, with supporters highlighting protection of healthy riparian and aquatic ecosystems and opponents (including the Montrose County Board of Commissioners) expressing concern over potential restriction of water and mining uses.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenic

An interdisciplinary BLM field inventory team evaluated the area and assigned a *Scenic Quality Classification of A*. The following observations were derived from their field notes: Massive rock outcrops and prominent cliffs are the stunning qualities of the La Sal Creek area. The creek flows constant and swift. The rocks and box elder-river birch vegetation create an area of strong contrasts in color and relief consisting of greens, reds, yellows, oranges, grays, and browns. This area is visually exceptional and was determined to be rare within the region.

Recreational

This narrow, deeply incised, and tightly meandering canyon provides superior opportunities for hiking, wildlife observation, nature study, and photography in a high quality, primitive, densely vegetated riparian setting. BLM specialists have observed abundant signs of game species and large predators. The upper end of the segment can be reached by rough four-wheel drive road, while the lower end is accessible by boaters hiking up from the Dolores River.

Fish

This segment harbors exemplary populations of three BLM and Colorado sensitive species: flannelmouth suckers (*Catostomus latipinnis*), bluehead suckers (*Catostomus discobolus*), and roundtail chubs (*Gila robusta*). The segment is one of only a very few spawning tributaries for these three species in the Dolores River Basin. In addition, this river segment supports two other native fishes: speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus*) and mottled sculpin (*Cottus bairdii*).

Cultural

Several large and significant petroglyph panels are located at the junction of La Sal Creek and the Dolores River. These panels represent cultural expressions ranging from Archaic hunting motifs dating from as early as 4,000 years ago to late period Anasazi figures from around AD 1000. These petroglyph panels have been recorded and evaluated as being eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under *Criteria C* and *D*.

Vegetation

This segment contains boxelder/river birch riparian woodland (*Acer negundo/Betula occidentalis*) along its entire length, which is currently ranked as globally imperiled (G2). The segment is included within the CNHP-designated La Sal Creek Potential Conservation Area.

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes greatly to the proper hydrologic function of the Dolores River downstream.

The CWCB holds an instream flow water right along the entire segment, structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable extent. The water right is decreed for 3 cfs (from December 15 to March 14), 5.1 cfs (from March 15 to June 14), and 1.2 cfs (from June 15 to December 14), providing some protection to sustain the ORVs by limiting future water right actions within and upstream of the segment.

No absolute or conditional water rights occur in the segment. No impoundments occur within or upstream of the segment to the Colorado-Utah state line. Four ditch diversions occur upstream of the segment within La Sal Creek, Segment I.

Land Ownership and Uses

All surrounding federal lands are within the Dolores River Canyon WSA.

Approximately 0.9% of the corridor consists of private lands zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the General Agriculture Zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses requiring a special use permit. Many of the uses are not related to agriculture and have the potential to conflict with the intent of the WSR Act.

WSR designation would complement BLM Colorado Public Land Health standards for riparian vegetation and special status species.

Special Designations

The entire segment is located within the Dolores River Canyon WSA. While the WSA affords interim protection for the ORVs, the designation is transitory and should not be relied upon for enduring protection.

ROWs and Withdrawals

There are no known ROWs within the segment.

While portions of the segment are within an area classified as having Waterpower and Reservoir Resources the Powersite Classification does not preclude WSR designation.

Energy and Mineral Resources

Because of the WSA designation, BLM-proposed projects are likely to constitute the only foreseeable development within the segment. Although lands under wilderness review continue to be subject to location under federal mining laws, location methods and subsequent

assessment work are restricted to operations determined as meeting BLM non-impairment criteria.

Administration

A streamflow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community might only be accomplished through WSR designation.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The existing state-based instream flow water right is sufficient to sustain the warm water fishery, but may not be adequate for long-term sustainability of the Vegetation ORV.

The entire segment is located within the Dolores River Canyon WSA. The WSA designation affords some protection for the ORVs in accordance with the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review (H-8550-1).

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Costs for administering and managing this segment for the Scenic, Recreational, Fish, Cultural, and riparian Vegetation ORVs would be similar to slightly higher than current funding levels. The stream corridor is totally within the Dolores River Canyon WSA, is very remote and accessible only by an unmaintained non-motorized, non-mechanized trail, factors that assist in protection of the ORVs. The BLM presently incurs some costs in this area associated with implementing the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review. However, additional visitor use associated with WSR designation could generate the need for funding to develop staging facilities to support primitive recreation opportunities, signage, public education, ranger patrolling, and maintenance.

P.3.16 34: Dolores River, Segment I – Suitable Segment

NOTE: The identification of ORVs and eligibility determination for this segment were made by the BLM Dolores Field Office.

Classification: Wild

ORVs: Recreation, Scenery, Fish, Wildlife, Geology, Ecology, Archaeology

Suitable Length: 8.7 miles

BLM-Administered: 8.7 miles

Key Considerations:

- A wide array of ORVs occurs within the segment.

- A stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community for the segment might only be secured through WSR designation.
- The segment is within the Dolores River Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

The portion of Dolores River, Segment I classified as *Wild* by the BLM Dolores Field Office was found to be *suitable* for WSR designation, while the northernmost downstream portion classified as *Recreational* was excluded from the segment in order to circumvent mining operations. The segment was shortened to begin at the UFO boundary and terminate at the private land boundary south of Bedrock, and the corridor was redelineated to extend from rim to rim or one-quarter mile from the high water mark (whichever measure is less). The suitability finding complements the Wilderness Study Area designation and is consistent with WSR findings for portions of the Dolores River outside of the UFO.

Public Input

The segment received balanced support for and opposition to suitability, with supporters highlighting the segment's significance in relation to both upstream and downstream portions of the Dolores, and opponents citing potential future access and development issues associated with designation.

Segment Assessment

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The following ORV descriptions are derived from page D-16 of the *San Juan Public Lands Draft Land Management Plan, Appendix D*.

Recreation and Scenery

This section of the Dolores contains Class II, III, and IV rapids and is listed as one of the most popular and beautiful rafting areas in Southwest Colorado. The river flows through a wild and deep canyon that combines red sandstone cliffs with coniferous forests.

Based on observations of actual use and interviews with regional recreation providers, the segment is regionally important for boating recreation, and is listed in the Nationwide Whitewater Inventory, *American Whitewater, 2006* (although it is more of a scenic float trip than a whitewater experience).

Fish and Wildlife

This section of the Dolores contains occupied habitat for roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*), considered a sensitive species by the BLM and State of Colorado.

The segment also contains a population of canyon treefrog (*Hyla arenicolor*), considered rare or imperiled within the state and listed by the state as a species of special concern. Canyon treefrogs occur along streams in deep rocky canyons and breed in canyon bottom pools, often bounded by solid rock. Although most active at night, they can be found resting in small depressions in solid rock near pools of water during the day.

Geology

Dramatic Cretaceous sandstone cliffs throughout the canyon, and in some areas the geology has confined the canyon to a uniquely persistent linear and angular form. The northerly flow of this river is rare within the region of comparison, and documents the uplift of the Colorado Plateau and the subsidence of the adjacent Paradox Basin. These two geological events also determine the unusual gradient of the river. The penetration of the river through the hard caprock of the present-day cliffs and the linear flow pattern of the canyon demonstrate the unusual rapidity of tectonic processes in the area and the speed of the corresponding downward cutting of the river, which in turn documents the geologic-timescale history of water supply in Southwest Colorado.

Ecology

The segment contains New Mexico privet (*Forestiera pubescens*), which is currently ranked as extremely rare or imperiled globally, and the BLM-sensitive Eastwood's monkeyflower (*Mimulus eastwoodiae*), ranked S1 (critically imperiled within Colorado).

Archaeology

Several rare and exemplary prehistoric archaeological sites are preserved immediately adjacent to the Dolores River between McPhee Reservoir and the small town of Bedrock. The sites range from Anasazi pueblos such as Mountain Sheep Point Village and the Kayenta House cliff dwelling to sacred sites such as the rock art panel at the mouth of Bull Canyon. These archaeological sites evince at least 11,000 years of inextricable connection between the Dolores River and the area's human inhabitants.

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes greatly to the proper hydrologic function of the Lower Dolores River downstream. The CWCB holds a year-round 78 cfs instream flow water right along the entire segment, structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable extent. The instream flow would also provide some protection to sustain the ORVs.

One pump diversion within the segment is located near the lower terminus. There are no conditional water rights within the segment.

The 2004 Statewide Water Supply Initiative identifies reservoir sites on Beaver Creek and Plateau Creek with flows into McPhee Reservoir that could be operated to increase flow in the Dolores River below McPhee Reservoir. The reservoir sites are a high priority for the Southwest Basins Roundtable of Colorado Interbasin Compact Committee. The report also identifies potential dam sites on the Dolores River in Paradox Valley and Slickrock, Colorado.

Flow through the segment is greatly diminished by the operation of McPhee Reservoir upstream. A large portion of natural water yield entering the reservoir is transferred out of the basin, primarily for agricultural use. Water rights associated with the reservoir are senior to an instream flow water right downstream.

According to the 2004 Statewide Water Supply Initiative, most future water demand will come from conservation practices and development of existing water rights, including some existing

141,000 acre-feet of conditional water rights in the basin. Many of these are senior to both the existing instream flow water right and any instream flow associated with WSR designation.

Land Ownership and Uses

Special Designations

The segment is located within the Dolores River Canyon WSA, as well as a Special Recreation Management Area. While the WSA affords some interim protection for the ORVs, neither designation provides the authority to acquire flows necessary for sustaining the Ecology ORV.

Rights-of-Way and Withdrawals

While portions of the segment are within an area classified as having Waterpower and Reservoir Resources the Powersite, classification does not preclude WSR designation.

Energy and Mineral Resources

Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

WSA designation limits access to the segment. WSR designation would complement BLM Colorado Public Land Health standards for special status species and wildlife.

Managing the segment to sustain native warm water fish is consistent with actions in the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*).

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

As a result of the suitability finding, the stream and corridor will be managed to protect the ORVs, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Costs for administering and managing this segment for the Recreation, Scenery, Wildlife, Geology, Ecology, and Archeology ORVs would be similar to or slightly higher than current funding levels. The segment is within the Dolores River Canyon WSA, with access limited to a single track non-motorized, non-mechanized trail, factors that assist in protection of the ORVs.

The BLM presently incurs some costs on this area to implement the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review. However, additional visitor use resulting from WSR designation could generate the need for funding to develop staging facilities to support primitive recreation opportunities.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The segment is within the proposed Dolores River Slickrock Canyon ACEC, being considered during development of the Uncompahgre RMP.

The segment is located within the Dolores River Canyon WSA, as well as a Special Recreation Management Area. The WSA designation affords some protection for the ORVs in accordance with the Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review (H-8550-1).

If the stream is designated into the NWSRS, future ROW applications on BLM lands for would include terms and conditions to protect the ORVs.

P.4 NOT SUITABLE SEGMENTS: ASSESSMENT AND SUITABILITY DETERMINATION

P.4.1 5: Gunnison River, Segment 2 – Not Suitable

Classification: Recreational

ORV: Fish

Eligible Length: 0.41 miles

BLM-Administered: 0.41 miles

Key Considerations:

- The southern bank of the river corridor is largely private land, and includes a dominant flood flow channel, which could eventually pirate the existing channel.
- Existing BLM authorities and agreements, along with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), provide effective management and river flow to protect and sustain the ORV.

Gunnison River, Segment 2 was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation due to the short length of the segment, as well as the lack of exemplary habitat and spawning ground for the endangered fish species for which the Fish ORV was assigned.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

No absolute or conditional water rights or impoundments occur in this segment. The segment has no instream flow water right protection. Flows derive primarily from:

- Required deliveries to downstream senior water rights.
- Upstream water releases from three in-channel reservoirs of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Colorado River Storage Project Aspinall Unit.

An instream flow water right upstream through the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area helps ensure flow through the segment. A portion of water conveyed through this segment is made as part of the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program (according to personal communication with Patty Gelatt of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Grand Junction, CO dated 9/20/2010).

Delta Water Works Department has an alternate point of diversion for 2.40 cfs just downstream from the lower terminus.

According to the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (2004), future water demand and development in the Gunnison Basin and within the Lower Colorado River Basin has the potential to affect the flow regime of the Gunnison River. Additionally, the initiative identified several future potential dam sites upstream of the segment which could influence the river's flow regime (including Union Park, Gateview, Gates, Almont, and Lamm reservoirs).

The south bank of the river is largely private land and includes a dominant flood flow channel, which in the future could pirate the existing channel.

Land Ownership and Uses

Delta County zoning for private lands in the corridor does not ensure land uses compatible with designation. Delta County has no land use zoning to ensure development compatible with designation on private portions of the river corridor (according to personal communication with David Rice, Delta County Planner, 9/29/2010). However, change of use approval is needed by the county to convert existing agricultural lands to commercial or industrial development.

Special Designations

The proposed segment is within the North Delta OHV area.

Rights-of-Way (ROWs)

ROWs include a Delta County road. All future private water right and ROW applications should include BLM terms and conditions to protect the Fish ORV.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are no existing oil and gas leases or mining claims within the segment.

Administration

Both the instream flow water right through the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area and releases from the Aspinnall Unit in support of the Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program provide flows to sustain native fish populations.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

The costs for administering and managing this segment for the fish ORV would not increase much above current funding levels. Federal protections exist for the target fish species under the Endangered Species Act which would continue with or without designation. Private land acquisition would not be needed since the entire fish habitat (river channel) is under federal management. There would be no additional facilities needed to provide protection for the ORV. A small amount of additional funding would be needed for signage, public education, ranger patrolling, and maintenance.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

Potential management mechanisms considered by the BLM include:

- Intensive travel management.
- Designation as a Special Recreation Management Area.

- Tributary watershed management activities to reduce sediment, salinity, and selenium loading to the Gunnison River.

P.4.2 I I: Roubideau Creek, Segment 2 – Not Suitable

Classification: Scenic

ORVs: Wildlife, Vegetation (not supported following review)

Eligible Length: 7.6 miles

BLM-Administered: 3.5 miles

Key Considerations:

- Private land is consolidated into two parcels at the upper terminus and approximately one half mile upstream of the lower terminus.
- A stream flow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community might only be achieved through WSR designation.

Roubideau Creek, Segment 2 was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation. Following a review by the CNHP that lowered the rarity ranking of the Fremont cottonwood/skunkbush sumac plant community to G3, the segment no longer possesses a Vegetation ORV and the remaining Wildlife ORV could not be adequately substantiated. In addition, the BLM manages less than 50% of the land within the corridor.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

There are no absolute or conditional water rights or impoundments within this segment. The CWCB holds an instream flow water right structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable extent. The water right is decreed for 1.8 cfs (from March 1 to March 31), 4 cfs (from April 1 to June 15), 1.8 cfs (from June 16 to July 31), and 1.4 cfs (from August 1 to February 28). The instream flow provides some protection to sustain the ORVs. A streamflow regime that mimics natural seasonal flow changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community in this segment might only be achieved through federal designation.

In the headwaters, a water diversion known as Spruce Spring Ditch decreed for up to 9.3 cfs transfers water from Roubideau Creek to the Dry Creek drainage (typically limited to the snowmelt period). The diversion diminishes spring and early summer flow through the segment.

Land Ownership and Uses

Approximately 19.4% of the corridor consists of private lands zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the General Agriculture Zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses requiring a special use permit. Many of the uses are not related to agriculture and have the potential to conflict with the intent of the WSR Act.

ROWs

ROWs crossing the segment include a county road, Tri-State transmission lines, and a Transco gas pipeline.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are no existing oil and gas leases or mining claims within the segment.

Administration

Reducing the segment length to omit private land would reduce potential manageability issues.

WSR designation would complement BLM Colorado Public Land Health standards for riparian and wildlife.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The segment is within two potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern being considered during development of the Uncompahgre RMP.

The current state-based instream flow water right provides some support for general vegetation and wildlife values.

P.4.3 12: Deep Creek – Not Suitable

Classification: Scenic

ORV: Fish

Eligible Length: 2.6 miles

BLM-Administered: 0.6 miles

Key Considerations:

- Senior upstream water diversions greatly deplete the stream flow.
- The Fish ORV could be protected through a state instream flow water right.
- Approximately 0.58 mile of the stream channel is managed by the BLM, while the remaining 1.97 miles are private.

Deep Creek was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation due to the short portion of the segment managed by the BLM, as well as the intermittent flow of the creek.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

There are no absolute or conditional water rights or impoundments within the segment. Four diversions above the upper terminus are used for irrigation, livestock, and domestic purposes. The diversions greatly deplete the streamflow, especially during irrigation season. Much of the natural flow, as well as water from an adjoining drainage, is used for irrigation upstream of the upper terminus, greatly diminishing flow through the segment.

The Fish ORV could be protected without WSR designation through a state instream flow water right. This segment currently has no water right protection.

Land Ownership and Uses

Approximately 84% of the corridor is private land within Gunnison County. While there is no land use zoning, the county does have an administrative review and approval process for land use changes. While proposed residential and agricultural related facilities typically do not require a permit, more substantive changes require a permit as well as administrative review. Gunnison County *Standards for Approval of Administrative Review Projects* states that: The proposed land use change shall be compatible with, or an enhancement of, the character of existing land uses in the area, and shall not adversely impact the future development of the surrounding area.

ROWs

BLM ROW authorizations crossing or briefly running adjacent to the creek include telephone and distribution power lines, private access roads, and an historic ditch.

Energy and Mineral Resources

Lands within the segment have known high potential for oil, gas, and coal development. There are no existing oil and gas leases or mining claims.

Administration

WSR designation would have limited potential to adequately protect the segment, as any federal water right associated with designation would be junior to existing water rights. While a state instream flow water right would protect the Fish ORV, it could require the purchase, lease, or donation of water to achieve adequate flow rates.

Any new water right application on public lands within the segment should contain BLM conditions to ensure compliance with the intent of the WSR Act and Endangered Species Act.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

If not designated, the BLM recommends that protective language be included in the Uncompahgre RMP to ensure that no additional impacts to streamflow quantity and quality occur on public lands within the segment.

P.4.4 I3: West Fork Terror Creek – Not Suitable

Classification: Scenic

ORV: Fish

Eligible Length: 1.2 miles

BLM-Administered: 0.5 miles

Key Considerations:

- The Fish ORV could be protected through a state instream flow water right.
- The segment is within an area with high potential for coal development.

- Because the public land portion of the segment is comprised of two short reaches, one of which is bracketed by private lands, the land configuration could be difficult to manage.
- There is significant public opposition to WSR designation of this segment.

West Fork Terror Creek was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation due to the predominance of private land within the segment and uncertainty regarding whether the threatened Greenback Cutthroat Trout occurs within the segment.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

There are no absolute or conditional water rights or impoundments within the segment. The Overland Ditch upstream of the segment diverts 75 cfs for irrigation, and three diversions downstream of the lower terminus create water demand through the segment during the irrigation season.

There is no instream flow water right protection on the segment. There is a conditional water right upstream of the upper terminus for 50 cfs, which could greatly deplete flow during the irrigation season if perfected. This water right has a low probability of being developed (based upon personal communication with Colorado Division of Water Resources, Division 4 Water Commissioner Stephen Tuck).

Land Ownership and Uses

Over 52% of the corridor consists of private land in Delta County. While Delta County has no land use zoning to ensure development compatible with WSR designation on private portions of the corridor, change of use approval by the county is necessary for converting existing agricultural lands to commercial or industrial development (based upon personal communication with Delta County Planner David Rice on September 29, 2010).

ROWs

BLM ROW authorizations crossing or briefly running adjacent to the segment include a WAPA transmission powerline, coal development access roads, and a stream gauge site to monitor coal development and water quality. There is a pending access road ROW application for the Bowie Spruce Stomp Coal Exploration License and current coal mining activities.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

Federal coal leases currently held by Bowie Resources, LLC span or are adjacent to Terror Creek. A federal coal lease spans about one mile of the upper portion and another is within one quarter mile along the west side of the segment. In a final environmental assessment, a proposed coal exploration drill pad within the corridor would not be visible from the creek and would have no detectable effect on the Fish ORV.

Administration

Land distribution alternates between private and public at three locations along the segment length. Providing and managing for special protection of the greenback cutthroat trout

population in the West Fork of Terror Creek complies with the Endangered Species Act and BLM Colorado Public Land Health standards.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The Fish ORV could be protected through a state instream flow water right. If the segment is not designated, the BLM recommends that protective language be included in the Uncompahgre RMP to ensure that no additional impacts to streamflow quantity and quality occur within public portions of the segment.

P.4.5 15: Dry Creek – Not Suitable

Classification: Wild

ORVs: Scenic, Geologic

Eligible Length: 10.5 miles

BLM-Administered: 10.4 miles

Key Considerations:

- Private land and water rights could make the segment difficult to manage.

Dry Creek was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation primarily due to a variety of protective factors (including low visitation and natural terrain) that serve to protect the canyon to some extent. In addition, current travel management implementation, as well as ACEC designation and No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulations (potential management strategies being considered during RMP development) would provide considerable protection for the segment.

While oil and gas development is thought to be the greatest potential threat to the Dry Creek corridor, little exploration has occurred to date. Five miles of private land at the upper end of the segment and three miles of private land between the segment and the San Miguel River, as well as accompanying senior private water rights, could make WSR management difficult.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

There is no instream flow water right protection for the segment. An absolute water right diversion of 5 cfs for irrigation near the lower terminus has seniority over any future instream flow water right associated with designation. Upstream of the segment, absolute water rights include ditch diversions totaling 97 cfs and reservoir storage totaling 170 acre-feet. These rights are also senior to any instream flow associated with WSR designation.

In addition, conditional water rights upstream of the segment include ditch diversions totaling 135 cfs and reservoir storage totaling 136,400 acre-feet. If developed, these water rights would be senior to any instream flow water right associated with WSR designation.

Land Ownership and Uses

ROWs and Withdrawals

Hecla Mining has ROWs for earthen berm water diversion structures and a tank site within the corridor.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. According to the State of Colorado Oil and Gas Commission electronic well records database, an abandoned oil and gas well remains within the corridor. Current lode mining claims have a prior existing right to lode mineral deposits. No BLM authorizations exist for these claims.

Administration

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

The costs for administering and managing this segment for the Scenic and Geologic ORVs would not likely increase much above current funding levels. The segment is remote, has limited trail access, and the stream corridor is nearly all (greater than 99%) federal or state managed lands, factors that assist in protection of the ORVs and support the Wild classification. It is therefore unlikely that additional facilities would be needed if the segment was designated. While just under 0.1% of the stream corridor contains private land, there is no known benefit in acquiring this land to support the ORVs.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The segment is within a potential ACEC being considered during development of the Uncompahgre RMP and an area undergoing travel management planning. Implementing travel restrictions would help to protect the area from surface-disturbing activities.

P.4.6 16: Naturita Creek – Not Suitable

Classification: Scenic

ORV: Fish

Eligible Length: 25 miles

BLM-Administered: 10 miles

Key Considerations:

- Numerous conditional water rights in the Naturita Creek drainage are senior to any federal water right associated with WSR designation.
- The Fish ORV is concentrated in the lower reaches of the segment.
- During suitability analysis, BLM staff determined that CWCB appropriation of a state instream flow water right would provide much protection for the Fish ORV.
- A substantial amount of private land is distributed in a diffuse pattern throughout the corridor.

Naturita Creek was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation because the fish species for which the Fish ORV was assigned is found primarily within private property at the lower end of the segment and landowners in that portion do not support WSR suitability. While a private landowner with property at the upper end of the segment expressed strong support for suitability, an on-site review conducted by BLM staff concluded that a Vegetation ORV could not be substantiated in the stretch. Another landowner within the segment has a conservation easement on their property.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

Naturita Creek provides value-added flow for the proper hydrologic function of the San Miguel River system and river-dependent resource values (including aquatic and riparian plant and animal species).

Five diversion ditches decreed for 2.73 cfs are scattered between the lower and upper terminus and would be senior to any instream flow water right associated with WSR designation. Absolute water right decrees upstream of the segment on the mainstem and tributaries (including Maverick Draw) consist of ditch diversions totaling 1,623 cfs and storage rights totaling 43,000 acre-feet. These water rights cause much depletion of streamflow through the segment. Changing points of diversion on existing water rights within the segment could be limited by any instream flow right associated with WSR designation.

Development of conditional water rights would be senior to any instream flow water right established as part of WSR designation and would further diminish flow through the segment. Conditional water rights on the mainstem and tributaries upstream of the segment include ditch diversions totaling 8.4 cfs and storage rights totaling 19,434 acre-feet.

The CWCB holds an instream flow water right decreed for 3 cfs year-round from above the upper terminus (at the Uncompahgre National Forest boundary) to a county road crossing just upstream of the confluence with McKee Draw (4.81 miles) structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable extent, including the Fish ORV. Due to the many surface water diversions in the creek, this instream flow progressively loses value downstream of the confluence with McKee Draw.

Land Ownership and Uses

Almost 50% of the corridor consists of private land encompassing parts of San Miguel and Montrose counties. Portions of the corridor within Montrose County are zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses requiring a special use permit. Many of the uses are not related to agriculture and have the potential to conflict with the intent of the WSR Act.

Portions of the corridor within San Miguel County and to the east and north of Naturita Creek are within the Wright's Mesa Zone District. The district is intended to preserve the rural and agricultural character of Wright's Mesa, while encouraging diverse economic opportunities compatible with the rural landscape. A history of co-existing agriculture, ranching, residential,

and small business uses comprise the rural character of the area. The district discourages the sprawl pattern typically created by 35-acre lots by offering alternatives and incentives to cluster buildings, retain open lands, and keep large parcels intact.

Portions of the corridor within San Miguel County and to the south and west of Naturita Creek are within the West End Zoning District. The district is intended to preserve large, relatively remote areas of western San Miguel County for resource, agricultural, open space, and recreational purposes, while protecting private property rights. These areas currently have minimal public facilities and services and are considered premature for substantial development. Development in these areas preserves historical, archeological, and natural resources and landmarks, while allowing individuals to farm, ranch, and use necessary resources with limited intrusion on property rights.

ROWs

Numerous ROWs exist within the corridor, including Highways 145 and 141, county roads, powerlines, telephone lines, a water pipeline, and an access road to private property.

Energy and Mineral Resources

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. While portions of the segment are within an area identified by the USGS as having coal potential, the classification does not preclude WSR designation. There are no mining claims within the corridor.

Administration

The diffuse and scattered pattern of private land within the corridor could make this segment difficult to administer. Given the current level of water depletion in Naturita Creek, sufficient flow needed to protect the fish population might need to be acquired from existing decree owners. WSR designation would be consistent with the BLM Colorado Public Land Health standard for special status species.

Proposed management actions include designating the area as a Special Recreation Management Area, as well as conducting travel management planning for Burn Canyon (part of the Norwood Recreation District in Montrose and San Miguel counties).

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

The costs for administering and managing this segment for the Fish ORV would be substantially higher than current funding levels. Approximately half (3,177 acres) of the stream corridor is composed of private land with a fragmented pattern throughout most of the reach that could restrict access and limit available management options within the stream corridor. Land acquisition from willing sellers would be necessary in order to effectively and proactively manage for the ORV. Some stream channel modification projects might be needed to facilitate fish propagation.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

Apart from WSR designation, options for protecting the Fish ORV include actions implemented in accordance with the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*).

BLM staff determined that appropriation of an instream flow water right below McKee Draw by the CWCB would provide much protection for the Fish ORV.

P.4.7 24: Tabeguache Creek, Segment 2 – Not Suitable

Classification: Recreational

ORVs: Cultural, Vegetation

Eligible Length: 11.6 miles

BLM-Administered: 7.9 miles

Key Considerations:

- Congressional designation to protect wilderness values upstream ensures reliable flow through the segment, while a recently authorized state-based instream flow will help sustain the Vegetation ORV.
- The upper Tabeguache Basin has experienced limited water development and has few conditional water rights, resulting in a flow regime that mimics natural conditions, except during irrigation.
- The source water area upstream is managed primarily by the BLM and USFS, facilitating protect flow and sustain the ORV.
- Private property within the corridor consists of three distinct parcels separated by public land.

Tabeguache Creek, Segment 2 was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation based on a consensus that much private land would make the segment difficult to manage. In addition, there was a lack of support from private landowners for finding the segment suitable.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes to the proper hydrologic function of the Lower San Miguel River downstream. One small impoundment occurs within the segment. An instream flow water right appropriation has been finalized for this segment.

While the water right provides additional protection to sustain the Vegetation ORV, the Templeton Ditch can dewater the channel downstream of the diversion during the summer months. The ditch is decreed for 5.5 cfs and is senior to the instream flow water right.

Although it has not been in use for several years, the Uravan pipeline diversion and ROW located near the lower terminus of the segment remains an active water right. Several small stock reservoirs and ditch diversions on tributaries draining into the segment are decreed for a total of 62.3 cfs and 46 acre-feet of storage rights. Changing points of diversion on existing water rights within the segment could be restricted by any instream flow right associated with WSR designation.

If developed, a conditional water right ditch diversion of 3.5 cfs upstream of the segment could result in additional diminution of flow through the segment. Conditional water rights are senior to a pending state instream flow and any future instream flow associated with WSR designation.

The majority of the source water area upstream of this segment is managed by the BLM or USFS. Existing authorities allow for management actions to ensure adequate river flow needed to sustain the ORV.

Land Ownership and Uses

Private property within the corridor consists of three distinct parcels separated by public land. The scattered land configuration provides opportunities for land uses that could negatively impact public land within the corridor. Approximately 17.2% of the corridor consists of private land zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses requiring a special use permit. Many of the allowable and special uses are not related to agriculture and have the potential to conflict with the intent of the WSR Act.

Special Designations

Cultural resources within the segment are on the National Register of Historic Places.

Rights-of-Way and Withdrawals

ROWs within the corridor include county roads V19 and U19, telephone and power lines adjacent to and crossing the creek, and an historic ditch adjacent to the creek in the upper part of the segment. Umetco owns a water pipeline and road adjacent to and crossing the creek.

While portions are within an area classified as having Waterpower and Reservoir Resources, classification preclude WSR designation.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

WSR designation would complement the BLM Colorado Public Land Health standard for riparian vegetation.

Management actions in support of the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*) promote preserving the streamflow in Tabeguache Creek, which in turn benefits the Vegetation ORV.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

Costs for administering and managing this segment for the Cultural and Vegetation ORVs would be moderately higher than current funding levels. Portions of the segment can be accessed by county roads which would facilitate increased visitor use if designated.

The corridor does include parcels of private land containing riparian vegetation. As funding and opportunities arise, the BLM would pursue land acquisition from willing sellers, which would add value for ORV management and protection.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

Congressional designation of an area upstream of the segment (that includes Tabeguache Creek, Segment I and a contiguous USFS segment) to protect its wilderness values ensures reliable flow through the segment, while a recently finalized state-based instream flow water right would contribute additional flow to help sustain the Vegetation ORV. Future water right applications on public land within the segment should contain BLM terms and conditions ensuring that the ORVs are sustained.

P.4.8 26: North Fork Mesa Creek – Not Suitable

Classification: Scenic

ORV: Vegetation (not supported following review)

Eligible Length: 8.5 miles

BLM-Administered: 5.8 miles

Key Considerations:

- There is little water development in the headwaters of the North Fork Mesa Creek, which produces a flow regime mimicking natural conditions.
- The majority of the source water area upstream of the segment is managed by the BLM or USFS and existing authorities provide for ample management actions to protect stream flow needed to sustain the Vegetation ORV.
- Several ROWs occur within the corridor.
- There is a significant amount of private land in the lower reach of the segment.

Following a review by the CNHP that lowered the rarity ranking of the Narrowleaf cottonwood/strapleaf willow/silver buffaloberry plant community to G3, the segment no longer possesses a Vegetation ORV to support WSR eligibility.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

The North Fork of Mesa Creek contributes flow to Mesa Creek and the Lower Dolores River, providing habitat for native warm water fish. WSR designation would be consistent with actions in the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for the Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*).

The CWCB holds instream flow water rights along the entire segment structured to protect the natural environment to a reasonable extent. The instream flow provides some protection to sustain the Vegetation ORV. From the lower terminus and 3.90 miles upstream to Cedar Tree

Ditch Diversion, seasonal instream flow is 2.1 cfs for the period from April 1 to May 31. From Cedar Tree Ditch to the upper terminus, instream flow appropriation varies throughout the year. Between April 1 and May 31, appropriated instream flow is 2.75 cfs. It drops to 0.5 cfs between June 1 and February 29, and rises to 1.9 cfs between March 1 and March 31.

There are three water diversions in the lower reach, but only the Patterson Ditch has a decreed flow (of 14.12 cfs). The Patterson ditch diversion is located on public land. This water right is senior to the existing instream flow water right and any federal water right associated with WSR designation. An instream flow right associated with WSR designation could restrict the ability to change points of diversion for existing water rights within the segment.

A number of stock watering facilities in headwater tributaries constitute the only water use above the upper terminus.

There are no conditional water rights within or upstream of the segment.

Any additional water right filings or changes to existing diversions would be junior to the instream flow water right.

Land Ownership and Uses

Approximately 17.2% of the corridor consists of private lands zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses requiring a special use permit. Many of the allowable and special uses are not related to agriculture and have the potential to conflict with the intent of the WSR Act.

ROWs and Withdrawals

ROWs include telephone and power lines. A county road runs along the creek, dominating the setting for much of the segment. Unsurfaced roads cross the stream in a couple of locations.

There is a bat maternity roost withdrawal along the creek.

While portions of the segment are within an area classified as having Waterpower and Reservoir Resources, the Powersite Classification does not preclude WSR designation.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

WSR designation would complement the BLM Colorado Public Land Health standard for riparian vegetation, while private land at the lower portion of the corridor could create challenges for managing the area.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

Upon finding a segment suitable, the stream and corridor would be managed to protect the ORV, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional

funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

Because the BLM and USFS manage the headwaters of the North Fork of Mesa Creek, authorities exist to preserve a flow regime that mimics the natural variability needed to sustain the Vegetation ORV.

P.4.9 28: Ice Lake Creek, Segment 2 – Not Suitable

Classification: Scenic

ORV: Scenic

Eligible Length: 0.58 miles

BLM-Administered: 0.31 miles

Key Considerations:

- Landowners in the lower reach of the segment oppose WSR designation.
- The segment length is short and there are access issues involving private land within the segment.
- The BLM manages the source water areas that produce baseflow for the creek, providing protection for flow-dependent values.
- The segment was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation due to mining along the mesa at the northern end of the segment, as well as the short segment length. In addition, the segment terminates on private land, which could make the area more difficult to manage.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes to the proper hydrologic function of La Sal Creek downstream. There is no instream flow water right protection on the segment. A federal water right associated with WSR designation could restrict changing the points of diversion for existing water rights within the segment.

One absolute water right near the lower terminus would be senior to any water right associated with WSR designation. There are no conditional water rights or impoundments within or upstream of the segment. In the lower reaches, La Sal Creek is protected by an instream flow water right that could restrict future diversions from Ice Lake Creek.

Flow through the segment could be further reduced if diversion amounts are enlarged or diversion points are changed prior to securing an instream flow water right.

Land Ownership and Uses

Approximately 42% of the corridor consists of private lands zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses requiring a special use permit. Many of the uses are not related to agriculture and have the potential to conflict with the intent of the WSR Act. The private property in question is a contiguous parcel located just upstream of the lower terminus. The potential for impacts to the ORV due to lack of zoning controls would be limited on public land.

ROWs

A BLM road traverses the canyon just east of the creek.

Energy and Mineral Resources

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

Ice Lake Creek contributes flow to La Sal Creek, providing spring spawning habitat for native warm water fish consistent with the Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*).

A large amount of private land hinders access to public land within the segment and a number of private landowners have expressed opposition to WSR designation.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

Upon finding a segment suitable, the stream and corridor would be managed to protect the ORV, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Administering and managing this segment for the Scenic ORV would increase costs moderately above current levels. The public land portion of this segment is remote and has no developed access, both factors that would assist in the protection of the ORV. The lower reach of this segment is private land within which the Ice Lake Creek Corridor is bisected by Colorado State Highway 90.

Private land currently limits access to the public land portion of the corridor from the highway. Acquiring portions of private land from willing sellers would add value for managing and providing public access to this segment if designated. If designated, additional facilities would not likely be needed.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The following potential actions were identified as alternatives to WSR designation:

- Upgrade the Visual Resource Management classification in order to protect scenic values.
- Apply a No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulation to protect the corridor.
- Include conditions in the Uncompahgre RMP to protect the baseflow source water area at the upper terminus.

The Scenic ORV could be protected through existing authorities by requiring BLM conditions on all future applications and actions to ensure compatibility with the scenic classification.

P.4.10 29: La Sal Creek, Segment I – Not Suitable

Classification: Recreational

ORV: Fish, Vegetation

Eligible Length: 4.82 miles

BLM-Administered: 0.62 miles

Key Considerations:

- There is a significant amount of private land within the segment, along with significant opposition to WSR designation from private landowners.
- Land use zoning for private land within the segment is relatively non-restrictive.

The segment was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation due to extensive private land that could make the segment difficult to manage. In addition, a large number of private landowners do not support finding the segment suitable.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

A streamflow regime that mimics natural seasonal changes necessary for sustaining a healthy riparian vegetation community in this segment might only be achieved through WSR designation. The upstream terminus is along the Colorado-Utah state line and much of the headwaters are in Utah.

There is no instream flow water right protection on the segment. Water yield through the segment contributes greatly to the proper hydrologic function of the lower reaches of La Sal Creek, which is protected by an instream flow water right, possibly restricting additional water development within the segment.

Four absolute water right diversions totaling 8.9 cfs within private portions of the reach are senior to any instream flow water right. A water right associated with WSR designation could restrict changing the points of diversion on existing water rights within the segment.

No conditional water rights or impoundments occur within the segment.

Land Ownership and Uses

Approximately 47% of the corridor consists of private lands zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses requiring a special use permit. Many of the allowable and special uses are not related to agriculture and have the potential to conflict with the intent of the WSR Act.

ROWs and Withdrawals

ROWs within the segment include a CDOT highway and county roads. Telephone and power lines cross and run adjacent to La Sal Creek.

Energy and Mineral Leasing

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

The headwaters of La Sal Creek are in the State of Utah. A state-based instream flow water right would provide sufficient flow to sustain the Fish ORV, but would be inadequate for sustaining the Vegetation ORV. WSR designation would complement BLM Colorado Public Land Health standards for riparian vegetation and special status species.

A large amount and configuration of private land with non-restrictive zoning occurs within the segment. Large portions of private land have been converted to agricultural crops, making it difficult to manage for native riparian vegetation.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

Upon finding a segment suitable, the stream and corridor would be managed to protect the ORV, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Costs for administering and managing this segment for the Fish and Vegetation ORVs would be substantially higher than current funding levels. Some management actions to sustain the target fish species would continue with or without designation per the Range-Wide Conservation Agreement and strategy for Roundtail Chub, Bluehead Sucker, and Flannelmouth Sucker.

Private land acquisition would not be pursued, as more than 87% of the stream segment is privately owned, making it difficult for the BLM to acquire enough land to benefit management of the ORV. Some stream channel modification projects may be needed to facilitate fish propagation.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

Any future private water right or ROW application on public land within the segment should include BLM terms and conditions to protect the ORVs.

P.4.11 32: Lion Creek, Segment 2 – Not Suitable

Classification: Scenic

ORV: Vegetation

Eligible Length: 1.57 miles

BLM-Administered: 1.26 miles

Key Considerations:

- There is a much private land and landowner opposition to WSR designation in the lower reaches of the segment.
- Because the BLM manages the source water areas that produce baseflow for the creek, flow-dependent values could be protected through existing authorities.
- Existing authorities could provide much protection for the Vegetation ORV by requiring that future BLM applications and actions be compatible with sustaining the riparian vegetation.

Lion Creek, Segment 2 was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation due to the short length of the segment, as well as a measure of self-protection afforded by the steep slopes of the corridor. In addition, private land restricts access and landowners do not support finding the segment suitable.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

Water yield through the segment contributes to the proper hydrologic function of La Sal Creek downstream, which is protected by an instream flow water right in the lower reaches that might also limit additional water development in Lion Creek. There is no instream flow water right protection for Lion Creek.

The Manning Ditch is an absolute water right (of 0.6 cfs) near the lower terminus that would be senior to any instream flow associated with WSR designation. There are no conditional water rights or impoundments within or upstream of the segment.

Changing points of diversion on existing water rights within the segment could be limited in the future by water rights associated with WSR designation. Enlarging the diversion amount or changing the diversion point of an existing water right within the segment would further reduce flow within the longer reach of the segment if the changes are decreed prior to securing water rights associated with WSR designation.

Land Ownership and Uses

Approximately 17.4% of the corridor consists of private lands zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses

requiring a special use permit. The property is a contiguous parcel located just upstream of the lower terminus, limiting the potential for impacts to the ORV.

Energy and Mineral Resources

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

WSR designation would complement the BLM Colorado Public Land Health Standard for riparian vegetation.

There is a much private land and landowner opposition to WSR designation in the lower reaches.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

Upon finding a segment suitable, the stream and corridor would be managed to protect the ORV, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Costs for administering and managing this segment for the Vegetation ORV would increase moderately above current funding levels. The public land portion of this segment is remote and has no developed access, both factors that would assist in the protection of the ORV. The lower reach of this segment is private land within which the Lion Creek Corridor is bisected by Colorado State Highway 90.

The private land presently limits access to the public land portion of the corridor from the highway. Thus, acquiring portions of the private land from willing sellers would be value added for managing and providing public access to this segment if designated. A small amount of additional funding would be needed for signage, public education, ranger patrolling, and maintenance. Additional facilities would not be needed if designated. No detailed cost analysis or estimate was prepared as part of this study.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The Vegetation ORV could be protected through existing authorities by requiring BLM terms and conditions on all future water right and ROW applications and actions to ensure compatibility with sustaining the riparian vegetation.

P.4.12 33: Spring Creek – Not Suitable

***Classification:* Recreational**

***ORV:* Vegetation**

***Eligible Length:* 2.65 miles**

***BLM-Administered:* 1.49 miles**

Key Considerations:

- The segment is short and non-contiguous, with private land parcels near the lower terminus and along much of the middle portion.
- The BLM manages the source water areas that produce baseflow for Spring Creek, allowing for protection of flow-dependent values through existing authorities.
- The Vegetation ORV in the segment could be protected through existing authorities by ensuring that all future applications and actions contain BLM terms and conditions.

Spring Creek was found to be *not suitable* for WSR designation due to the short length of the segment and an extensive amount of interspersed private land that could make the segment difficult to manage. In addition, the segment is afforded a measure of self-protection by the steep slopes that define the corridor.

Segment Assessment

Water Rights and Uses

Although Spring Creek has no instream flow water right protection, water yield from the creek contributes flow to La Sal Creek, which is protected by an instream flow in the lower reaches that could restrict additional water development within the segment.

An absolute ditch diversion water right within the segment is senior to any water right associated with WSR designation. There are no conditional water rights or impoundments within or upstream of the segment.

Enlarging or changing diversion points on existing water rights within the segment prior to obtaining a federal reserved water right associated with WSR designation could further reduce flow within the reach. If the points of diversion are on public land, the water right could contain BLM terms and conditions limiting impacts to the Vegetation ORV.

Land Ownership and Uses

Approximately 24.1% of the corridor consists of private lands zoned as General Agriculture in the Montrose County Master Plan. As presently defined in the Montrose County Zoning Resolution, the zone is relatively non-restrictive regarding allowable uses-by-right and uses requiring a special use permit. Many of the uses are not related to agriculture. Private parcels cover much of the middle portion and lower terminus of the segment.

ROWs

ROWs within the segment include Highway 90, a county road, a powerline, and a telephone line that parallels a portion of the creek.

Energy and Mineral Resources

There are existing oil and gas leases within the segment. Active mining claims occur within the corridor and have a prior existing right to mineral deposits.

Administration

WSR designation would complement the BLM Colorado Public Land Health standard for riparian vegetation.

Potential Costs Associated with WSR Designation

Upon finding a segment suitable, the stream and corridor would be managed to protect the ORV, with little additional funding needed. Formal WSR designation would require additional funding for signage, public education, ranger patrols, and maintenance, the amount of which would vary depending upon projected increases in visitor use, as well as the segment's size, location, and other attributes.

Costs for administering and managing this segment for the Vegetation ORV would increase slightly above current funding levels. The headwater, public land portion of this segment is remote and has no developed access, both factors that would assist in the protection of the ORV.

The middle and lower portions of this segment contain private land within which the Spring Creek corridor is bisected by Colorado State Highway 90. The private land currently limits highway access to public land portions of the segment. Thus, acquiring portions of private land from willing sellers would add value to managing and providing public access to this segment if designated. A small amount of additional funding would be necessary for signage, public education, ranger patrolling, and maintenance. Additional facilities would not be needed if designated.

Alternative Protective Measures Considered

The Vegetation ORV would receive much protection by placing BLM terms and conditions on all future actions and activities within the segment.

P.5 DOLORES-SAN MIGUEL STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

P.5.1 Southwest Resource Advisory Council

The SWRAC is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior to represent a variety of interests across the Southwest District. The SWRAC meets two to four times annually to develop recommendations for the BLM regarding the preparation, amendment, and implementation of land use plans for public lands and resources and to provide representative citizen counsel and advice to the Secretary of the Interior concerning the planning and management of public land resources within the BLM Southwest District.

Between November 2010 and January 2011, a subgroup of the SWRAC conducted a series of public meetings in various towns throughout the western portion of the planning area to inform and solicit comment regarding segments within the Dolores and San Miguel river basins. The SWRAC Subgroup presented their suitability recommendations to the full SWRAC at the Statewide RAC Meeting on February 25. The SWRAC adopted the recommendations and forwarded them to the UFO for consideration.

P.6 GUNNISON BASIN STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Gunnison Basin stakeholder process was initiated by the Colorado River Water Conservation District. The stakeholder group contracted with a team of co-facilitators and held a series of public meetings to formulate recommendations regarding WSR suitability for eligible river segments in the Gunnison River Basin, including within the Dominguez-Escalante NCA. Nine meetings pertained to segments within the planning area outside of the NCA.

The stakeholder group was unable to reach a consensus and two sets of recommendations were forwarded to the BLM for consideration. Following are the meeting notes submitted by each group.

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