

February 16, 2011

Barbara Sharrow
Field Manager, Uncompahgre Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
2465 South Townsend Avenue
Montrose, Colorado 81401

Re: Wild & Scenic River Suitability Evaluation – Gunnison Basin Segments outside of Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area

Dear Ms. Sharrow:

The Gunnison Basin Wild and Scenic Rivers Stakeholder Group is a group of diverse stakeholders that has held ten meetings with 25 – 60 people in attendance at each since October 2010 to develop management plans to guide the Bureau of Land Management’s suitability determinations for segments in the Gunnison Basin that BLM has found eligible to become part of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System.

After careful deliberation, the stakeholder group has come to consensus that Deep Creek, the West Fork of Terror Creek, Gunnison River Segment 2 and Roubideau Creek Segment 2 should be found “Not Suitable” for inclusion in the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System. There was no dissent from this final recommendation by participants in the stakeholder group.

Key factors leading to this conclusion for each of these stream segments are listed below; additional information generated by the group’s discussion can be found in the attached charts.

Deep Creek:

- The small portion of the creek that is managed by the BLM raised concerns about the BLM’s ability to manage it as a Wild & Scenic River.
- Existing management actions by area landowners are protective of the Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV).
- The stream segment is frequently dry.
- Sole-source power lines and access roads currently exist that must be used for year-round operations and maintenance. Future development will likely require future upgrades and/or replacement of this infrastructure.

West Fork of Terror Creek:

- The small portion of the creek that is managed by the BLM raised concerns about the BLM’s ability to manage it as a Wild & Scenic River.
- The stream segment is frequently dry. Water is diverted from upstream reservoirs to water right holders of the Leroux Creek Water Users Association. Water is only in the stream segment in the

summer when Terror Ditch and Reservoir Company diverts water through it.

- The stream corridor contains extensive infrastructure related to power lines. A 230 KV transmission line crosses BLM land within the eligible corridor and requires year-round motorized access for operation, maintenance, and repair.
- Potential coal reserves exist in the area, and leases for their development have been issued.

Gunnison River Segment 2:

- The ORV for Gunnison River Segment #2 was endangered fish in the eligibility report; however, this is in error. Therefore there are no ORVs for this segment. Gunnison River Segment #2 is upstream of the Recovery Implementation Program's (for the four endangered fish species of the Upper Colorado River) designated "Critical Habitat" for all of the listed species. Analysis on planned re-operation of the Aspinall Unit is nearing completion with a primary goal of providing adequate flows for recovery of the listed species. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Operation of the Aspinall Unit requires that the Unit be operated to avoid jeopardizing the continued existence of, and assist in the recovery of, the endangered fishes. To avoid jeopardizing means adequate water must continue to flow from the Aspinall Unit through Gunnison River Segment #2 and beyond. Even delisting of all four species would require continued flows deemed adequate for continued self-sustaining populations.
- The small portion of the river corridor that is managed by the BLM raised concerns about the impact on private lands from suitability finding.
- Potential for the river channel to change course exacerbated concerns about impacts to private property and reduced the viability of narrowing the corridor to mitigate concerns (one option discussed).

Roubideau Creek Segment 2:

- The large amount of private land in the corridor raised concerns about the BLM's ability to manage it as a Wild & Scenic River.
- Concerns about the potential impact of a Wild & Scenic suitability finding on grazing permittees' ability to use the area for grazing and transit (critical transit corridor for cattle grazing).
- Utility corridor crossing BLM with power lines and gas pipelines as well as electric distribution service to 10 meters within the corridor.

The stakeholder group held more in-depth discussions on Monitor Creek, Potter Creek and Roubideau Creek Segment 1, including two subcommittee meetings. The group came to unanimous agreement on what conditions need to be maintained in these stream corridors, but did not come to full consensus on what management tools should be applied to maintain these conditions. Additional information collected on each segment by the group can be found in the attached charts.

Conditions to be maintained on Monitor Creek, Potter Creek and Roubideau Creek Segment 1:

- Existing grazing rights, including continued access to important livestock transit corridors to both BLM and Forest Service lands.
- Existing water rights.
- Equipment access for pond maintenance.
- Healthy range and well-managed grazing.
- Healthy vegetation: both vegetation types identified by the BLM as ORV's and other vegetation types, which have improved because of current grazing management practices.
- Diverse and healthy wildlife: both wildlife identified by the BLM as ORV's and other species.

- A sense of wildness, remoteness and naturalness.
- Existing quiet recreation opportunities:
 - Hiking.
 - Horseback riding.
 - Hunting.
- Protection from over-use for recreation and damaging forms of recreation, including effective means to limit access by motorized vehicles.
- Existing healthy stream flows, which include return flows from irrigation and water facilities.

Management tools:

The group agreed that current management has maintained the values listed above and should be continued. However, there was no consensus on what classifications or management tools should be applied to the areas to ensure that this continues. Management tools discussed included Wild & Scenic Suitability, incorporating the corridors into an area classified as “Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC),” a “Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA),” or “Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).” Group members expressed a preference for management tools that the local BLM office can reconsider with resource management plan revisions over tools that require the maintenance of particular protections until Congress acts (such as Wilderness Study Areas and Wild and Scenic suitability determinations).

Wild & Scenic Suitability

On Wild & Scenic Suitability, the majority of the group (24) indicated that the segments should be found Not Suitable, with two in opposition. Those opposed, which represent environmental advocacy organizations, will submit a separate report detailing why they believe the segments should instead be found Suitable. Key factors in the majority’s opinion that the segments should be found Not Suitable include:

- The ORV’s are already protected by a combination of current management strategies and the topography of the area. The current management is adequate as evidenced by the ORV’s BLM identified in finding the segments eligible
- Concern about potential impacts on water rights.
- Concern about potential impacts on grazing rights.
- On Potter Creek, updated information showed that the vegetation identified by BLM as the segment’s sole ORV in the original eligibility report was too common for the vegetation to qualify as an ORV, making the segment ineligible for Wild and Scenic status.
- Roubideau Creek Segment 1 is already contained within the Camelback Wilderness Study Area and therefore already managed to protect its wilderness qualities.

Alternative Management Tools

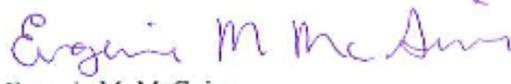
The group did not find consensus on whether classifying the stream segments as part of a LWC, SRMA, or ACEC would be an acceptable alternative to Wild & Scenic Suitability. Concerns raised with all of these management options included:

- The area is already sufficiently protected through current BLM management.
- These tools could affect a broader area than the stream corridors the group has been discussing.
- The full implications of these classifications are not yet sufficiently understood by the group.
- The group has not had time to flesh out what use stipulations they would want to recommend along with any of these classifications.

Please review the attached individual segment sheets for detailed information collected from the stakeholders.

The stakeholder group participants appreciate the support provided by BLM staff to help the participants understand the Wild & Scenic Rivers evaluation process.

Sincerely,
Gunnison Basin Wild & Scenic Rivers Stakeholder Group

<p>Billy L. Pease* Western Slope Gold Prospectors Association of America chapter from Olathe</p>	<p>Constantine Hirschfeld* President, Thunder Mountain Wheelers North Fork Snowmobile Club</p>
<p>Larry R. and Wanda K. Boyd* Landowners in Roubideau Segment 1 and grazing permittees in Roubideau Segment 1 and 2, and Potter Creek, and Monitor Creek</p>	 Kenyon E. McGuire Terror Ditch and Reservoir Company  Eugenie M. McGuire Terror Ditch & Reservoir Company
<p>Mike Wilson* Thunder Mountain Wheelers</p>	
<p>Olen Lund* Delta County Commissioner District #3 <i>Delta County endorses this letter.</i></p>	<p>Steven R. Lewis* Concerned citizen, Western Colorado Chapter Gold Prospectors Association of America</p>
<p>Betty Oglesby*</p>	<p>Shelby Bear* SCRAC Subgroup</p>
<p>Thomas M Alvey* North Fork Water Conservancy District Delta County Director CRWCD</p>	<p>Charles McMurdy* President, Montrose Ouray and San Miguel Farm Bureau Olathe property owner and farmer.</p>
 <p>Chris Treese Colorado River Water Conservation District</p>	<p>Dick Steele, DVM* Western Colorado Chapter of the Gold Prospectors Association of America Colorado Mule Deer Association Colorado Sportsmens Wildlife Fund Western Colorado Sportsmens Council</p>
<p>Eric Trommer* Landowner/farmer on the lower Gunnison and owner of New Leaf Fruit</p>	<p>Art Etter, Engineer* Bowie Resources, LLC</p>

*Permission to list as signatory provided via email or phone.

Signatures continued on following page.

<p>James Graziano* Monitor Mesa Ranch</p>	<p>Max, Julie & Gina Ungerer* Landowners and water rights owners</p>
<p> Mike Berry Tri-County Water Conservancy District</p>	<p> Dick Miller My signature represents that of myself, Scott Miller, John and Beth Wool, Kent Davis, Alan Malcolm and Dave Abbott who are all in association with the Escalante Ranch.</p>
<p>Mike Clarke* Grazing permittee</p>	
<p>Robert Gill* Ranch Manager for Bear Ranch, LLC</p>	<p>C. Douglas Atchley* Landowner</p>
<p>Richard Connell* Colorado Farm Bureau</p>	<p>Roger Bentley* Landowner</p>
<p>Chann Fogg* Vice President, Delta County Farm & Livestock Bureau <i>Delta County Farm & Livestock Bureau endorses this letter.</i></p>	<p>Anna M. Hutchins* Landowner</p>

*Permission to list as signatory provided via email or phone.