

**Public Comments Regarding
Wild and Scenic Suitability
Dolores River and Tributaries**

December 14 and 15, 2010

Two public meetings were hosted by the BLM's Sub-RAC in Telluride and Norwood, CO in mid December 2010. As part of a series of educational and public input gatherings, these two-hour evening meetings opened with a presentation by Dan Kowalski, aquatic biologist for Colorado Division of Wildlife in Montrose, who outlined the status of sport and native fish in the San Miguel and Dolores rivers. Also presenting was Amanda Clements, ecologist and Riparian Field Coordinator for the BLM's Uncompahgre Field Office, who discussed survival of vegetation values and rare plant communities, as well as how species/communities are determined ORVs for Wild and Scenic Act consideration.

Following the presentation, those in attendance were encouraged to participate in a question-and-answer session with the presenters, and then to provide comments regarding specific San Miguel/tributary segments.

The following provides a summary of the comments made at each meeting.

Telluride-December 14, 2010

SAN MIGUEL SEGMENT 1 (Map 18, page 65 in June 2010 "Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Report)

Mely Whiting, Trout Unlimited: I would like to remind the Sub-RAC members that these are segments that should be considered also from the national and statewide perspectives. There are only a handful of suitable segments in question, and we know there are more beautiful stretches than that. When people ask "why do anything?," we need to remember that the suitability discovery process gets other organizations to notice these areas. For example, the ORV "recreation" (boating and fishing) brings much money into the area. The DOW creates a report that tracks this, for example, and the San Miguel River area is generating revenues of more than \$17 million per year; boating alone is worth \$1 million per year (written comments/reports submitted).

Chris Meyers, Telluride Town Council and recreational boater: I will provide written comments. In terms of recreational values, I am very much for a WSR designation. Is there a cutthroat conservation effort in this segment? (response from Dan Kowalski: yes.)

Dave Allen, fly fishing guide and equipment representative/Trout Unlimited: I spend a lot of time on this segment, and have guided many clients through here, as well. Every single trout is very valuable on this segment.

Cari Mackey, San Miguel Whitewater Club: What is significant here is the quality of whitewater. A minimum of 150 cfs is what we (kayakers) are after.

Hilary White, Sheep Mountain Alliance: The BLM owns a significant amount of this land, which is important. What they need is a Nature Conservancy reserve.

Aaron Kimple, San Juan Citizens Alliance: I have been working many years on the San Juan tributaries and with other groups. We support WSR designation for this segment, and suggest particularly that the health of the ecosystem needs to be maintained here. Thank you to the BLM for attention to this.

Linda Luther, landowner: This segment has the best boating and is the finest riparian area in the state, with 300 bird species and Audubon designations.

Suzanne Sellers, Colorado Water Conservation Board: (stated in-stream flow information for all segments; written report provided)

John Duncan, "Telluride Outside" guiding company: It is a healthy river, still free flowing – for example, the Trout Lake segment has moss on the stream bank. From Deep Creek to Placerville, it is very healthy; the trees are healthy and provide good cover. Good volume of water for fishing and rafting from Deep Creek to Clay Creek.

Eric Dalton, outfitter: We have ten employees in the Telluride area, which is only possible because of the health and beauty of this river. There are 10-12 outfitters on this river because it is special and unique in the state – protecting this economic resource is important.

Lonnie Taylor, Gold Prospectors' Association: There is potential for uranium and gold mining along this stretch, which could have potential problems under WSR, but this could be compatible with all of the other values.

Hilary White, Sheep Mountain Alliance: Regarding mining claims in this segment, SMA respects the demand for mining but feels that riparian areas are not the best location for conducting this activity. This is a very important habitat that should be protected. Are there segments in the ACEC? Is there mining/uranium in this segment? Are flows maintained for native fishes? We should prevent an Endangered Species Listing (ESL) with in-stream flows in this segment.

SAN MIGUEL SEGMENT 2 (Map 18, page 69)

Hilary White: Part of the ACEC (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern). This is the most spectacular segment of the San Juan, hands down, and has already been through the process for designation.

Eric Dalton: The best kayaking is at the base of Norwood Canyon.

Mark Minchell(?): This segment really needs help because there are so many cattle ranches. There are actually fences in the river in some places. Protecting this area would be wonderful.

Cari Mackey: This really deserves the "Wild" designation. It is a very special stretch.

Dave Allen: Backcountry fishing in this segment is unmatched anywhere in southwest Colorado. There is gold-medal fishing on this segment.

Dan Kowalski, DOW: This segment does nearly reach gold-medal fishing; the best trout fishing on the San Miguel. The angler attitudes about their experiences are extremely positive, regardless of sometimes low catch rates – this is a rare phenomenon, as most fishing experiences are measured as positive based on successful catch rates.

Lonnie Taylor: You can only access this by floating in, or walking in from the south side.

SALTADO CREEK (Map 17, page 63)

Hilary White: This is located in an ACEC. The landowners upstream of BLM land are much in support of this. They comment that grazing needs to be managed here, as the cattle are threats to vegetation and wildlife habitats.

Lonnie Taylor: What is the recovery period for grazing? (response by Amanda Clements: It depends on the length of time, etc. Our guidelines call for no more than 30% vegetation loss, which can be recovered within a season. All of this is controlled via permitting.)

Barbara Hawke: Are flows and spring flooding important to this segment? (response by Dan Kowalski: Yes, and usually with a flow of this size, it is significant.)

Rusty Scott, landowner on Beaver Creek: The landowner/rancher here has done serious damage to the riparian vegetation – there are cows in the creek for long periods of time, and some water is diverted.

BEAVER CREEK (Map 14, page 56)

Rusty Scott, landowner at confluence of Goat and Beaver creeks: No one runs this river. There's not a trail, nothing; it is completely remote, and one of the region's most unique areas. There even are tons of fish and no one ever goes there.

Lonnie Taylor: There is an old road from the confluence of the San Miguel to some location on top.

Dave Allen: Lots of fish here near the Forest Service boundary. Fishing is a very good experience in this stretch.

Mark Minchell (?): The riparian habitat here is unique, due to Beaver Mesa drainage. This should be protected.

Hilary White: All of this is located in an ACEC. Why not "Wild" suitability? Is it because of the diversion? (response by Barbara Sharrow: Eligibility determined this to be "Scenic," due to power and gas lines passing through here.) Please consider a "Wild" designation, and split it up if necessary to get some portion(s) "Wild."

Norwood – December 15, 2010

SAN MIGUEL SEGMENT 1 (Map 18, page 65 in June 2010 "Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Report)

Jenny Russell, water attorney and property owner: I would like to see WSR designation here, as well as increased recreational use. It is important to protect this segment for additional water rights. Water rights for recreational users would protect downstream users.

Marshall Pendergrass, Trout Unlimited: I support designation. Recreational fishing is important for this area.

Tom Kyle, Norwood resident: I think it is important to take a historical perspective. My fear is what the government will do 20 years from now. How do we protect the future and keep it from getting screwed up? No segment should have a designation, leave it alone.

Dave Andrews, landowner: There are too many layers of regulation already. The Dolores has been managed for WSR for years, but Congress still has not voted on it. If the BLM is going to name some of these segments as suitable, they should tell Congress that if there is no designation by X date, the segment will be pulled from suitability.

Marlin Littlefield, Gold Prospectors' Association: Placer mining is not mentioned in the description for any of these segments.

Lonnie Taylor: Mineral resources are still here, with the potential to be developed. Recreation should not push this out.

Cherri Cooper, Nucla landowner: There seems to be a lot of concern here about future dams. What we are really concerned about is stream flow. Is there another way to keep dams from being on the river, except by restricting people from river access? I hate for someone else to tell us how to take care of the river when we are already taking care of it.

Kelly V: What is the ACEC? (response by Barbara Sharrow: Covers most of the segment, and is in place largely due to the riparian community.) In light of the ACEC, I would like to see this segment found suitable.

Erlin G (?): Wild and Scenic protects economic aspects of the river, fisheries and clean water. Placer mining could be very destructive on a large scale. If gold goes up in value, commercial gold mining could be prevented by Wild & Scenic designation. Admittedly, large-scale gold mining would be very difficult to pull off here.

SAN MIGUEL SEGMENT 2 (Map 18, page 69)

Nate Smith, attorney and resident of San Miguel County: This segment seems ideal for “Wild” designation because of its lack of private land, as compared with other segments.

Lonnie Taylor: There is evidence of a road there that may block the “Wild” designation.

RD Round, placer miner from Grand Junction: Are there campsites in this segment? (response by Barbara Sharrow: three sites are at the put-in above Norwood Bridge)

Marvin Littlefield: How does “Wild & Scenic” affect grazing rights? (response by Barbara Sharrow: Probably will not have impact)

Bruce Irvine, Norwood: I have a grazing permit with the BLM. Would prefer to see this not designated to protect my grazing rights.

Jenny Russell: This is a good example of what the BLM could manage since there is no private land on this segment. This river will continue to see heavy impacts due to recreation, droughts, etc. It should be protected to prevent upstream diversion.

Breck Richards, Nucla rancher: I think “Wild” designation is over the top. Good in-stream flow will solve the problem that this designation is hoping to solve.

Earl Reams, Naturita rancher: Wouldn't rafting impact the “Wild” designation? This should not be designated as “Wild” because of the recreational use on the river. I am not in favor of the designation.

SALTADO CREEK (Map 17, page 63)

Jerry Spore (?), resident: There is an old road there, so am not sure it would qualify.

Jenny Russell: Greg Craig has information on values in this area.

BEAVER CREEK (Map 14, page 56)

Lonnie Taylor: Would prefer to see designated “Scenic” or “Recreational,” rather than “Wild.”

Marshall Pendergrass: Very wild area. The old logging road washes out after about five miles. Good trout fishing in this area.