

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Glenwood Springs Field Office  
50629 US Highway 6 & 24  
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**NUMBER:** CO140-08-081 EA

**PROJECT NAME:** Roan Plateau Road Closures

**LOCATION:** T94W R5S all sections; T94W R6S Sec 1-6; T95W R6S Sec 1-6; T95W R5S Sec 1, 2, 11-14, 23-26, 35, 36

**APPLICANT:** BLM

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

**Proposed Action:** The Proposed Action is to reinforce 136 road closures, encompassing 124 miles of routes, that were legally closed in the 2007 Roan Plateau Record of Decision. The specific action will vary across closure points and will be dictated by factors such as terrain, vegetation, road condition, and the likelihood of violations of the closure.

On many routes the only closure will be by signage. Other closure methods will include falling trees on the route, placing rock barriers, gating, creating earthen berms to prevent vehicular traffic, and ripping and rehabilitating road beds. At some closure points a small area (no larger than 25' by 50') will be bladed to allow for vehicle turnaround and parking of several vehicles.

For the sake of analysis, it should be assumed that each of the 136 closure points will have an earthen berm and vehicle turnaround constructed, even though many of them will incur much less disturbance. Sixteen routes will be ripped and rehabilitated; nine are denoted by the following closure names on the attached map; Northwater 4, Northwater 5, Northwater 7, Long Ridge 4, South Rim 1, South Rim 2, and South Rim 12-16. The other seven are along the south rim and JQS cutoff road and denoted by the 2008 ACEC closure points.

**No Action Alternative:** Do not reinforce the closures of these points.

**PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION:** On some of the closed routes, the regulatory signing is not enough to prevent illegal motorized use of the routes. This illegal use causes impacts to soils, vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, and heritage sites, as well as recreation conflicts. Reinforcing these closures by physical means will help prevent these impacts.

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:** The proposed action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

**Name of Plan:** Glenwood Springs Resource Management Plan.

**Date Approved:** Jan. 1984, revised 1988, amended in November 1991 - Oil and Gas Leasing and Development - Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; amended Nov. 1996 - Colorado

Standards and Guidelines; amended in August 1997 - Castle Peak Travel Management Plan; amended in March 1999 - Oil and Gas Leasing & Development Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; amended in November 1999 - Red Hill Plan Amendment; and amended in September 2002 – Fire Management Plan for Wildland Fire Management and Prescriptive Vegetation Treatment Guidance — Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan Amendment, June 2007 — Roan Plateau Areas of Critical Concern Record of Decision, March 2008.

Decision Number/Page: Page 33 of the Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan Amendment:

Decision Language: Limit mechanized (wheeled conveyance) and motorized travel to designated routes year round.

### **STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH:**

In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. The five standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands.

The Glenwood Springs Field Office is in the ongoing process of completing land health assessments on a landscape basis. The proposed action is located in the Roan Cliffs landscape which had land health assessment fieldwork conducted in 1999 and the determination report was approved on January 8, 2001. The Standard for riparian areas was being met on all but two sites. The Standard for threatened, endangered and other special status species was not being met due to the decline in the population of Parachute penstemon near the Anvil Rim Road.

The impact analysis must address whether the proposed action or any alternatives being analyzed would result in impacts that would maintain, improve, or deteriorate land health conditions for that specific parameter.

### **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the proposed action and no action alternative. In addition, the section presents comparative analyses of the direct and indirect consequences on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the various actions.

A variety of laws, regulations, and policy directives mandate the evaluation of the effects of a proposed action and alternative(s) on certain critical environmental elements. Not all of the critical elements that require inclusion in this EA are present, or if they are present, may not be affected by the proposed action and alternative (Table 1). Only those mandatory critical elements that are present and affected are described in the following narrative.

In addition to the mandatory critical elements, there are additional resources that would be impacted by the proposed action and alternative. These are presented under **Other Affected Resources**.

#### **Critical Elements**

**Table 1. Critical Elements of the Human Environment**

<i>Critical Element</i>	<i>Present</i>		<i>Affected</i>		<i>Critical Element</i>	<i>Present</i>		<i>Affected</i>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No		Yes	No	Yes	No
Air Quality	X		X		Prime or Unique Farmlands		X		X
ACECs	X		X		Special Status Species*	X		X	
Cultural Resources	X		?		Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	X		X	
Environmental Justice	x			x	Water Quality, Surface and Ground*	X		X	
Floodplains		X		X	Wetlands and Riparian Zones*	X		X	
Invasive, Non-native Species	X		X		Wild and Scenic Rivers	X		?	
Migratory Birds	X		X		Wilderness/ WSAs		X		X
Native American Religious Concerns	?		?						

\* Public Land Health Standard

## **Air Quality**

**Affected Environment:** The proposed action area (Garfield County) has been described as an attainment area under CAAQS and NAAQS (Colorado Ambient Air Quality Standards and National Ambient Air Quality Standards). An attainment area is an area where ambient air pollution amounts are determined to be below NAAQS standards. For further details on air quality studies in the Glenwood Springs Resource Area, refer to the Roan Plateau RMPA and EIS which describes potential effects from oil and gas development (BLM 2006:4-26 to 4-37).

### *Proposed Action:*

**Environmental Consequences:** The proposed action would result in short term localized equipment emissions and possibly dust generation during heavy equipment operations that include excavation, rock placement, and berm creation. Additional emissions would occur from chainsaws during the falling of trees. These effects would be minor, of short duration, and overall would have little or no effect on air quality.

### *No Action:*

**Environmental Consequences:** The no action alternative would have no effect on air quality.

## **Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

**Affected Environment:** Thirty-eight of the proposed road closure points or portions of the roads to be closed are within or on the boundary of the Trapper Creek, East Fork Parachute Creek, or Anvil Points ACECs. These ACECs were created to protect the Colorado River cutthroat trout, Parachute penstemon, several significant natural plant communities and the outstanding scenic values within the East Fork Parachute Creek canyon.

**Environmental Consequences:** None of the proposed road closure activities would be visible from the East Fork Parachute Creek canyon. The proposed action will have no impacts to the scenic values in this canyon. See the Special Status Species section for a discussion of the potential impacts to and mitigation for the trout, the penstemon and the natural plant communities. Although, there will be short-term

impacts to the ACEC values from the proposed action, in the long-term, with proper mitigation employed, the road closures will benefit the ACEC values by reducing sedimentation into trout-bearing streams, reducing fragmentation of significant plant communities and reducing the potential for noxious weed invasions by reducing the amount of bare ground and the amount of vehicular traffic.

## **Cultural Resources**

Affected Environment: A number of surveys have been conducted on the Roan Plateau. Two of these surveys (GSFO# 786, 8396-1a & b) are large block inventories conducted for the Department of Energy and BLM of the Naval Oil Shale Reserve lands. Approximately, 74% of the proposed action area has been inventoried resulting in the recording of 186 cultural resources. Approximately, 34 of these resources are considered eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and are identified as historic properties. Potentially, more cultural resources may be present in the proposed action area but, are obscured by dense vegetation. Any activity that disturbs the ground surface or exposes features and/or artifacts to erosion processes or artifact collection will **Adversely Affect** cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences: For archaeological sites, direct impacts result primarily from disturbance of surface and subsurface sediments. For historic properties with Protohistoric or Historic period structural remains, direct impacts result from damage to or destruction of these structures. Construction activities pose the greatest threat to buried cultural resources due to the potential to totally destroy the resource. The greatest to least threat proposed by this action is: construction of berms; followed by ripping and rehabilitating of road beds; grading of turnaround areas; gating; tree felling; placement of rocks; with signage being the least destructive.

Proximity of the proposed action to cultural resources may adversely impact their significance by changing the setting, location, association, and feeling of area. This is particularly true for culturally sensitive Native American sites and/or areas of concern.

The proposed road closures should reduce casual travel over time and should help reduce the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects resulting in the reduction of degradation of the condition and integrity to most sites, decrease illicit surface collection, and the integrity of setting, location, association, and feeling that is a part of the site's significance.

Mitigation: To mitigate the adverse affect the closure of the roads needs to be prioritized and phased in. Additionally, and *most importantly, close coordination with the Cultural Resource Specialist will be necessary* to determine the type of mitigation necessary to protect cultural resources. These mitigation prescriptions will follow the Roan Plateau Planning Area Cultural Resource Management Plan which could include cultural resource inventories, monitoring, and/or data recovery. Monitoring will likely be the most prescribed mitigation. Monitoring requires a qualified archaeologist be present during all ground disturbing activities and requires advance notice of at least one week prior to any disturbance to facilitate getting an archaeologist to conduct the monitoring.

### No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences: Under this alternative the road closures would not be constructed, erosion and continued casual use would continue to impact cultural resources.

## **Environmental Justice**

Affected Environment:

Review of 2001 data from US Census Bureau indicates the median annual income of Garfield County averages \$43,560 and is neither an impoverished or wealthy county. Median annual income of Eagle County averages \$51,578 and is not impoverished but is considered a wealthy county. U.S. Census Bureau data from July, 2004 shows the minority population of Garfield and Eagle County comprises less than 3 % of the total population<sup>1</sup>.

Garfield County		Eagle County	
Median Household Income		Median Household Income	
Estimate	90% Confidence Interval	Estimate	90% Confidence Interval
\$50,119	\$ 47,045 to \$53,393	\$59,037	\$55,067 to \$63,294

**Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:** The proposed action and alternatives are not expected to create a disproportionately high and adverse human health impact or environmental effect on minority or low-income populations within the area.

**Invasive, Non-native Species**

**Affected Environment:** No comprehensive weed surveys have been conducted in the project areas, however, due to the widespread nature of weeds in the Glenwood Springs Field Office, it is likely some population level of noxious or invasive weed species are present at the project sites.

**Environmental Consequences:** Noxious weed populations are a threat to land health as they contribute to loss of rangeland productivity, increased soil erosion, reduced species richness, reduced wildlife habitat quality, and reduced aesthetic quality. Weeds generally germinate and become established in areas of surface disturbing activities or other human activities such as road construction and maintenance, vehicular traffic, big game and livestock grazing. Surface disturbing activities associated with the proposed action would create a niche for noxious and invasive weed species. After construction, the project sites would be an area where weeds would easily become established.

Noxious weeds or weed seed attached to vehicles can be introduced into areas of travel. Closing roads to vehicle traffic would remove the spread of noxious weeds caused by vehicles. However, weeds would still be spread by other methods.

**Mitigation:** Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a certified weed-free native seed mixture identified in the vegetation mitigation section below. The GSFO would continue to monitor the project sites for the presence of any noxious weeds and will be responsible for promptly controlling any noxious weeds on the Colorado State List A or B (except redstem filaree).

**No Action Alternative:** Under the no action alternative, surface disturbing activities associated with the proposed action would not take place thereby not creating a niche for noxious and invasive species to become established.

**Migratory Birds**

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<sup>1</sup> Table CO-EST2002-ASRO-02-08-County Population Estimates by Race Alone and Hispanic or Latino Origin: July 1, 2002  
 Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau  
 Release Date: September 18, 2003  
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Affected Environment: The Roan Plateau is comprised of a variety of vegetation types, including sagebrush, mountain shrub, pinyon/juniper, aspen and conifer. These community types typically provide nesting habitat for a large array of migratory birds during the breeding season. Several species listed on the USFWS's Bird of Conservation Concern List, pinyon jay, black-throated gray warbler, Williamson's sapsucker and Virginia's warbler potentially nest in the area. Additional high interest birds that may nest in these habitat types include Brewer's sparrow, grey flycatcher and juniper titmouse. Peregrine falcons, goshawks, red-tailed hawks and golden eagles are known to nest and forage in the vicinity of the plateau.

Environmental Consequences:

*Proposed Action:* The proposed action would have minimal impacts to migratory birds. Road closures would occur in already disturbed areas and would be unlikely to destroy any nests. Construction activities may disrupt nesting attempts and disturb some species due to noise and an increase in human activity. These impacts should be minimal as habitat quality would be reduced near roads. The proposed action would help improve migratory bird habitat by closing and reclaiming roads.

No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to migratory bird species from this alternative. However, the proposed action would likely improve migratory bird habitat.

**Native American Religious Concerns**

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located within a larger area identified by the Ute Tribes as part of their ancestral homeland. Cultural resource inventories (see **Cultural Resources**) were conducted to determine if there were any areas that might be culturally sensitive to Native Americans. The Ute tribes were informed during the Roan Plateau planning process of the various actions that might occur and while they did not specifically identify particular areas of concern they did identify vegetation communities that may be of interest to them during a field visit during the Roan Plateau. Currently there are no known areas of Native American concern within the proposed action area. However, this could change once removal of the dense vegetation and construction is begun. No formal consultation was undertaken at this stage of the process.

Environmental Consequences: Direct impacts of construction have the potential to irreparably damage or destroy buried culturally sensitive sites. Additionally, impacts that affect the physical setting could result in a loss of what makes an area significant. There may also be other unidentified culturally sensitive or significant locations in the area that have not been identified by the Ute tribes. The proximity of Native American sites to planned action area may result in indirect impacts that may adversely impact the significance of resources by changing the setting, location, association, and feeling.

Cumulative impacts of increased development, access, construction, operation, and maintenance may also adversely impact these sites, possibly degrading the cultural significance by either destroying the sensitive area or its landscape setting. Impacts to the auditory and visual environment may be of importance in considering values placed on some sites by Native American tribes, thus impacting them. Mitigation measures designed to protect resources of potential Native American concern are presented in

Mitigation: To mitigate the adverse affect the closure of the roads needs to be prioritized and phased in. Additionally, and *most importantly*, *close coordination with the Cultural Resource Specialist will be necessary* to determine the type of mitigation necessary to protect Native American resources. These mitigation prescriptions will follow the Roan Plateau Planning Area Cultural Resource Management Plan which could include cultural resource inventories, monitoring, and/or data recovery. Monitoring will likely be the most prescribed mitigation. Monitoring requires a qualified archaeologist be present during

all ground disturbing activities and requires advance notice of at least one week prior to any disturbance to facilitate getting an archaeologist to conduct the monitoring. If any Native American areas of concern are identified, formal consultation with the Ute tribes will be undertaken. Native American Graves and Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) regulations will be followed if burials are identified. All work in the vicinity will cease, notification will commence with the Tribes, SHPO, and Sheriff's department. The area is to be protected until which time as a decision can be made as to how best to handle the situation.

#### No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences: Under this alternative the road closures would not be constructed, erosion and continued casual use would continue to impact Native American resources.

#### **Special Status Species (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 4)**

##### Affected Environment:

According to the latest species list from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/endspp/CountyLists/COLORADO.pdf>), the following Federally listed, proposed, or candidate plant and animal species may occur within or be impacted by actions occurring in Garfield County: Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*), Ute Ladies' Tresses orchid (*Spiranthes diluvialis*), Parachute penstemon (*Penstemon debilis*), DeBeque phacelia (*Phacelia submutica*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis*), yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), razorback sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*), Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*), bonytail chub (*Gila elegans*), and humpback chub (*Gila cypha*).

The project area does not provide habitat for any federally listed wildlife species. One BLM sensitive species, Colorado River cutthroat trout, is found in East Fork Parachute Creek, East Middle Fork Parachute Creek, JQS Gulch, Northwater Creek, and Trapper Creek. All of these populations are Core Conservation Populations that are important to the sustainment of the species. Road closure work is planned within each of these watersheds.

Parachute penstemon is a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The historic population of Parachute penstemon along the Anvil Rim Road is greater than one-half mile from the nearest proposed route closure. No other listed or candidate plants have occurrences or habitat within the project area.

Several of the road closures along the Anvil Rim Road are within a beardless bluebunch wheatgrass/Sandberg bluegrass community, which was identified as a Significant Natural Plant Community in the Roan Plateau RMPA due to the rarity and good ecological condition of the community.

##### Environmental Consequences:

##### Proposed Action:

###### *Parachute penstemon*

Due to the distance of the Parachute penstemon population from the nearest proposed road closure, the action would not result in any direct or indirect impacts to the Parachute penstemon.

###### *Colorado River cutthroat trout:*

The proposed action would result in up to 3 acres of disturbance in upland vegetation consisting primarily of mixed mountain shrub with some limited aspen and sub-alpine fir areas. Berm construction and vehicle turnaround areas would be small and adjacent to or directly on existing disturbed roads. The

creation of these features would result in some soil compaction and displacement and increase the likelihood of erosional processes, especially on steep slopes and areas devoid of vegetation. Soil detachment and sediment transport would be likely to occur during runoff events associated with spring snowmelt and short-duration high intensity thunderstorms. Due to the close proximity of many of the proposed activities to occupied streams, there is potential that additional sediment associated with the proposed activity could reach the above mentioned streams. Sediment can impact cutthroat trout by silting in spawning substrates which can smother eggs resulting in reduced recruitment, silting in limited pool habitats important to cutthroat as seasonal thermal refugia, and silting in the interstitial spaces in the streambeds that harbor aquatic insects an important food source for these fish. Given the elevation of the project area and the associated moisture regime, the likelihood of timely revegetation is good. Areas that are ripped would be seeded with a seed mix appropriate to the site to facilitate timely reclamation of abandoned route surfaces. Erosion and sediment concerns would be short-term until such time that disturbed areas would be revegetated.

In addition, the reinforcement of these road closures would help to minimize and reduce long-term erosion and sediment concerns associated with the presence of these routes. As routes are closed and reclaimed either actively through ripping or seeding or passively through natural revegetation, it is anticipated that the proposed action would result in a long-term net decrease in the amount of sediment entering resident streams which would help improve conditions for resident cutthroat trout.

**Mitigation:**

To further minimize erosion concerns, hasten reclamation, and reduce the spread or introduction of weedy species, all ground disturbing activity areas (all berms and turnaround sites) should be reseeded with a seed mix appropriate to the site.

*Beardless bluebunch wheatgrass/Sandberg bluegrass community*

Several of the roads to be closed traverse through this significant natural plant community. Ripping and seeding these roads may have positive benefits to the community by reducing fragmentation and eliminating potential weed invasions caused by vehicular traffic. However, to preserve the genetic integrity of the plant community, it is important to seed the road(s) with the same species that presently occur there and use locally-collected seed, if possible.

Mitigation: To preserve the integrity of the beardless bluebunch wheatgrass/Sandberg bluegrass natural plant community along the Anvil Rim Road, close coordination with the GSFO Ecologist will be necessary to determine the most appropriate mitigation measures to use. Mitigation for disturbances within and immediately adjacent to this significant plant community will likely include seeding the area with seed collected on-site and implementing timely control of noxious weeds.

**No Action Alternative:**

*Parachute penstemon*

Under the no action alternative, the existing road closures would not be reinforced and no new surface-disturbing activities would be conducted. There should be no impact to the historic population of Parachute penstemon along the Anvil Rim Road.

*Colorado River cutthroat trout:*

Under the no action alternative, no reinforcement of road closures would occur. It is likely that some routes would continue to be used illegally resulting in continued erosion and sediment concerns. Impacts would be similar to the proposed action except somewhat more pronounced.

*Beardless bluebunch wheatgrass/Sandberg bluegrass community*

Under the no action alternative, the existing road closures would not be reinforced and no new surface-disturbing activities would be conducted. Some routes, including routes which traverse through the significant natural plant communities, would continue to be used illegally without physical barriers to vehicle traffic. Vehicles can carry weeds and weed seeds which can become established and degrade the condition of the natural plant community.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Special Status Species: In 1999, the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office conducted the Roan Cliffs Land Health Assessment. The Land Health Assessment indicated that a portion of the landscape was not meeting the Standard for Special Status Species due to the dramatic decline in the population of Parachute penstemon along the Anvil Rim Road. Causes of the decline have not been determined. The proposed action should have no impact to the population of Parachute penstemon and may help to maintain or improve habitat conditions by reducing roads in the vicinity which serve as vectors for weed introductions.

### **Wastes, Hazardous or Solid**

Affected Environment: Vehicle fuel and lubricants would be used for dozer operations and transportation during project implementation. Additionally, fuels and lubricants would be used for chainsaw operations.

*Proposed Action:*

Environmental Consequences: Fuels and lubricants would be stored in appropriate containers and refueling would occur in designated areas. Based on the distance of the proposed activities from area drainages, the existing slope angles, and good vegetative cover; it is unlikely that fuels or lubricants would be transported to area drainages.

*No Action:*

Environmental Consequences: Under the no action alternative there would be no fuel or lubricants present associated with equipment.

### **Water Quality, Surface and Ground (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 5)**

#### Surface Water

Affected Environment: Affected Environment: Proposed activities would occur on the Roan Plateau within two major 6<sup>th</sup> field watersheds. To the north is a 21,862 acre 6<sup>th</sup> field watershed that contains the perennials Northwater and Trapper Creeks and to the south is a 26,345 acre 6<sup>th</sup> field watershed that contains the perennials East Fork of Parachute and Ben Good Creeks. As mentioned in the proposed action, the proposed activities would occur along existing roads at some distance from these perennial drainages.

The State of Colorado has developed *Stream Classifications and Water Quality Standards* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 37) that identify beneficial uses of water and numeric standards used to determine allowable concentrations of water quality parameters. The perennial drainages mentioned above have been classified aquatic life cold 1, recreation 2, water supply, and agriculture. These classifications indicate that this segment is capable of sustaining a wide variety of cold water biota, not suitable or intended for primary contact recreation, and suitable or intended to become suitable for potable water supplies and agricultural purposes that include irrigation and livestock use.

The State of Colorado has also developed a *303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments Requiring TMDLS* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 93) that identifies stream segments that are not currently meeting water quality standards with technology based controls alone and

a *Monitoring and Evaluation List* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 94) that identifies waterbodies suspected to have water quality problems. At this time, the perennial drainages mentioned in the Affected Environment section above are not on either of these lists. In addition, there are no current water quality data available for these drainages.

*Proposed Action:*

Environmental Consequences: Proposed activities would temporarily remove vegetation and could alter soil conditions through compaction and displacement associated with dozer operations. These impacts would result in an increase in erosion potential and possible offsite sedimentation. Additionally, there is a potential for contaminants associated with fuel and lubricant spills to be transported. Based on the distance of the proposed activities from area drainages, the existing slope angles, and good vegetative cover; it is unlikely that sediment, fuels, or lubricants would be transported to area drainages.

*No Action Alternative:*

Environmental Consequences: The no action alternative would have no affect on surface water.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 5 for Water Quality: The proposed action and no action alternative would not likely prevent Standard 5 for Water Quality from being achieved. In 1999, the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office conducted the Roan Cliffs Land Health Assessment. During that time, it was determined that all waterbodies evaluated were meeting Standard 5.

### **Wetlands and Riparian Zones**

Affected Environment: There are approximately 363 acres of riparian and wetland vegetation that occur within the Roan Plateau planning area. The variety of vegetation types include evergreen riparian forests and woodlands, deciduous dominated forests and woodlands, willow shrublands, willow shrublands, non-willow shrublands, and herbaceous vegetation. All of these communities occur as narrow strips that are sustained by surface water, groundwater discharge, or a combination of the two.

*Proposed Action:*

Environmental Consequences: Few, if any, road closure points are anticipated within riparian and wetland areas. Construction of vehicle turnaround/parking areas would be the most intrusive activity to riparian and wetland areas. In the event this construction takes place within a riparian area, some loss of riparian vegetation would occur due to construction work and subsequent use of the site as a vehicle turnaround and/or parking area. Other road closure methods such as falling trees, placing rock barriers, gating and signage would not cause any direct loss of riparian vegetation. The reinforcement of the road closures may help prevent vehicle damage to riparian areas associated with the presence of these routes.

Mitigation: Construction activities will be limited to areas beyond the outer edge of riparian or wetland vegetation.

*No Action:*

Environmental Consequences: Under the no action alternative, no reinforcement of road closures would occur. It is likely that some routes would continue to be used illegally and possibly causing damage to riparian and wetland areas. There would be no loss of riparian vegetation due to construction activities associated with the road closure points.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 2 for riparian systems: The proposed action would not result in failure to achieve this standard and may maintain and/or improve land health conditions for riparian systems.

### **Wild and Scenic Rivers**

Affected Environment: Portions of this proposed action may occur within stream corridors that were found in to meet eligibility criteria in the Roan Plateau Eligibility Report for the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, May 2002. Specifically segments (1/4 mile each side of the following streams) that may be within the project area are; East Fork of Parachute Creek , Second Anvil Creek, First Anvil Creek, Trappers Creek, and Northwater Creek. These streams were found to meet the free-flowing criteria and were eligible for their identified outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) related to fish, and botanical values. Until a suitability study is completed, all actions must protect the free flowing nature of the “eligible” stream and identified ORVs, and maintain the preliminary classifications.

Environmental Consequences: While the exact method of closure will be determined on a case by case basis based on site conditions, implementation actions within ¼ mile of any “eligible” stream needs to ensure the protection of the identified ORV values and the stream corridors preliminary classifications. Mitigation: Implementation actions must avoid negative impacts to identified fish and botanical values and should blend into the natural landscape as much possible (earthen berms, minimal disturbance and signage, etc.) in order to preserve the preliminary classifications within the following “wild” segments: Cook 9, Cook 10, Cow 23, SW 13, and within the following “scenic” segments: Rim 10, Rim 11, Rim 22. With the proposed mitigation no negative impacts are likely to occur to the identified ORVs.

*No Action:* Without reinforcement of these closure points it is likely that continued travel would occur on many of these routes. Some identified ORV’s may experience negative impacts from increased erosion and subsequent increased sediment within the stream corridors.

### NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

#### **Soils (includes analysis of Public Land Health Standard 1)**

Affected Environment: Affected Environment: According to the *Soil Survey of Rifle Area, Colorado: Parts of Garfield and Mesa Counties* (USDA 1985), the proposed activities would be located on many different soil map units. Common within the proposed action area are the Northwater loam, Parachute-Rhone loams, and Rhone loam. Following is a brief description of these three soil map units.

- Northwater loam – This deep, well drained soil is found on mountainsides at elevations ranging from 7,600 to 8,400 feet and on slopes of 15 to 65 percent. The Northwater loam is derived from sedimentary rocks. Surface runoff for this soil is slow and the erosion hazard is slight. Primary uses for this soil include grazing, wildlife habitat, and recreation.
- Parachute-Rhone loams – These gently sloping to steep soils are found on ridges and mountainsides at elevations ranging from 7,600 to 8,600 feet and on slopes of 5 to 30 percent. The Parachute soil is derived from sandstone and or marlstone while the Rhone soil is derived from fine-grained sandstone. Approximately 55 percent of this unit consists of the Parachute soil

while approximately 30 percent is the Rhone soil. The Parachute soil is moderately deep, well drained, and has a moderate erosion hazard with medium surface runoff. The Rhone soil is deep, well drained, and has a slight erosion hazard with slow surface runoff. Primary uses for these soils include grazing and wildlife habitat.

- Rhone loam – This deep, well drained, gently sloping to steep soil is found on ridges and mountainsides at elevations ranging from 7,600 to 8,600 feet and on slopes of 5 to 30 percent. This soil is derived from sandstone and marlstone. Surface runoff for this soil is slow and the erosion hazard is slight. Primary uses for this soil include wildlife habitat and limited grazing.

*Proposed Action:*

Environmental Consequences: Proposed activities would temporarily remove vegetation and could alter soil conditions through compaction and displacement associated with dozer operations. These impacts would result in an increase in erosion potential and possible offsite sedimentation. Based on the distance of the proposed activities from area drainages, the existing slope angles, and good vegetative cover; it is unlikely that sediment, fuels, or lubricants would be transported to area drainages.

*No Action Alternative:*

Environmental Consequences: The no action alternative would have no impact on soil resources.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 1 for Upland Soils: The proposed action and the no action alternative would not likely prevent Standard 1 for Upland Soils from being met. In 1999, the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office conducted the Roan Cliffs Land Health Assessment. During that time, it was determined that Standard 1 was being met at all upland sites evaluated.

**Vegetation (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 3)**

Affected Environment: Vegetation on the Roan Plateau includes a variety of vegetation types, including mixed mountain shrubs (Big sagebrush/snowberry/serviceberry), grasslands, aspen woodlands and mixed conifers (Engelmann spruce-Subalpine fir).

Environmental Consequences:

*Proposed Action:*

Construction of earthen berms and vehicle turnaround/parking areas would be the activity most likely to affect vegetation resources. Construction and subsequent use of vehicle turnaround and/or parking areas would result in the permanent loss of a small amount of upland vegetation. Felling of trees and installation of gates would result in a temporary loss of upland vegetation. Other road closure methods such as placing rock barriers and signage would not cause any direct loss of vegetation. In addition, the reinforcement of the road closures may help prevent vehicle damage to vegetation resulting from illegal motorized use of these routes.

All surface-disturbing activities such as construction of turnaround and/or parking areas, construction of earthen berms, and ripping of road surfaces would create areas devoid of vegetation that provide a niche for the invasion of noxious weeds. Given the elevation and moisture regime in the project area, rapid revegetation is expected. Some routes that are closed would be passively reclaimed through natural revegetation; other routes would be reclaimed through ripping and seeding of the road bed. In either case, the proposed action should result in a long-term increase in vegetation as closed roads are reclaimed.

Mitigation:

Disturbed areas, *other than the significant grassland plant communities*, would be seeded with the following seed mixture:

<u>Species of Seed</u>	<u>Variety</u>	<u>Application Rate (PLS lbs/ac)</u>
Mountain brome	Garnet, Bromar	12.5
Letterman needlegrass	VNS	7.0
Slender wheatgrass	San Luis	5.0
Big bluegrass	Sherman	1.0
Prairie junegrass	VNS (North American Origin)	<u>0.3</u>
TOTAL		25.8 (PLS lbs/ac)

The rates shown above are for broadcast seeding. If seed is drilled, use one-half the application rate. All seed will be certified free of weed seed.

To preserve the integrity of the grassland natural plant communities, any surface disturbances within the grassland communities would be seeded with native seed collected from the site. This seed would be broadcast at a rate that would attain an approximate coverage of 60-80 pure, live seeds (PLS)/square foot. Wherever possible, seed would be raked in to cover the seed with approximately one-quarter inch of soil.

Noxious weeds would be controlled as identified in the Invasive, Non-native Species section above.

*No Action:*

Under the no action alternative, the existing road closures would not be reinforced and no new surface-disturbing activities would be conducted. Some routes would continue to be used illegally without physical barriers to vehicle traffic. The potential for the invasion of noxious weeds or other invasive plants would be less than under the Proposed Action since no surface-disturbing activities would take place, however, some weeds would continue to be transported due to illegal motorized use of closed routes.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities:

The Roan Cliffs Land Health Assessment determined that the project area was meeting the Standard for plant and animal communities on a landscape basis. Across the landscape, some concerns were noted regarding the presence of old, even-aged class stands of trees and shrubs with little recruitment evident. Noxious weeds were noted in some localized areas, particularly in some old burns and in riparian areas. If noxious weeds resulting from the surface-disturbing activities are promptly controlled, the proposed action should result in an improvement in land health conditions on a landscape basis by reducing the future opportunities for noxious weed invasions by vehicular traffic.

**Wildlife, Terrestrial (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 3)**

Affected Environment: The Roan Plateau is comprised of a variety of vegetation types, including sagebrush, mountain shrub, pinyon/juniper, aspen and conifer. These habitat types provide cover and forage for a variety of wildlife species, including big game species, reptiles, small mammals and birds.

Environmental Consequences:

*Proposed Action:* The proposed action would impact a small amount of wildlife habitat. Wildlife species may be displaced from the project area during construction due to noise and an increase in human presence. Most species would return after the road closures are complete. Closing and reclaiming roads would improve habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

*No Action Alternative:* There would be no impacts to wildlife species from the no action alternative. However, closing and reclaiming routes would improve habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities: The proposed action would improve wildlife habitat and would contribute to meeting this standard.

**OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS:** The following elements presented in Table 2 were considered for impact analysis relative to the proposed action and no action alternatives. Resources that would be affected by the proposed action and no action alternative are discussed below.

<b>Table 2. Other Resources Considered in the Analysis.</b>			
<i>Resource</i>	<i>NA or Not Present</i>	<i>Present and Not Affected</i>	<i>Present and Affected</i>
Access and Transportation			X
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire/Fuels Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Law Enforcement	X		
Paleontology	X		
Noise	X		
Range Management			X
Realty Authorizations	X		
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics	X		
Visual Resources	X		
Water Rights	X		

**Access and Transportation**

Affected Environment:

This action will affect travel on 124 miles of routes. While these routes are already legally closed to motorized vehicles, the signs stating that closure are not completely effective at stopping that use.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

This action will help prevent illegal motorized use of these routes. It will ensure that people using legal access methods are the only ones using these routes.

**Recreation**

Affected Environment:

This action will affect travel on 124 miles of routes. While these routes are already legally closed to motorized vehicles, the signs stating that closure are not completely effective at stopping that use. .

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

By stopping illegal motorized use of these routes, this action will help prevent the recreation conflicts that occur when motorized users illegally use non-motorized routes.

**Range Management**

Affected Environment: The road closure area encompasses 3 grazing allotments with a total of 13 permittees. The table below summarizes the authorized use on each allotment:

<i>Allotment Name and Number</i>	<i>Livestock Number and Kind</i>	<i>Period of Use</i>	<i>Total AUMs</i>
JQS Common #18908	1200 Sheep 660 Cattle	6/16 to 9/30 6/16 to 9/30	3170
Clough-Alber #18909	1000 Sheep 134 Cattle	6/20 to 10/01 6/16 to 10/15	1090
East Fork Common #18910	634 Cattle	6/16 to 10/15	2540

Environmental Consequences: Many of the roads that were closed in the Roan Plateau Management Plan access range improvement projects such as ponds, spring developments, management facilities, and fences. To maintain proper management of the rangeland resource, permittees and BLM should maintain administrative access into the projects. Under all road closure alternatives such as fencing, locked gates, berms, boulders, or other obstructions other than signing, the BLM Range Management Specialist should be included to determine the most effective way to close the road without losing administrative access to range projects.

**SUMMARY OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Cumulative impacts are the incremental effects caused by management actions considering all other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions affecting a resource. These can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taken over time and the effects can be either additive or subtract from the effects of other actions. In summary, the proposed action is not expected to result in cumulative impacts.

**PERSONS AND AGENCIES CONSULTED**

Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer

**INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Cheryl Harrison	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Concerns.
Desa Ausmus	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, Terrestrial Wildlife and T&E Terrestrial Wildlife Species
Jeff O'Connell	Hydrologist	Soil, Air, Water, Geology
Kay Hopkins	Outdoor Recreation Planner	VRM, Wilderness, WSR
Carla DeYoung	Ecologist	ACECs, T/E/S Plants, Vegetation, Land Health Stds
Brian Maiorano	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Project Leader, Recreation

**REFERENCES:**

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
1984. *Glenwood Springs Resource Management Plan*. Glenwood Springs Field Office.

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CO-140-2008-081 EA

The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. The proposed action with mitigation measures result in a finding of no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

Rationale: The analysis of the proposed action with mitigation measures did not identify any impacts that would be significant in nature either in context or intensity. The action will help enforce the route closures and thus help soil, vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, heritage and recreation resources. In addition, there is nothing to indicate the action is highly controversial or that it is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant actions.

Mitigation Measures:

- The closure of the roads needs to be prioritized and phased in. Additionally, and *most importantly, close coordination with the Cultural Resource Specialist will be necessary* to determine the type of mitigation necessary to protect cultural resources. These mitigation prescriptions will follow the Roan Plateau Planning Area Cultural Resource Management Plan which could include cultural resource inventories, monitoring, and/or data recovery. Monitoring will likely be the most prescribed mitigation. Monitoring requires a qualified archaeologist be present during all ground disturbing activities and requires advance notice of at least one week prior to any disturbance to facilitate getting an archaeologist to conduct the monitoring.
- Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a certified weed-free native seed mixture identified in the vegetation mitigation section below. The GSFO would continue to monitor the project sites for the presence of any noxious weeds and will be responsible for promptly controlling any noxious weeds on the Colorado State List A or B (except redstem filaree).
- To preserve the integrity of the beardless bluebunch wheatgrass/Sandberg bluegrass natural plant community along the Anvil Rim Road, close coordination with the GSFO Ecologist will be necessary to determine the most appropriate mitigation measures to use. Mitigation for disturbances within and immediately adjacent to this significant plant community will likely include seeding the area with seed collected on-site and implementing timely control of noxious weeds.
- Construction activities will be limited to areas beyond the outer edge of riparian or wetland vegetation.

NAME OF PREPARER: Brian Maiorano

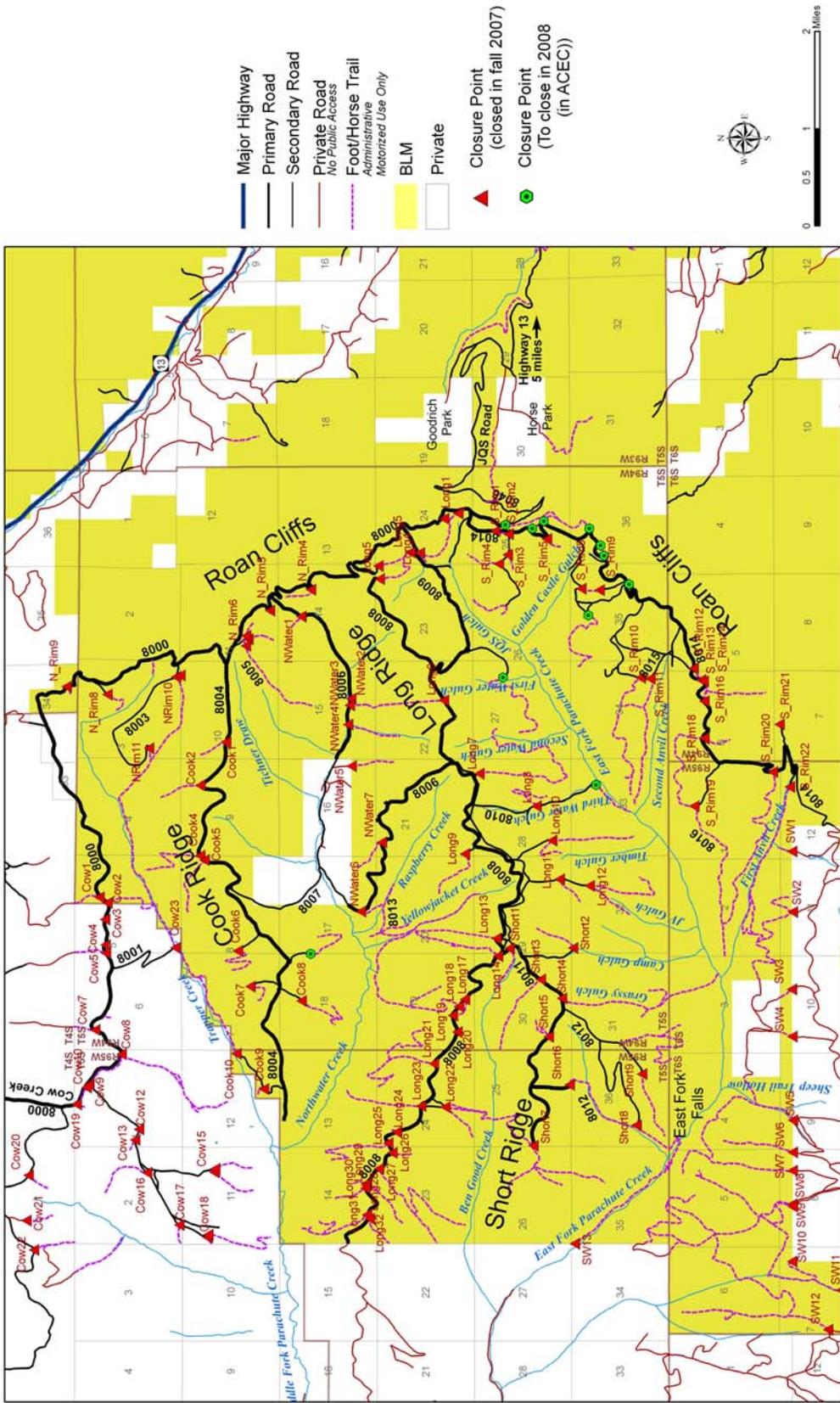
SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: 

DATE SIGNED: 7/17/2008

ATTACHMENTS:

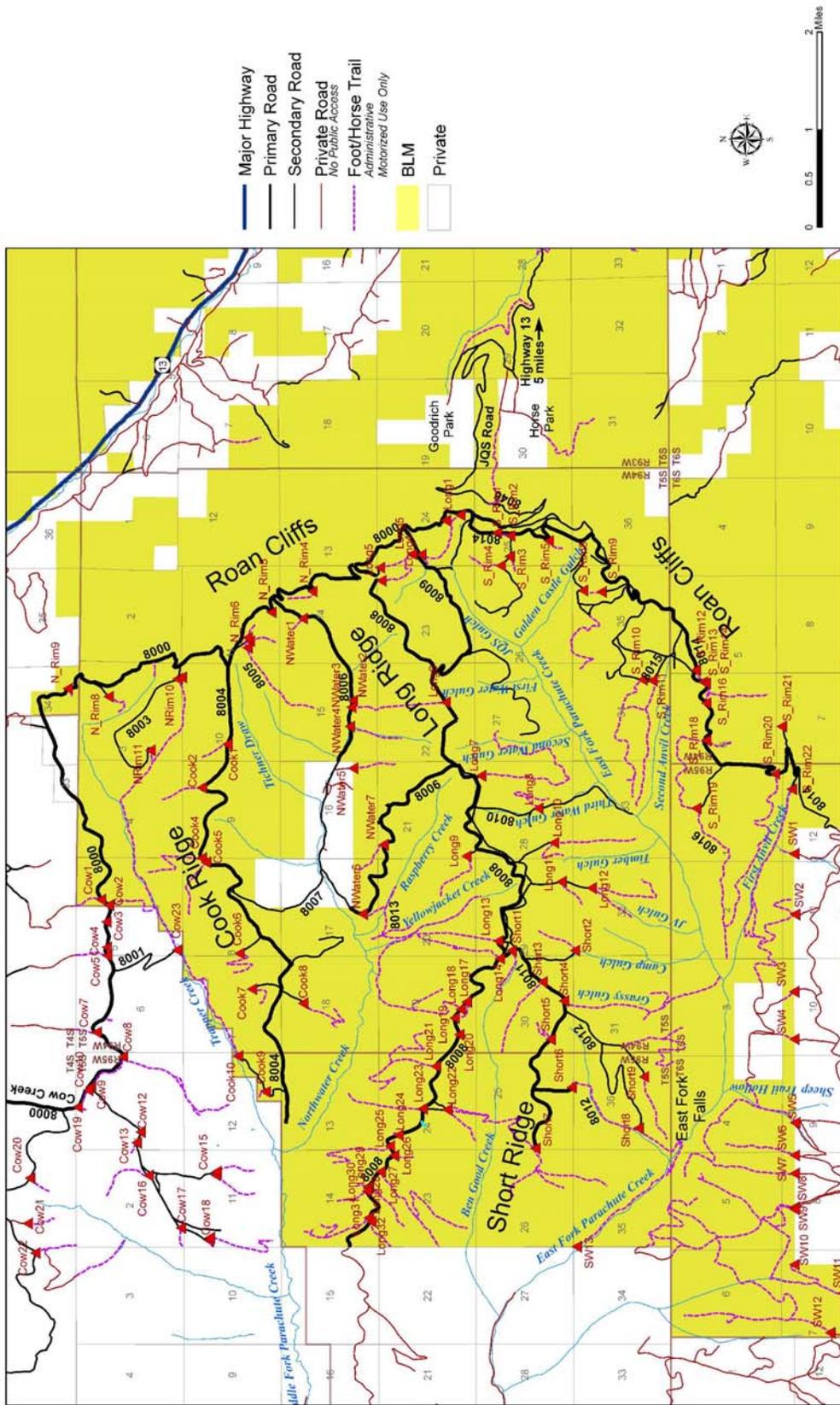
Map  
Education/Discovery/NAGPRA Stipulation

# Roan Plateau Road Closure Points



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# Roan Plateau Road Closure Points



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### **Education/Discovery Stipulation/NAGPRA**

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires that if newly discovered cultural resources are identified during project implementation, work in that area must stop and the agency Authorized Officer notified immediately (36 CFR 800.13). The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), requires that if inadvertent discovery of Native American Remains or Objects occurs, activity must cease in the area of discovery, a reasonable effort made to protect the item(s) discovered, and immediate notice made to the BLM Authorized Officer, as well as the appropriate Native American group(s) (IV.C.2). Notice may be followed by a 30-day delay (NAGPRA Section 3(d)). Further actions also require compliance under the provisions of NHPA and the Archaeological Resource Protection Act.