

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Kremmling Field Office
P.O. Box 68
Kremmling, CO 80459**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-120-2007-24-EA

PROJECT NAME: North Sand Hills and Wolford Mountain Staging Areas

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

North Sand Hills SRMA: SW1/4, Sec.36, T11N R79W & NW1/4, Sec.1, T10N R79W

Wolford Mountain: NE1/4, Sec.1, T1N R81W & SW1/4, Sec.4, T1N R80W

APPLICANT: BLM

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction/Issues and Concerns: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Kremmling Field Office (KFO) applied for and was awarded an Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) grant through the Colorado State Parks OHV Grant Program in 2005-2006 to construct four staging areas, two within the North Sand Hills (NSH) Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and two within the Wolford Mountain Travel Management Area (WMTMA).

The NSH SRMA and WMTMA both receive heavy OHV use during the summer months. The NSH receives 2500 to 3000 visitors during Memorial Day weekend, with the Fourth of July and Labor Day Holidays receiving hundreds of visitors as well. There has been a lack of defined staging areas that are needed for public health and safety and for the protection of natural resources at both areas. Currently, on high use weekends, visitors park alongside or partially in existing roadways to unload OHV's from vehicles and/or trailers. A 2004 survey of the North Sand Hills provided visitor input on facilities that are needed within the area. One facility that was identified from visitor input as needed was designated staging areas.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action is to construct four staging areas for OHVs and public parking. Two staging areas would be located within the NSH SRMA, and two would be located within the WMTMA.

Within the NSH, a staging area would be constructed just to the west of the Aspen restroom facility, and a second would be constructed west of the Instant Study Area (ISA) boundary along the south side of Jackson County road 6S.

Within the WMTMA, a staging area would be constructed within the designated play area along Grand County Road 224, with a second constructed adjacent to the kiosk site on Grand County Road 227 (see project maps below).

The staging areas would be approximately 50' x 100' feet, and would be delineated by large boulders. Each staging area would have the existing surface leveled, hardened and graveled as necessary to provide a sustainable parking area for visitors. Staging area locations have been selected to provide visitors with an area to park and unload OHVs while providing direct access to existing trails, high use areas, and access to public facilities and informational kiosks. Under the Proposed Action, construction would take place in the summer of 2008.

No Action Alternative: The four staging areas would not be constructed. Visitors would continue to stage their OHV's throughout both areas, creating safety hazards for themselves and other visitors, and continuing to damage natural resources.

Alternative #1: The Proposed Action would stay the same with the exception of the staging area along Grand County Road 227. This staging area would be located near Muddy Creek adjacent to an existing parking area and permanent restroom facility that is accessed from Grand County Road 227. The staging area would be separate from the current parking area, still providing visitors not participating in motorized recreation an area to park. To implement this alternative, maintenance work of the existing access route would need to be done to improve access. This would be accomplished under the Wolford Mountain Travel Management Plan identified Implementation Action: *Conduct annual maintenance and rehabilitation of 10 miles of routes (combination of roads, single-track and ATV trails)*. This site would still provide direct access to the trail system while providing a facility for public health.

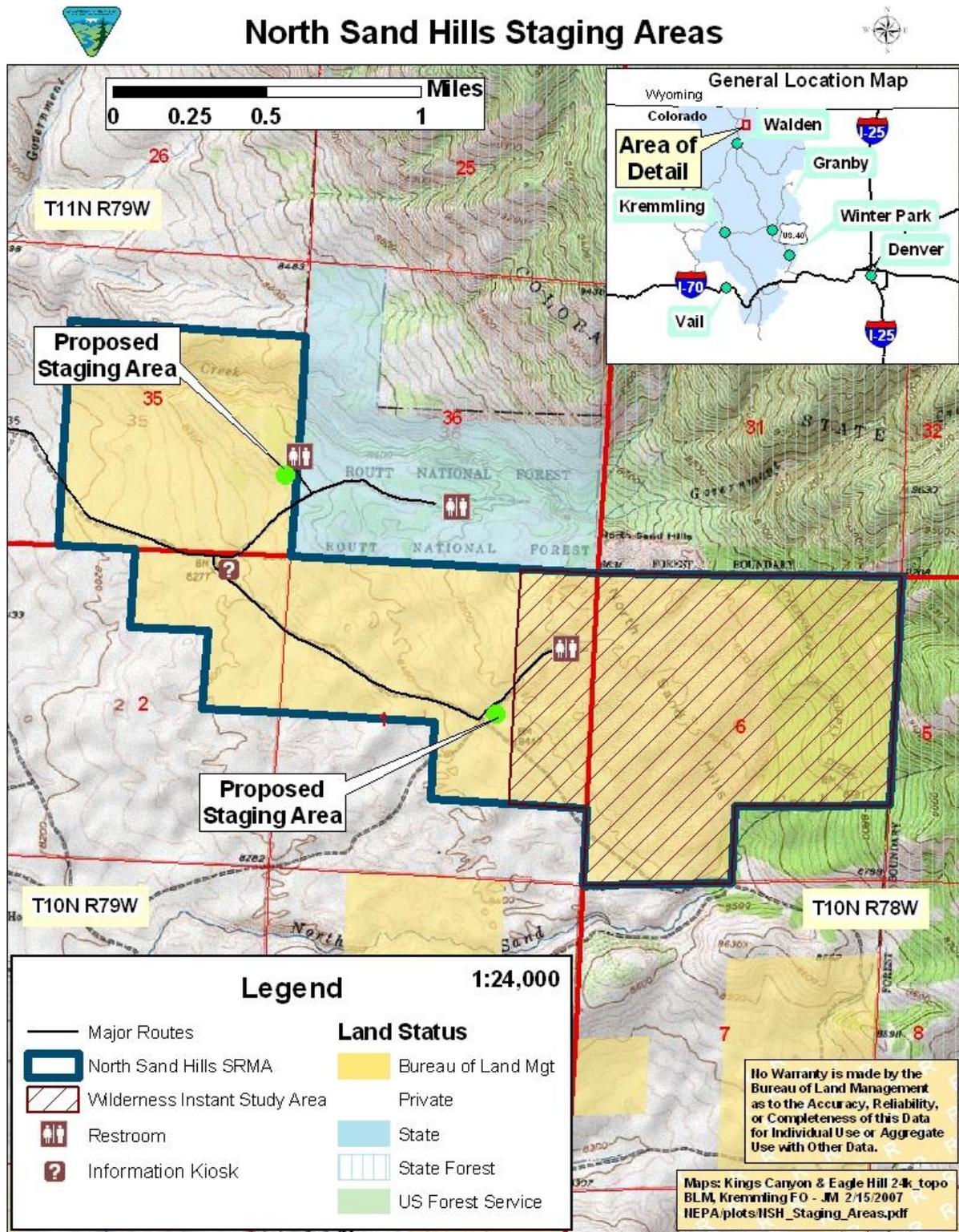
Alternatives Considered But Eliminated From Further Analysis: Within the North Sand Hills SRMA, one staging area was proposed to be near the existing Dune Restroom at the terminus of Jackson County Road 6S. This site was not analyzed due to it being within the North Sand Hills Instant Study Area (ISA), one of three Wilderness Study Area categories.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION: The purpose of the proposed project is to provide recreational visitors with designated areas that would be used for parking and as a staging area for OHVs. The project would also further BLM's objective to "protect fragile and unique resource values from damage by off-road vehicle (ORV) use and to provide ORV use opportunities where appropriate."

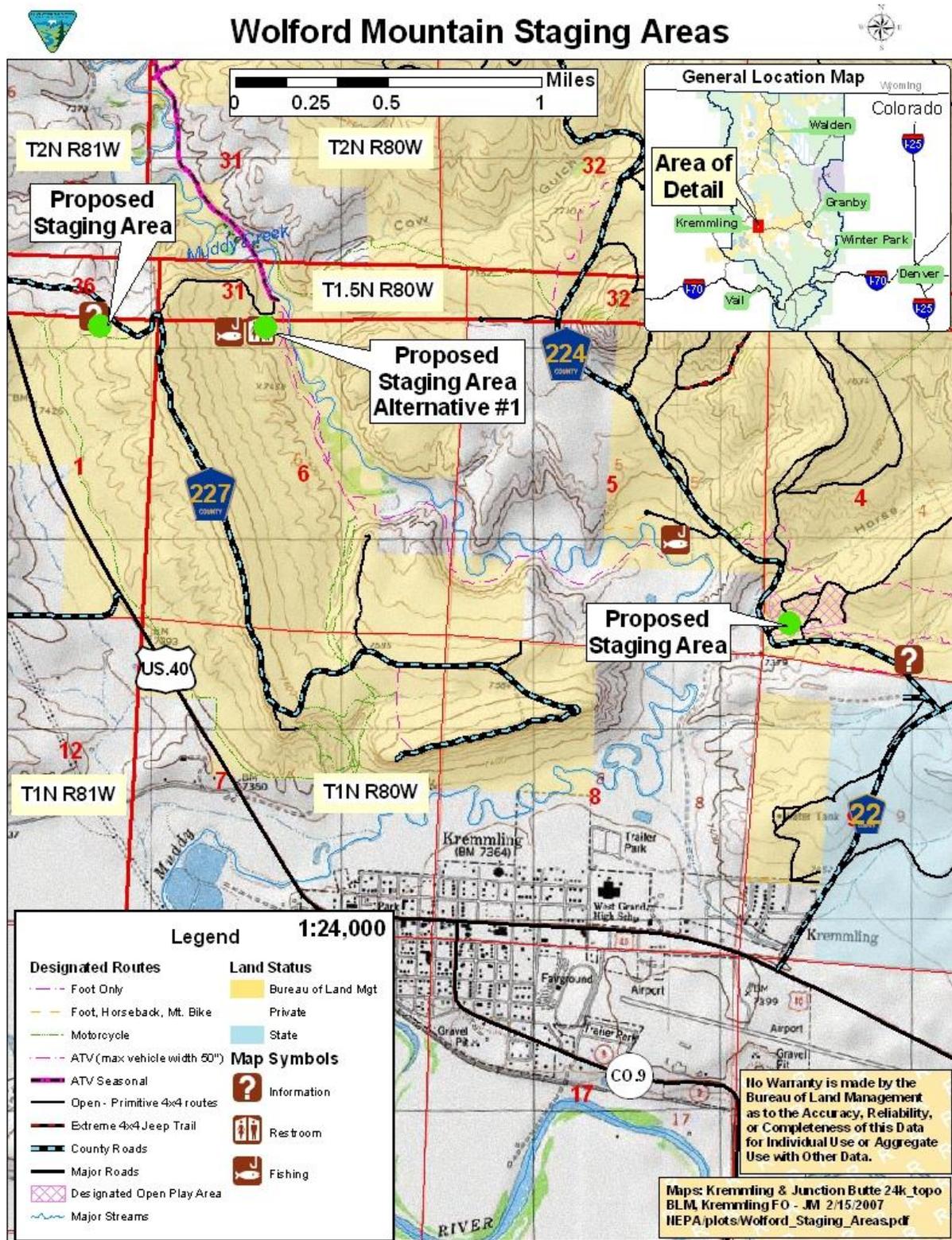
A need for the proposed project within the NSH was identified through a visitor survey conducted in 2004, identifying designated staging areas as a facility the public would like to see implemented. The BLM staff also identified a need to help reduce off road parking within vegetated areas, congestion along access routes, and the proliferation of trails.

The WMTMA has several county roads and designated routes which visitors park along. Often, parking occurs on vegetated areas and/or partially obstructs travel along such routes. This creates a public safety hazard for other vehicles traveling along those routes, and has a direct impact on the vegetation. By creating designated parking and staging areas, the BLM would protect resources while providing for visitor safety and promoting appropriate off highway vehicle use.

Map 1



Map 2



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: Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP), Record of Decision (ROD)

Date Approved: December 19, 1984; Updated February 1999

Decision Number/Page: P. 12, 9, a

Decision Language: *To protect fragile and unique resource values from damage by off-road vehicle (ORV) use and to provide ORV use opportunities where appropriate.*

Decision Number/Page: P.11, 7, a

Decision Language: Objective: *To ensure the continued availability of outdoor recreational opportunities which the public seeks and which are not readily available from other sources, to reduce impacts of recreational use on fragile and unique resource values, and to provide for visitor safety, and resource interpretation.*

Standards for Public Land Health: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. The following are the approved standards:

Standard	Definition/Statement
#1 Upland Soils	Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes. Adequate soil infiltration and permeability allows for the accumulation of soil moisture necessary for optimal plant growth and vigor, and minimizes surface runoff.
#2 Riparian Systems	Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water, function properly and have the ability to recover from major surface disturbances such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods. Riparian vegetation captures sediment, and provides forage, habitat and bio-diversity. Water quality is improved or maintained. Stable soils store and release water slowly.
#3 Plant and Animal Communities	Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential. Plants and animals at both the community and population level are productive, resilient, diverse, vigorous, and able to reproduce and sustain natural fluctuations, and ecological processes.
#4 Threatened and Endangered Species	Special status, threatened and endangered species (federal and state), and other plants and animals officially designated by the BLM, and their habitats are maintained or enhanced by sustaining healthy, native plant and animal communities.
#5 Water Quality	The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado. Water Quality Standards for surface and ground waters include the designated beneficial uses, numeric criteria, narrative criteria, and anti-degradation requirements set forth under State law as found in (5 CCR 1002-8), as required by Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act.

Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in the environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements below or in the Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Review Record and Checklist (IDT-RRC) (Appendix 1).

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS: The following critical elements: Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Cultural Resources, Environmental Justice, Farmlands- Prime and Unique, Floodplains, Native American Religious Concerns, Wastes, Hazardous or Solid, Wetlands and Riparian Zones, Wild and Scenic Rivers were evaluated and determined that they were not present or that there would be no impact to them from the Proposed Action, Alternative #1, or the No Action Alternative. See IDT-RRC in Appendix 1 for further information.

The following critical elements were determined to be potentially impacted and were carried forward for analysis from the IDT-RRC in Appendix 1.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Currently, the sites selected for the Proposed Action contain previously disturbed soils and vegetation and an existing avenue for the establishment and spread of invasive, non-native species. The proposed sites are included in the BLM and Jackson and Grand counties weed control programs.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The small size of the proposed disturbances and treating the areas with leveling, hardening, and graveling should reduce the chance of establishment or expansion of invasive, non-native species. However, since the disturbance is long term and many different types of seeds would be imported by the vehicles, the areas would require long term monitoring and weed control. Any weeds that become established or spread would be treated through the BLM and its partnerships with Jackson and Grand counties.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The proposed project sites and adjoining areas provide habitat for a variety of migratory bird species. Mountain bluebirds, vesper sparrows, horned larks, sage thrashers, green-tailed towhees, and red-tailed hawks are among the more common species. All the proposed sites are associated with some losses of habitat and disturbances occurring from motorized vehicle travel and human use, primarily recreational use. Alternative #1 in the WMTMA would be located adjacent to riparian habitat adjoining Muddy Creek. This habitat supports a variety of migratory birds in addition to those listed above.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The proposed sites would eliminate less than one acre of vegetation and would likely attract more human and mechanical use within the habitat in which they would be located. The proposed sites would displace those species listed above to areas of habitat with less disturbance associated with vehicle and human use. Sufficient undisturbed habitat exists to support species which would be displaced from the proposed staging sites. Alternative #1 would be located adjacent to riparian habitat associated with Muddy Creek but construction and use of this site would not cause any additional impacts since the area is currently used by people and vehicles and no riparian habitat loss would result.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: The proposed project sites, except Alternative #1 located in the WMTMA, provide winter habitat for Greater Sage-grouse, a BLM designated Sensitive Species. Sage-grouse use the ridges which remain relatively snow free and draws that support stands of tall sagebrush within the proposed project area during winter.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The proposed projects in the WTMTA would eliminate less than ½ acre of winter habitat for sage-grouse. Both of these sites are located in areas which have been disturbed by roads and trails, and little additional vegetation removal would be required. Also, neither site would be accessible to motorized travel during winter when sage-grouse are most likely to be using the habitat in the proposed project area. Thus, there would be minimal impacts to Greater Sage-grouse.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: This standard would continue to be met if the 4 sites are constructed as proposed.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The Proposed North Sand Hills staging areas are located within the Canadian River 5th Order watershed. The two staging areas would be on the flatter western edges of the Sand Hills with few defined drainages. The sandy soils and flat terrain with low precipitation amounts would result in little runoff leaving the sites. If any runoff did leave the northern staging area, it would travel within the Spring Creek drainage area, but would be intercepted by the Government Ditch No. 2 prior to reaching any surface waters. The southern staging area would also be within the natural Spring Creek drainage area, but would be intercepted by the Sand Creek Ditch. It is unlikely that runoff from either site reaches surface waters.

The state of Colorado has designated Spring Creek as a “Use Protected” stream, with Agricultural, Recreation-Class 2, and Aquatic Life- Coldwater Class 2 uses. This is a stream that the Water Quality Commission has determined does not warrant special protection. A Class 2 aquatic life rating is for streams that are not capable of sustaining a wide variety of cold water biota due to the physical habitat, water flows, or uncorrectable water quality. The Canadian River is designated for water supply, agriculture, recreation- class 1a, aquatic life- coldwater class 1 uses. Both the Canadian River and Spring Creek are considered to be meeting the state’s use designations and water quality standards.

The Proposed Wolford staging areas are located within the Muddy Creek 5th Order Watershed, within the Upper Colorado River basin. The Kremmling RMP identified Muddy Creek as a sensitive watershed, where the soils, geology, and/or vegetation create a fragile situation. The state has designated Muddy Creek for Aquatic Life- Coldwater, class 1, Recreation- class 1a, water supply, and agriculture uses. The state’s Monitoring and Evaluation List includes Muddy Creek and its tributaries for possible water temperature impairment. The Monitoring and Evaluation List is part of Colorado’s efforts to implement the Clean Water Act, and identifies streams where there is “reason to believe” that impairment exists, but additional data are needed.

The Wolford's western staging area is located on a west-facing hillslope that has several ephemeral gullies. Runoff from the site travels west and south approximately 1.8 miles to Muddy Creek. Due to the aridness of the area, most of the time runoff would not reach the Muddy Creek floodplain. If it does, there is an irrigation ditch that would intercept the runoff prior to it reaching Muddy Creek. The eastern site is located on flat terrain adjacent to a "play area" hill. Runoff from this site travels about 600 feet to Horse Gulch, an intermittent tributary of Muddy Creek. It is approximately 0.25 miles from Horse Gulch to Muddy Creek. Alternative #1's location is just outside of the Muddy Creek floodplain. The terrain is fairly flat, with two gullies flanking the Staging Area site. Runoff from the staging area would travel about 430 feet to Muddy Creek.

In 2001, the BLM contracted a well to be drilled in the immediate vicinity of the northern NSH's staging area site. The drill log indicates about 60 feet of sand underlain by 24 feet of shale. The drill hole was dry and no ground water was encountered in the entire 150 foot depth. There are no known springs or seeps near the WMTMA's west site, and ground water would be expected to be fairly deep. A private well near the play area (east site) is 25 feet deep, indicating a relatively shallow depth to the floodplain's water table.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Selecting a staging area site and then building it with an all weather surface can help alleviate vegetative loss and erosion due to numerous user-created parking spots. The North Sand Hills sites and the western WMTMA pose few threats to surface water quality from runoff.

At the North Sand Hills, the north staging area is located north of a large intersection, nearer the aspens adjacent to Government Creek. The aspens were not part of the trail system at the time of the RMP, and users have created several camps and a trail leading into Government Creek. The BLM has fenced the adjacent portion of Government Creek to keep recreationists from driving the riparian zone and having the staging area nearer the main intersection would be preferred rather than drawing use to the aspens. The proposed staging area is also along a road experiencing trail widening and new routes. The main intersection, however, has been so widened that the recreation program feels it would be difficult to locate the staging area in the soft sand. The proposed site is located near restrooms to encourage their use and would help anchor the north-south route to the aspen from further widening and multiple routes. In view of the multiple issues, the present proposed location is suitable and the planned Travel Management Plan in the RMP revision would further address vehicles in and around Government Creek.

Wolford's west site runoff pathway makes it unlikely that surface water quality would be impacted by the staging area. The east and Alternative #1's sites are close to Muddy Creek, but due to the gravel layer and the flattened slope, little runoff would be expected to leave the site. A constructed all weather staging area helps reduce the un-vegetated erosive user-created sites that can impact water quality, especially depending on their location. Due to condition of Alternative #1's access road, the route should be improved to control surface runoff and erosion from the road.

Although vehicle fuel and oil spills would travel through the gravel and sandy soils fairly quickly, there does not appear to be shallow ground water in the North Sand Hills near the proposed sites. It appears the groundwater gradient is to the west towards Spring Creek, but there are no known ground water users between the sites and Spring Creek itself (about 1.5-2

miles away). In Wolford, the loam to clay loam soils are not only easily compacted, reducing infiltration into the soil, but spills would be more likely to adhere to the clay particles and not be as mobile. It is unlikely that the west site would reach groundwater due to the depth to shale. The east and Alternative #1 site could eventually reach the water table, but it would take a large volume spill, not very likely to occur. Signage and visitor information should encourage users to have spill clean-up kits with them. Having a user concentrated, easily observed site, is preferred to having numerous locations throughout the areas to protect ground water quality and surface water quality.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The North Sand Hills and the Wolford are both located in areas with water quality concerns. The Proposed Action is considered to be a positive action to help reduce vegetative loss and possible water quality impacts from numerous user-created parking areas in less desirable locations. Alternative #1's length of access road is considered less desirable, but with road improvements, could also have the same benefits as the Proposed Action. If additional water quality concerns are identified in the future (ex: Muddy Creek is listed as impaired), then the BLM would review their lands to see if additional best management practices are needed and compliance monitoring may be done.

WILDERNESS

Affected Environment: The Proposed Action would construct two staging areas within the North Sand Hills SRMA that also has an Instant Study Area (ISA), one of three categories of Wilderness Study Areas, within its boundary. The staging area within the NW1/4, Sec.1, T10N R79W is approximately 500 feet west from the ISA boundary. The staging area within the SW1/4, Sec.36, T11N R79W is approximately .75 miles northwest from the ISA boundary.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Under the Proposed Action, the construction of the two staging areas within the North Sand Hills SRMA would have no direct impact on the ISA. The staging areas would help reduce parking and the associated loading and unloading of vehicles inside the ISA. Under the No Action alternative, parking and the loading and unloading of vehicles would continue throughout the SRMA and ISA boundary, with greater potential for resource damage.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: The following non-critical elements were determined to be potentially impacted and were carried forward for analysis from the IDT-RRC in Appendix 1.

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The Natural Resource Conservation Service's Soil Surveys can give a general idea of the soils in the area of the proposed sites. Due to the small sizes of the staging areas, the actual soils could vary some, especially if located in a mapping unit inclusion. The Jackson County Soil Survey maps most of the North Sand Hills SRMA as Bangston fine sands, 1-10% slopes. Permeability is rapid and runoff from the soils is slow. Wind erosion is severe for these sandy soils and re-vegetating disturbances can be difficult due to low plant available moisture.

The WMTMA western site is mapped in the Grand County Soil Survey as a Roxal loam, 15-50% slopes. The soils have loamy surface textures, but are underlain by calcareous sandy shale within 15 inches. The surface runoff is rapid and water erosion is high. The soil has a fairly low tolerance to soil loss without having the fertility affected, and plant available moisture is low. The play area (east site) is mapped as a Leavitt loam, 0-6% slopes and Alternative #1's site is also mapped as a Leavitt loam, 15-55% slopes. Leavitt loams formed in alluvium and below about 6 inches of loam is a clay loam. Surface runoff is low to medium, depending on slopes, and plant available moisture is high. The soil is considered highly erodible, but also has a high tolerance to erosion.

Environmental Consequences: Surfaced staging areas can help reduce rutted user-created parking lots and widened trails from "pull-outs". It is desirable to create all weather sites and try to reduce these impacts to soils. At the North Sand Hills, the southern staging area is located adjacent to an intersection that is widening with recreational use. Locating the staging area near the junction would increase its usefulness for recreationists while helping "anchor" the trails and reduce further trail widening. The northern site would also help keep the north-south road from widening, and would hopefully reduce users' need to create multiple "soft" staging areas along the road, resulting in exposed sand that is susceptible to wind erosion and difficult to re-vegetate.

The WMTMA sites are both proposed near the "entrances" of the TMA. This may help reduce the rutting of the roads by trailers and larger heavier vehicles that might otherwise travel further to use or create an unloading area. The confined and surfaced parking area would help reduce off site impacts and soil rutting. Both sites are slick when wet, and having a parking area near the entrance may also help users evaluate road conditions early before unloading and proceeding to use the trails. Alternative #1's access road would result in users being much further in, and down a steep trail, before unloading. This could possibly result in more rutting of the main access road, as trailers would drive further in than at present. To help reduce soil erosion from the existing access road, and due to its popularity, Alternative #1's road should be improved regardless of which location is selected.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The two areas on a landscape scale are considered to be meeting the Standard for upland soils, but both NSH and Wolford have localized areas with soil concerns, generally due to vehicle uses. The Proposed Action would help the areas meet or move towards meeting the Standard, and reduce unwanted impacts to upland soils.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The WMTMA staging areas are in sagebrush steppe vegetation communities with an overstory of big sagebrush and an understory of a variety of native grasses and forbs with a very minor component of introduced vegetation.

The North Sand Hills staging areas are within the recreation site and consist of mostly sands and can support only a small, sparse vegetation community.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Implementation of the Proposed Action or Alternative #1 would have minimal localized impacts (< 1 acre of disturbance) to the overall vegetation of the areas affected.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The proposed WMTMA site on CR 224 is part of Allotment # 07568 (RCA). This allotment was assessed for compliance with the Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado in June 2006. The allotment was found to be compliance with all of the Standards.

The proposed WMTMA site on CR 277 is not a part of a BLM livestock grazing allotment and therefore, was not assessed for compliance with the Standards.

The NSH sites are part of BLM livestock grazing Allotment # 07163 (Sand Hills). The allotment was assessed for compliance with Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado in 2006 during the permit renewal process. The allotment was found to be in compliance with all of the Standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed project sites provide habitat for a variety of upland wildlife including mule deer, pronghorn, Rocky Mountain elk, badgers, coyotes, and a variety of small rodents. Mule deer and pronghorn are yearlong residents as are badgers and coyotes while Rocky Mountain elk inhabit the areas during winter.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Construction of the staging sites as proposed would eliminate less than one acre of vegetation which provides forage for the herbivores listed above. The increased human and vehicle use of the proposed sites if constructed, would displace wildlife from habitat adjoining the project sites. The small amount of vegetation loss and additional human and vehicle use of the sites would have little impact on wildlife since each proposed site has been disturbed in the past and the sites would not be used for staging during winter when wildlife using is occurring.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): This standard would continue to be met if the proposed projects are implemented as proposed.

ACCESS/TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: Trail systems directly connected to, adjacent to, and near the proposed staging areas would be affected under this proposal. The proposed staging areas would provide increased public access to adjacent trail systems and provide a safe area for the public while unloading or loading OHV's.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: If the Proposed Action is implemented, access to trail systems and use areas would be increased, while mitigating for public safety and health and resource protection by reducing roadside parking.

The No Action Alternative would allow the current access and the public would continue to park alongside and/or partially within roadways.

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The areas around the Proposed Action are primarily used for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use by dirt bikes, ATVs, and Jeeps. The area is also used for hunting, camping, hiking, biking, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing.

The proposed staging areas are along established access roads and adjacent to trails utilized by off highway vehicles. This affords these areas to be classified as 'Roaded Natural' in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. There is a moderate probability of contacts with others in a mostly natural setting. The management alterations (vegetative treatments, structures, range improvements, roads and trails, etc.) are noticeable and travel is often by conventional motorized vehicles (may include sedans, trailers and RVs) on better than 'primitive' roads with some designed roads.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: With the implementation of these staging areas, traffic is expected to increase directly from the designated areas, while providing for public safety, and reducing resource impacts from off road parking.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed projects are located in areas classified as VRM Class II, III & IV in the KFO 1984 Resource Management Plan. The objective of VRM Class II is to retain the existing characteristic landscape. The level of change in any of the basic landscape elements (line, form, color, texture) due to management activities should be low and not evident. The objective of VRM Class III is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change in any of the basic landscape elements (line, form, color, texture) due to management activities should be moderate, and not attract the attention of the casual observer. The objective of VRM Class IV is to provide for management activities, which require major modifications of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The North Sand Hills staging areas would not be visible from CO125 and vegetation in the area would decrease the potential visibility from any distance. The Wolford Staging area on County Road 224 is in a Class IV area, the area is visible from very short distances. The Wolford Staging area near Hwy 40 is in Class II. This site would be visible but should not attract attention from Hwy 40. Using natural materials and minimizing the size of the parking area would reduce the overall visual impact. This project will meet Class II, III & IV objectives.

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The proposed staging areas at the North Sand Hills are mapped as Holocene age deposits of wind blown (aeolian) sand. These deposits have not been ranked, but because they are less than 10,000 years in age, it is unlikely that any fossil remains are present. The proposed staging areas for the Wolford Mountain area all lie within deposits of Pierre Shale and/or pediments of Pierre Shale. These deposits are classified as Class II. Class II deposits are defined as: "Fossils of scientific significance are occasionally found in the formation within the Craig District. "(Harley Armstrong and David G. Wolney, 1989)

Environmental Consequences: The following mitigation measures are proposed to alleviate any potential impacts to fossils that could be present within the proposed staging areas.

Mitigation:

-The staff archaeologist/paleontologist would be notified a minimum of 10 days in advance of construction so that a Paleontological inventory can be completed. Monitoring of construction activities is stipulated. If fossils are discovered during inventory or monitoring by the staff archaeologist/paleontologist, construction activities at that location must cease until the fossil resources can be documented and evaluated for significance.

-If fossils are discovered by the construction crew, construction must stop at the point of discovery and the staff archaeologist/paleontologist would be immediately notified, so that documentation and evaluation can be completed.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. It has been determined that there would be no cumulative impacts. The proposed staging areas would concentrate dispersed parking and staging in the areas, which would have beneficial impacts to resource values.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: Jackson County, Colorado OHV Grant Committee, Metal Mashers

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW: See IDT-RRC in Appendix 1.

FONSI

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Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

DECISION RECORD

DECISION: It is my decision to authorize the Proposed Action as described in the attached EA. This decision is contingent on meeting all mitigation measures and monitoring requirements listed below.

RATIONALE: The Proposed Action was selected to provide recreational visitors with designated areas that would be used for parking and as a staging area for OHVs. The staging areas will help reduce off road parking within vegetated areas, congestion along access routes, and the proliferation of trails. By creating designated staging areas, the BLM will protect resources while providing for visitor safety and reducing off road parking, congestion along access routes, and the proliferation of trails.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

Standard Cultural stipulations:

-The holder shall immediately bring to the attention of the Authorized Officer any and all antiquities, or other objects of historic, paleontological, or scientific interest including but not limited to, historic or prehistoric ruins or artifacts DISCOVERED as a result of operations under this authorization (16 U.S.C. 470.-3, 36 CFR 800.112). The holder shall immediately suspend all activities in the area of the object and shall leave such discoveries intact until written approval to proceed is obtained from the Authorized Officer. Approval to proceed will be based upon evaluation of the object(s). Evaluation shall be by a qualified professional selected by the Authorized Officer from a Federal agency insofar as practicable (BLM Manual 8142.06E). When not practicable, the holder shall bear the cost of the services of a non-Federal professional.

-Within five working days the Authorized Officer will inform the holder as to:

- Whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- The mitigation measures the holder will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary); and,
- A timeframe for the Authorized Officer to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800.11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the Authorized Officer are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the holder wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the Authorized Officer will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the holder will be responsible for mitigation costs. The Authorized Officer will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the Authorized Officer that the required mitigation has been completed, the holder will then be allowed to resume construction.

Antiquities, historic, prehistoric ruins, paleontological or objects of scientific interest that are outside of the authorization boundaries but directly associated with the impacted resource will also be included in this evaluation and/or mitigation.

Antiquities, historic, prehistoric ruins, paleontological or objects of scientific interest, identified or unidentified, that are outside of the authorization and not associated with the resource within the authorization will also be protected. Impacts that occur to such resources, which are related to the authorizations activities, will be mitigated at the holder's cost.

Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder of this authorization must notify the Authorized Officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the Authorized Officer.

The staff archaeologist/paleontologist will be notified a minimum of 10 days in advance of construction so that a Paleontological inventory can be completed. Periodic monitoring of construction activities by the staff archaeologist/paleontologist is stipulated. If fossils are discovered during inventory or monitoring by the staff archaeologist/paleontologist, construction activities at that location must cease until the fossil resources can be documented and evaluated for significance. If fossils are discovered by the construction crew, construction must stop at the point of discovery and the staff archaeologist/paleontologist will be immediately notified, so that documentation and evaluation can be completed. BLM standard discovery stipulations are made part of this E.A. and the authorization to proceed with construction.

Paleontology:

-The staff archaeologist/paleontologist must be notified a minimum of 10 days in advance of construction so that a Paleontological inventory can be completed. Monitoring of construction activities is stipulated. If fossils are discovered during inventory or monitoring by the staff archaeologist/paleontologist, construction activities at that location must cease until the fossil resources can be documented and evaluated for significance.

-If fossils are discovered by the construction crew, construction must stop at the point of discovery and the staff archaeologist/paleontologist must be immediately notified, so that documentation and evaluation can be completed.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING:

Invasive/Non-native species:

-The staging areas will require long term monitoring and weed control due to the fact that many different types of seeds will be imported by vehicles.

NAME OF PREPARER: John Monkouski

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Joe Stout

DATE: 1/31/08

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ Peter McFadden

DATE SIGNED: 3/24/08

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Review Record and Checklist
Appendix 2 – Bibliography

Appendix 1

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM ANALYSIS REVIEW RECORD AND CHECKLIST:

Project Title: North Sand Hills and Wolford Mountain Staging Areas

Project Leader: John Monkouski

Consultation/Permit Requirements:

Consultation	Date Initiated	Date Completed	Responsible Specialist/ Contractor	Comments
Cultural/Archeological Clearance/SHPO	N/A	N/A	BW	
Native American	2/16/07	4/15/07	FGR	
T&E Species/FWS	N/A	N/A	Cesar	
Permits Needed (i.e. Air or Water)	N/A	N/A	PB	Staging areas are all proposed outside of wetland areas, and are smaller than 1 acre per TMA.

(NP) = Not Present

(NI) = Resource/Use Present but Not Impacted

(PI) = Potentially Impacted and Brought Forward for Analysis.

NP NI PI	Discipline/Name	Date Review Comp.	Initials	Review Comments (required for Critical Element NIs, and for elements that require a finding but are not carried forward for analysis.)
CRITICAL ELEMENTS				
NI	Air Quality Belcher	7/2/07	PB	Some fugitive dust could be created during construction- but would be of short duration and very small amounts. No impact to Air Quality.
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Stout	1/2/08	JS	There are no Areas of Critical Environmental Concern in the proximity of the proposed project area.
NI	Cultural Resources Wyatt	11/19/07	BW	A cultural resource inventory (Report #CR-08-2) was completed for the project undertaking and located only two isolated finds at the Wolford Mountain staging area. The isolated finds are not eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. The project is a no effect, no historic properties affected.
NP	Environmental Justice Stout	1/2/08	JS	According to the most recent Census Bureau statistics (2000), there are no minority or low income communities within the Kremmling Planning Area.
NP	Farmlands, Prime and Unique Belcher	07/02/07	PB	There are no farmlands, prime or unique, in the proximity of the proposed project area.
NP	Floodplains Belcher	07/02/07	PB	Staging Areas are located outside of the floodplain and would not affect the functionality of the floodplain nor increase flood hazard.
PI	Invasive, Johnson	07/13/07	RJ	See analysis in EA.

	Non-native Species				
PI	Migratory Birds	Cesar	7/16/07	CC	See analysis in EA.
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	Rupp	9/10/07	FGR	Consultation with the five Native American tribes identified as having direct affiliation with lands managed by the Kremmling Field Office was initiated on February 27, 2007. No issues were identified during the consultation period, which closed on April 15, 2007. The project is recommended to proceed with BLM standard discovery stipulations.
PI	T/E, and Sensitive Species (Finding on Standard 4)	Cesar	7/16/07	CC	See analysis in EA.
NP	Wastes, Hazardous and Solid	Hodgson	7/17/07	KH	There are no quantities of wastes, hazardous or solid, located on BLM-administered lands in the proposed project area, and there would be no wastes generated as a result of the Proposed Action, Alternative #1, or No Action alternative.
PI	Water Quality, Surface and Ground (Finding on Standard 5)	Belcher	7/02/07	PB	See analysis in EA.
NP	Wetlands & Riparian Zones (Finding on Standard 2)	Belcher	7/02/07	PB	Finding: The proposed staging areas are all located in upland sites and would not directly impact wetlands or riparian zones. Could indirectly reduce user-created areas in riparian areas.
NI	Wild and Scenic Rivers	Sterin	4/26/07	BS	Muddy Creek has been identified as an eligible Wild and Scenic River. However, Alternative #1 would not impact the Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs).
PI	Wilderness	Monkouski	2/22/07	JM	See analysis in EA.
NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS (A finding must be made for these elements)					
PI	Soils (Finding on Standard 1)	Belcher	7/02/07	PB	See analysis in EA.
NI	Vegetation (Finding on Standard 3)	Johnson	07/13/07	RJ	Finding: No impact to the overall vegetation of the area.
NI	Wildlife, Aquatic (Finding on Standard 3)	Cesar	7/16/07	CC	The proposed projects except Alternative #1 are not located in aquatic habitat or in areas which would impact aquatic habitat. Alternative #1 would be located adjacent to Muddy Creek which supports a variety of aquatic wildlife including waterfowl, beaver, and muskrats. Finding: No impact.
PI	Wildlife, Terrestrial (Finding on Standard 3)	Cesar	7/16/07	CC	See analysis in EA.
OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS					
PI	Access/Transportation	Monkouski	2/22/07	JM	See analysis in EA.
NI	Forest Management	Rosene	3/16/07	RR	No impact.
NI	Geology and Minerals	Hodgson	7/17/07	KH	The alternatives would have no impacts to the geological or mineral resources within the project areas.
NI	Hydrology/Water Rights	Belcher	7/02/07	PB	Hydrology discussion in Water Quality and Soils sections. No impacts to Water Rights.
PI	Paleontology		9/10/07	FGR	See analysis in EA.
NI	Noise	Monkouski	2/22/07	JM	Noise impact would be minimal and temporal in nature during construction.
NI	Range Management	Johnson	07/13/07	RJ	No impact on the livestock grazing in the affected livestock grazing allotments

NI	Lands/ Realty Authorizations Cassel	3/1/07	SC	There are no leases or permits in the location of the proposed action. There is a buried gas pipeline authorized to Public Service Co. of Colorado (C-23293) in the area of the Wolford Mountain staging area and WAPA transmission lines in the area of the North Sand Hills staging area. Neither ROW's should be affected by the proposed action.
PI	Recreation Monkouski Sterin	2/22/07 4/26/07	JM BGS	See analysis in EA
NI	Socio-Economics Stout	1/31/08	JS	There would be no socio-economic impacts.
PI	Visual Resources Straub	4/18/07	RS	Wolford Class II & IV, NSH Class III & IV
NI	Cumulative Impact Summary Stout	1/31/08	JS	There would be no cumulative impacts.
FINAL REVIEW				
	P&E Coordinator Stout	1/31/08	JS	
	Field Manager D. Stout			

Appendix 2

Armstrong, Haley J. and David G. Wolney

1989 Paleontological Resources of Northwest Colorado: A Regional Analysis.

Museum of Western Colorado. Grand Junction, Colorado.