

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, CO 81625-1129**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2011-0032-EA

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Geocaching Events Umbrella EA

PROJECT NAME: Little Snake Field Office Geocaching Events

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Little Snake Field Office Area (all management units)

APPLICANT: Bureau of Land Management and Special Recreation Permittees

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action and Alternatives are subject to the following plan:

Name of Plan: Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Date Approved: April 26, 1989

Results: The proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3). The proposed alternatives are in conformance with the objectives of the Little Snake Resource Management Plan.

Other documents: Instruction Memorandum (IM) 2005-092. Geocaching Activities on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Public Lands. March 3, 2005.

Remarks: The proposed action is authorized in all management units within the Little Snake Field Office area. Such recreation actions are allowed where they do not conflict with other primary management purposes. The proposed activity is consistent with actions allowed in the Little Snake Resource Management Plan (RMP). The standard Special Recreation Permit (SRP) stipulations (see Appendix A) apply to the events.

PURPOSE AND NEED: Geocaching is a widely popular outdoor adventure game for global positioning system (GPS) users. Participating in a cache hunt is an activity designed to take advantage of the features and capability of a GPS unit and enjoy the freedom and access to Public Lands. Competitive and organized geocaching events are needed by the public to provide appropriate opportunities for socialization, skill development, and exploration of the outdoors.

Special Recreation Permits are required for an organized event, unless the event is organized by

the BLM, by BLM's Special Recreation Permit Policy (43 CFR 8372).

The Environmental Assessment will analyze the impacts of geocaching organized events on public land managed by the BLM. The analysis will include terms and conditions to the permit/lease which improve or maintain public land health.

PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS: The action in this EA was posted on the NEPA log on the LSFO web site: http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/nepa/lsfo.html . No comments were received.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to permit organized geocaching events, not defined as casual use, in the Little Snake Field Office's (LSFO) area on approximately 1.3 million acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Casual use is defined as an activity that is not a commercial endeavor, the activity complies with land use decisions and designations, (i.e., special area designations and wilderness interim management policy), and it does not award cash prizes, is not publicly advertised, poses minimal risk for damage to public land or related water resource values, and generally requires no monitoring.

Geocaching is an outdoor sporting activity in which the participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers, called "geocaches" or "caches." A typical cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook where the geocacher enters the date they found it. Larger containers such as plastic storage containers or ammo boxes can also contain items for trading, usually toys or trinkets of little value. Geocaches are typically hidden in trees, piles of rocks, or on manmade objects. Caches are never buried or placed in a manner that causes any major surface disturbance.

Geocaches can also come in the form of EarthCaches. EarthCaches are locations that people can visit to learn about a unique geoscience feature or aspect of our earth. These types of caches are based on a landmark and nothing is placed at the site.

The following additional stipulations to the standard SRP stipulations would apply to all geocaching events:

- 1) Cache sites will be pre approved.
- 2) Caches will not be placed within 300 feet of an archeological site.
- 3) Caches will not be placed where they will interfere with threatened or endangered wildlife habitat.
- 4) Caches will not be placed where they will interfere with threatened or endangered plant species.

- 5) Caches will not contain any food, solid waste or hazardous items, to include explosives, ammunition, knives, drugs, and alcohol.
- 6) Caches will not be placed where they will conflict with other land uses.
- 7) Caches will not be placed inside a Wilderness Study Area.
- 8) Caches will not be placed in a location that is deemed hazardous to the public.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Organized geocaching events would not be authorized within the Little Snake resource area. However, due to the discrete nature of geocaching, some activity may still occur.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES

For the following resources and issues, those brought forward for analysis will be addressed below.

Resources	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Air Quality		ELS 1/12/11	
ACEC		GMR 1/14/11	
Cultural Resources			EM 1/19/11
Environmental Justice		BB 1/18/11	
Flood Plains		ELS 1/12/11	
Invasive, Non-native Species			CR 1/18/11
Migratory Birds			GEM 1/20/11
Native American Religious Concerns			EM 1/19/11
Prime & Unique Farmlands		ELS 1/12/11	
T&E and Sensitive Animals			JHM 1/13/11
T&E and Sensitive Plants			GEM 1/20/11
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid		SW 1/18/11	
Water Quality - Ground		EMO 1/14/11	
Water Quality - Surface			ELS 1/12/11
Wetlands/Riparian Zones			ELS 1/14/11
Wild & Scenic Rivers		KSD 1/14/11	

WSA's, Wilderness Characteristics		KSD 1/14/11	
Soils			ELS 1/14/11
Upland Vegetation		JHM 1/13/11	
Aquatic Wildlife		GEM 1/20/11	
Wildlife, Terrestrial			GEM 1/20/11

Fluid Minerals		EMO 1/14/11	
Forest Management		KSD 2/3/11	
Hydrology/Ground		EMO 1/14/11	
Hydrology/Surface		ELS 1/12/11	
Paleontology		EMO 1/14/11	
Range Management		JHS 1/13/11	
Realty Authorizations		LM 1/11/11	
Recreation/Travel Mgmt		KSD 1/14/11	
Socio-Economics		LM 1/11/11	
Solid Minerals		JAM 1/11/11	
Visual Resources		KSD 1/14/11	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt		KSD 2/1/11	

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Affected Environment: Cultural resources, in this region of Colorado, range from late Paleo-Indian to Historic. For a general understanding of the cultural resources in this area of Colorado, see *An Overview of Prehistoric Cultural Resources, Little Snake Resource Area, Northwestern Colorado*, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resources Series, Number 20, *An Isolated Empire, A History of Northwestern Colorado*, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resource Series, Number 2 and *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Northern Colorado River Basin*, Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists.

Environmental Consequences, Both Alternatives: The locations of the proposed geocaching events would likely not have undergone a Class III cultural resource survey. The issuance of a Special Recreation Permit is considered an undertaking under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. However, geocaching is considered a “Casual Use” activity that does not require a Class III cultural resource survey. If properties eligible to the National Register are identified at a cache site then the site may have to be removed or relocated.

Mitigative Measures, Both Alternatives: None

Name of specialist and date: Ethan Morton 1/19/11

INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Noxious weeds are present throughout the LSFO management area.

Species included in Colorado's C and B Lists of Noxious Weeds can be found in spot locations and dense infestations. The most common noxious weeds in the area include downy brome (cheatgrass), halogeton, hoary cress (white top), Canada thistle, scotch thistle, musk thistle, bull thistle, Russian knapweed, spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, houndstongue, Dalmatian toadflax, yellow toadflax, perennial pepperweed (tall whitetop), tamarisk and Russian olive. Management and control of these weeds are implemented through coordinated efforts with Moffat County Pest Management, Routt County weed department, grazing permittees, and multiple weed control partnerships. All facets of IPM are implemented through the LSFO noxious weed control program.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Weeds can be spread through many activities on public lands including human recreational use. Geocaching events that bring people to a site could introduce new infestations through seeds carried by clothing, transportation vehicles, etc. Additionally, if the site is located near a weed infestation seeds could be carried away from the site causing a spread to other areas and locations.

No Action Alternative: There would be no affect to invasive or non-native species.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 1/18/11

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The LSFO includes over 1.3 million acres of BLM managed lands and spans a variety of elevations and vegetation communities. The diversity of vegetation communities provides habitat for a variety of migratory songbirds. The LSFO is located within two Bird Conservation Regions – Northern Rockies and Southern Rockies/ Colorado Plateau. Several species on the USFWS's Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) list for these regions occupy habitats within the LSFO.

Salt desert communities composed of fourwing saltbush, shadscale, Wyoming big sagebrush, and greasewood are found at lower elevations. These areas may contain colonies of white-tailed prairie dogs, which provide habitat for two BCC listed species, burrowing owls and ferruginous hawks. Extensive shrublands dominate much of the LSFO. Most shrubs in these areas are either big sagebrush or deciduous mountain shrubs such as bitterbrush and serviceberry. Birds listed on the BCC list that nest in shrublands include: Brewer's sparrow, sage thrasher, sage sparrow and loggerhead shrike.

Pinyon-juniper woodlands are widely distributed across resource area. Two pinyon-juniper obligate birds on the BCC list are pinyon jay and juniper titmouse. Limited higher elevation aspen stands and coniferous forests are also present within the resource area. These forests provide habitat for two BCC listed species, flammulated owl and Cassin's finch.

Rock outcrops and cliffs provide nesting habitat for a variety of raptor species, including golden eagles, prairie falcons and peregrine falcons. Cottonwood galleries along the Yampa and Little

Snake Rivers and their major tributaries provide nesting areas for bald eagles.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: There would be little chance of take from the proposed action. If geocaching events take place during the nesting season (May 15 – July 15) breeding or nesting activities may be temporarily disturbed. Individual birds would likely be displaced from the area during geocaching events due to noise from people, but this disturbance would be minimal and short in duration.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Gail E. Martinez, 1/20/11

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

Letters were sent to the Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Utes Tribal Council, Shoshoni Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs in the spring of 2010 discussing upcoming projects the BLM would be working on in FY10 and FY11. Letters were followed up with phone calls. No comments were received (Letters on file at the Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado). If geocaching events and caches are later determined to impact Native American Religious sites then the cache locations will be relocated.

Name of specialist and date: Ethan Morton, 1/19/11

T&E AND SENSITIVE ANIMALS

Affected Environment: The Little Snake Field Office provides habitat for several BLM sensitive species and endangered species listed and candidate species. Table 3 lists Federally listed and Candidate species. BLM sensitive species that are known to occur on BLM lands within the LSFO include: white-tailed prairie dog, spotted bat, northern goshawk, burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, mountain plover, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, long-billed curlew, American white pelican, Brewer’s sparrow, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, bluehead sucker, flannelmouth sucker, mountain sucker, roundtail chub, Colorado River cutthroat trout, midget faded rattlesnake, northern leopard frog and Great Basin spadefoot.

Threatened, Endangered and Candidate Species for the LSFO

Common Name	Status	Habitat
Bonytail	Endangered	Yampa and Green Rivers
Humpback chub	Endangered	Yampa and Green Rivers
Razorback sucker	Endangered	Yampa and Green Rivers
Colorado pikeminnow	Endangered	Yampa and Green Rivers
Greenback cutthroat trout	Threatened	Higher elevation creeks and streams

Mexican spotted owl	Threatened	Dense old-growth conifers and deciduous (especially in steep walled canyons).
Canada lynx	Threatened	Coniferous forest
Black-footed ferret	Experimental/ Nonessential	Prairie dog colonies
Yellow-billed cuckoo	Candidate/BLM Sensitive	Mature cottonwood riparian woodlands.
Greater sage-grouse	Candidate/BLM Sensitive	Sagebrush stands

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: All caches placed as part of an organized event would be required to be placed in areas that do not contain threatened or endangered wildlife habitat. Therefore, there would be no impacts to threatened or endangered wildlife species as a result of the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Gail E. Martinez, 1/20/11

T&E AND SENSITIVE PLANTS

Affected Environment: The proposed project area contains the following populations of plants listed as sensitive by BLM: Duchesne milkvetch (*Astragalus duchesnensis*), debris milkvetch (*A. detritalis*), Woodside buckwheat (*Eriogonum tumulosum*), Duchesne buckwheat (*E. viridulum*), ligulate feverfew (*Bolophyta ligulata*), tufted cryptanth (*Oreocarya caespitosa*), narrow leaf evening primrose (*Oenothera acutissima*), Uinta Basin spring parsley (*Cymopterus duchesnensis*), strigose Easter-daisy (*Townsendia strigosa*), and Gibben's beardtongue (*Penstemon gibbensii*). While these species are not protected under the Endangered Species Act, their rarity and potential for listing has resulted in recognition by BLM that they need particular attention so management activities do not adversely impact existing populations. BLM would take all necessary actions to mitigate any adverse impacts to existing populations of these species.

Within the boundaries of the project area, there is one federally listed threatened species, Ute ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*). Habitat exists for this plant on BLM lands within the LSFO; however, this species has not been identified on BLM lands within the planning area.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: All caches placed as part of an organized event would be required to be placed in areas that do not contain sensitive plant species. Therefore, there would be no impacts to special status plant species as a result of the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 1/13/11

WATER QUALITY - SURFACE

Affected Environment: Water quality of perennial waters within the Little Snake resource area is generally good. As of April 2010, there are ten stream segments within the resource area that are on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) Monitoring and Evaluation List for suspected water quality problems regarding lead, *E. coli*, copper, temperature, sediment, total recoverable iron, selenium, and zinc. There are four stream segments that are on the CDPHE Section 303(d) list of Water Quality Limited Segments for low priority selenium and recoverable iron impairments. Only one stream segment is on both lists for a high priority total recoverable iron impairment and a suspected sediment issue.

Environmental Consequences, Both Alternatives: Geocaching, as described, involves no manipulation of water sources, perennial or intermittent, that would adversely impact water quality or contribute to the degradation of existing water resources. Geocaching would have no effect on water quality under either alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 1/12/11

Reference: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Water Quality Control Commission. 2010. Regulations #33, 37, and 93. <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/regulations/wqccregs/index.html>

WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

Affected Environment: As of 2010, there are an estimated 357 miles of lotic (perennial and intermittent stream) and 357 acres of lentic (wetlands, seeps, springs) resources inventoried within the Little Snake resource area, much of which has been qualitatively assessed using the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment tool. The following table summarizes assessment results to date:

Riparian Type	Proper Functioning Condition	Functioning At Risk, upward trend	Functioning At Risk, no trend	Functioning At Risk, downward trend	Non-functioning	Unknown (not assessed)
Lotic (miles)	140	46	90	33	7	41
Lentic (acres)	118	41	105	29	10	54

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Depending on the size of the event, potential impacts to riparian resource could include trailing and soil compaction caused by participants in search of the cache. If group size is large enough for these to occur, impacts would likely be negligible and short-term. Event stipulations require that geocaches be small, non-permanent items that would be placed in a way so as not to impact natural resources. Additionally, all geocache sites would be pre-approved, so any cache proposed to be placed in

riparian areas would be reviewed for site-specific impacts. Geocaching would have no effect on riparian resources under proposed action.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: No organized geocaching events would occur, resulting in no additional impacts to riparian resources.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 1/14/11

SOILS

Affected Environment: At a landscape level, most soils within BLM-administered lands of the resource area are stable and functioning in a manner consistent with the upland soil standard for public land health. Many soil types in the western, drier half of the resource area exhibit one or more properties that can be considered “fragile” and are highly susceptible to erosion by wind and water, have slopes greater than 35%, and also have one of the following characteristics: a surface texture that is sand, loamy sand, very fine sandy loam, fine sandy loam, silty clay, or clay; a depth to bedrock that is less than 20”; poor erosion condition; or a K (soil erodibility) factor of greater than 0.32. These soil types are the least resilient to compaction-causing activities.

Environmental Consequences, Both Alternatives: Depending on the size of the event, potential impacts of geocaching to soils could include off-trail soil compaction caused by participants in search of the cache (Patubo 2010). Soil compaction can result in decreased pore space, which facilitates surface water runoff and erosion. The majorities of geocaches are not especially remote, and involve impacts on lands that are already disturbed by human activity, however, participants can stray from developed trails to reach areas of interest, and disturbance can stretch far from a localized corridor (Patubo 2010). Many soil types present within LSFO have some slope and little to no organic (O) horizon. These soil types are some of the least resilient to activities that cause compaction. Depending on proposed geocache site location, impacts to soils in areas with more resilient soil types would likely be negligible to low and be short-term in nature. Impacts to less resilient soil types could range from low to moderate and be short or long-term in nature, particularly if in areas with biological soil crusts. All geocache sites would be pre-approved, so any cache proposed to be placed in an area that requires off-trail exploration would be reviewed for site-specific impacts to soils and changes to cache placement made accordingly. Overall, geocaching would have little to no impact on soil stability and function under the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: No organized geocaching events would occur, resulting in no additional impacts to soils.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 1/14/11

Reference: Patubo, B. 2010. Environmental Impacts of Human Activity Associated with Geocaching. California Polytechnic State University research paper. 18 p.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL

Affected Environment: A variety of wildlife habitats and their associated species occur within the resource area. Each habitat type provides food, cover and shelter for a variety of mammal, bird, amphibian and reptile species common to northwest Colorado. Although all of the species are important members of native communities and ecosystems, most are common and have wide distributions within the state, region and field office.

Big game species include elk, mule deer, pronghorn, black bear and mountain lion. Smaller mammals such as coyotes, red fox, cottontail rabbits, ground squirrels and yellow-bellied marmots are common to this area. Reptile species present in the LSFO include short-horned lizards, sagebrush lizards and western rattlesnake. Birds and amphibians were discussed in the Migratory Bird and Aquatic Wildlife Sections of this EA.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Wildlife populations may be temporarily displaced due to geocaching events, but are likely to return to the area once events are completed. All geocache event sites will be pre-approved and sites will be chosen to avoid impacts to threatened or endangered wildlife habitat. Overall, there would be no impacts to wildlife species or wildlife populations due to geocaching events.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Gail E. Martinez, 1/20/11

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Cumulative impacts could result from geocaching events when added to the impacts from all other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable activities, regardless of who is conducting such activities. Other past or existing actions that have influence on the landscape are wildfire, hunting, grazing, and oil and gas exploration.

The majority of the field office area has been historically open to grazing by horses, sheep and cattle. Throughout the field office area, there are maintained and unmaintained roads. These roads are used regularly by local residents and ranchers as well by as the primary recreation users in the field office area, hunters. Wildlife populations in the field office area are high, especially for deer and elk that compete with livestock for available forage throughout the area. Additionally, there are oil fields in the areas where the proposed action could take place. The primary impacts from all of these activities are most immediately seen in the presence of roads, cultivation on private lands, and weed presence. The proposed action to allow geocaching events is compatible with other uses, both historic and present, and would not add any new or detrimental impacts to those that are already present.

STANDARDS

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD: The proposed action would not result in activity which would result in direct or indirect impacts to animal communities or their ability to meet this standard. The no action alternative would also meet this standard as no caches would be placed or sought as part of an organized event.

Name of specialist and date: Gail E. Martinez, 1/20/11

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal) STANDARD: Since no caches associated with permitted geocaching events would be permitted within habitats for threatened, endangered or sensitive species, the proposed action would meet this standard. The no action alternative would also meet this standard as no caches would be placed as part of an organized event.

Name of specialist and date: Gail E. Martinez, 1/20/11

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD: The proposed action would not result in activity which would result in direct or indirect impacts to plant communities or their ability to meet this standard. The no action alternative would also meet this standard as no caches would be placed or sought as part of an organized event.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 1/13/11

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant) STANDARD: Since no caches associated with permitted geocaching events would be permitted within populations of sensitive plant species, the proposed action would meet this standard. The no action alternative would also meet this standard as no caches would be placed as part of an organized event.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 1/13/11

RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD: Event stipulations require that geocaches be small, non-permanent items that would be placed in a way so as not to impact natural resources. Additionally, all geocache sites would be pre-approved, so any cache proposed to be placed in riparian areas would be reviewed for site-specific impacts. Geocaching would have no effect on riparian resources under either alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 1/14/11

WATER QUALITY STANDARD: Geocaching, as described, involves no manipulation of water sources, perennial or intermittent, that would adversely impact water quality or contribute to the degradation of existing water resources. Geocaching would have no effect on water quality under either alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 1/14/11

UPLAND SOILS STANDARD: Depending on proposed geocache site location, impacts to soils in areas with more resilient soil types would likely be negligible to low and be short-term in nature. Impacts to less resilient soil types could range from low to moderate and be short or long-term in nature, particularly if in areas with biological soil crusts. All geocache sites would be pre-approved, so any cache proposed to be placed in an area that requires off-trail exploration would be reviewed for site-specific impacts to soils and changes to cache placement made accordingly. Overall, geocaching would have little to no impact on soil stability and function under either alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 1/14/11

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: Letters were sent to the Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Utes Tribal Council, Shoshoni Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs in the spring of 2010 discussing upcoming projects the BLM would be working on in FY10 and FY11. Letters were followed up with phone calls.

ATTACHMENTS: Special Recreation Permit stipulations (Appendix A)

SIGNATURE OF PREPARER: /s/ Kenneth S. Dittlinger

DATE SIGNED: 06/22/11

SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER: /s/ Barb Blackstun

DATE SIGNED: 06/22/11

Finding of No Significant Impact
DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2011-0032-EA

The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. With the implementation of the attached mitigation measures there is 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.

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Little Snake Resource Area and adjacent land.
2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.
3. There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplain, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.
4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.
5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.
6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other actions that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State or local natural resource related plans, policies or programs.
7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.
8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural surveys, and through mitigation by avoidance, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and adversely affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice Policy.
9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act were identified. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, treatments would be modified or mitigated not to have an adverse effect or new analysis would be conducted.
10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ Matt Anderson

DATE SIGNED: 06/22/11

Decision Record
DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2011-0032-EA

DECISION AND RATIONALE:

I have determined that allowing geocaching events is in conformance with the approved land use plan. It is my decision to allow geocaching events with the mitigation measures provided in the proposed action and the Special Recreation Permit general stipulations.

MITIGATION MEASURES: The mitigation measures for this project are found in the stipulations in the permittee's individual file, unless an event is conducted by the Bureau of Land Management.

COMPLIANCE PLAN(S):

Compliance Schedule: Compliance will be conducted during the initial application and placement of geocaches.

Monitoring Plan: Geocache sites will be monitored at the beginning and end of the events to ensure the permittee is in compliance with all the mitigation measures.

Assignment of Responsibility: Responsibility for implementation of the compliance schedule and monitoring plan will be assigned to the Recreation staff in the Little Snake Field Office. The primary inspector will be the Outdoor Recreation Planner.

Protest/Appeal Language: This decision shall take effect immediately upon the date it is signed by the Authorized Officer and shall remain in effect while any appeal is pending unless the Interior Board of Land Appeals issues a stay (43 CFR 2801.10(b)). Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4.

Within 30 days of the decision, a notice of appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at the Little Snake Field Office, 455 Emerson Street, Craig, CO 81625. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U.S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

Contact Person: For additional information concerning this decision, contact Shane Dittlinger, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Little Snake Field Office, 455 Emerson Street, Craig, CO 81625, Phone (970) 826-5094.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ Matt Anderson

DATE SIGNED: 06/23/11

Attachment 1, DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2011-0032-EA

SPECIAL RECREATION PERMIT TERMS, CONDITIONS AND STIPULATIONS FOR ALL PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

Stipulations: The following standard stipulations are automatically included and apply to all permits (some additional stipulations are specific to only certain activities). Failure to comply with these stipulations may result in remedial actions listed below under Performance Evaluation, Section XVIII. B. Per 2932.40, violations of permit terms or stipulations may be subject to fines and imprisonment, in addition to administrative penalties.

I. RISKS, HAZARDS AND SAFETY

- A. Hazards related to climate, topography and terrain, waters, vegetation and wildlife, and man-made features are found on public lands and present risks which the permittee assumes. The permittee shall be responsible for inspecting sites, trails, roads, rivers and other authorized use areas for dangers and hazardous conditions, ensuring awareness by employees and clients of such risks and hazards, and promoting safe practices at all times.
- B. Adequate first aid and safety equipment shall be provided while performing the permitted activities.
- C. All guides and employees responsible for clients in the field shall be trained in First Aid and hold a valid certification of training from the American Red Cross or its equivalent.
- D. In case of human death, or wildfire, involving the permitted operation, the County Sheriff shall be notified immediately, and the BLM shall be notified immediately after the Sheriff is notified.
- E. The permittee shall notify the BLM of any accidents involving the permitted operation which result in loss of consciousness, injury disabling individuals in excess of 24 hours, requiring medical treatment or search and rescue, and/or property damage, and shall submit a detailed written report to the BLM within 10 days from the date of the accident. Other accidents shall be reported in the Post Use Report.

II. INDEMNIFICATION

- A. The permittee shall indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the United States and/or its agencies and representatives from any and all demands, claims, or liabilities of every nature whatsoever, including, but not limited to damages to property, injuries to or death of persons, arising directly or indirectly from, or in any way connected with the authorized use and occupancy of the lands authorized for use under this permit.
- B. Insurance: Coverage shall be obtained for the permitted operations in the minimum liability coverage amounts of:
 - \$300,000 damage per occurrence (persons, bodily injury or death);
 - \$600,000 annual aggregate for bodily injury; and
 - \$ 30,000 property damage per occurrence.
- C. An insurance certificate shall be submitted, stating the limits of coverage, identifying the United States Government" as additional insured, that includes the minimum shown above, expiration date, that the insurer will give BLM thirty (30) days notice prior to cancellation, or modification of such insurance, and a list of the activities that are permitted and insured.

III. APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS

- A. This Permit is subject to all applicable provisions of the regulations (43 CFR Group 2930 and 8300) which are made a part hereof.
- B. The permittee shall observe all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations while performing any authorized activity, including but not limited to: (1) operation, use and registration of motor vehicles, OHVs, aircraft, and boats; (2) hunting and fishing; (3) use of firearms; (4) injury to persons or destruction of property; (5) noise, air and water pollution; (6) littering; (7) drinking water and sanitation; (8) food service; (9) use of fire; and (10) business practices.
- C. Permits involving the taking of game, including fish, shall be valid only when accompanied by a valid State Outfitters Registration. Permits involving river floating or guiding shall be valid only when accompanied by a valid State River Outfitters License.
- D. All hunters shall comply with the Colorado Division of Wildlife hunter safety requirements.
- E. Permittee shall comply with restrictions while operating in a Wilderness or Wilderness Study Area (WSA) as prescribed in 43 CFR 8500. Maps and information on the Wilderness or WSA boundaries and restrictions are available at the Field Office.
- F. Permittee shall comply with Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) designations and restrictions in the area of operation as identified in the Resource Management Plan and prescribed in 43 CFR 8340.
- G. Permittee shall obtain a Colorado State Child Care License if working with minors.

IV. LIMITATIONS

- A. This permit authorizes only temporary use in connection with the operations, during the period(s) and in the area(s) identified in the permit and authorized by an Annual Operating Authorization.
- B. If an existing commercial permittee wishes to sell or otherwise terminate his or her business and desires that permit privileges be transferred to a new owner, the permittee must notify the authorized officer in advance, in writing, and receive advance written approval for the permit transfer from the authorized officer.
- C. Use of Non-Public lands: This permit does not authorize use of non-BLM land (i.e. private, city, county, state, or other federal land).
- D. The applicant shall provide upon request the name(s) and address(s) of private landowners whose property is used in connection with the permitted operations, and evidence of permission to use such land.
- E. Access to Public Lands: The BLM does not guarantee legal access to public lands unless legal access for the general public is available. Where legal public access is not available, the permittee is responsible for obtaining permission from the landowner(s) to travel through or use private lands.
- F. Multi-Year Permits: A multi-year permit is not valid unless accompanied by a current Annual Operating Authorization.

- G. **Joint Permit Requirement:** This permit authorizes use of public lands in this Field Office; use of public lands in other Field Offices or National Forest lands must be approved under a separate or joint permit. Code of Federal Regulation citations for both the BLM and Forest Service are valid and will be enforced for joint permits on associated public lands.
- H. If a lion outfitter does not own their own dogs, they must furnish copies of all lease or rental arrangements for the dogs and/or dog handler(s) that they plan on using. Dog handlers must be listed as guides.

V. ASSIGNMENT AND SUBLETTING OF PERMIT PRIVILEGES

- A. The permittee may not assign permit privileges to a third party, including booking agents. For purposes of this permit, an assignment of permit privileges is indicated if one or more of the following occurs:
 - 1) A third party advertisement used to book a trip does not clearly indicate that the trip will be operated by the company holding the permit;
 - 2) A third party provides both passenger transportation to the trip departure point and equipment used on the trip;
 - 3) More than two (2) representatives or employees of the third party act as guides/crew on the trip. Employees of the third party must constitute less than 50 percent of the guides/crew on trip;
 - 4) A trip is represented to the participants as being conducted by other than the permittee.
 - 5) Equipment or guide clothing carries a name, markings or logo of the third party involved with the trip (this does not apply to booking agents who are permitted outfitters in the permit area). See D. below for the use of equipment not marked with the permittee name or approved abbreviation;
 - 6) The passengers or guides/crew are not covered by the insurance carried by the permittee.
- B. Guides and employees must fall under federal and state employment regulations and be listed in the operating plan prior to each operating season. (ie. IRS Form-1099, independent contractor form).
- C. If you are proposing to employ guides or employees who are licensed and/or permitted outfitters elsewhere, that must be disclosed at the time you submit their name and information.
- D. Written notice must be given to the BLM to use equipment with outfitter markings (company names, logos, etc.) other than those of the permit holder prior to the time of use (hunt, launch, tour, etc.). If the markings are those of an outfitter not permitted to operate in that area, the markings of equipment used must not be visible while on the BLM-administered lands and waters.

VI. NON-EXCLUSIVE USE

- A. The permittee, employees and clients shall not interfere with other valid uses of public land, including but not limited to grazing, mining, and other recreational uses by the general public or other permitted commercial operations.
- B. Roads, trails and trailheads, or campsites commonly in public use shall not be blocked or enclosed by the permittee.

- C. This SRP does not guarantee the permittee's sole use of public land areas, nor does it grant the exclusive use of any area.
- D. Public lands will generally remain available on a first-come, first served basis to other commercial and private recreational users. Nothing herein implies that the first permittee in any area has been granted exclusive use, or priority use.

VII. CONDUCT AND MANNERS

- A. The permittee is at all times responsible for the actions of himself, his employees, clients and guests in connection with the authorized operations, and shall not cause a public disturbance or engage in activities which create a hazard or nuisance.
- B. The permittee should practice the TREAD LIGHTLY and LEAVE NO TRACE land ethics and inform their clients about these practices and ensure that they follow them.

VIII. MODIFICATION OR AMENDMENT

- A. The BLM reserves the right to alter the terms, conditions, and stipulations of this permit at any time upon notice for reasons such as changes in law, policy or administrative procedure, to prevent use conflicts, to protect public safety, or to prevent resource damage.
- B. The permittee shall request amendment or modification of the permit to provide for changes prior to issuance of annual operating authorization in: use areas or sites, season of use, services provided, fee structure, or any other changes in operations.
- C. The BLM may restrict use or close sites or areas on public land, or require relocation of use sites or areas to prevent use conflicts, protect public safety, or prevent resource damage.

IX. PAYMENTS

- A. Use Fee Payments: Permit fees are due and payable in advance based on estimated use gross receipts. Payments shall be sent to the Field Office by check, money order or cashier's check, made payable to the "Bureau of Land Management".
- B. Basis for Fee: The annual permit fee shall be three percent (3 %) of total client charges or \$95.00 annual minimum for commercial permits, or \$5.00 per person per day for events whichever is greater. Gross receipts shall be the sum of all payments made by clients for services rendered in connection with the permitted operations, before disbursement to private landowner for use of private land, payment to employees, and any other disbursement.
- C. Periodic Payments: At the Field Manager's discretion, when the estimated use fee is greater than one thousand dollars (\$1,000), a schedule for periodic payments may be arranged.
- D. End of Season Payment: The actual use fee shall be determined from the use reports. Payment should accompany the post-use reports and trip logs due 30 days after the last day of use or as specified on SRP.
- E. Refunds:
 - 1. No refunds of less than ten dollars (\$10.00) will be made.
 - 2. Unless requested in writing all overpayments will be credited for use for the following operating season.

- F. Late Payments
 - 1. Late payment of fees may result in additional fee penalties, permit probation, suspension, and/or revocation, and interest and administrative handling charges.
- G. Deductions: Allowable deductions in permit fees shall be agreed upon in advance, and may include costs related to the permitted operations incurred by the permittee for long distance off-site transportation, and off-site lodging, per Handbook H-2930-1.
- H. Discounts for Non-Public Lands use (For Upland Use Only) must be requested and approved prior to use. No discounts are allowed for river related permits

X. USE REPORTS

- A. Trip Logs: Trip Logs shall be submitted within 30 days of the authorized use season or as specified on the permit, on a form provided by the BLM, or an approved equivalent. Trip logs shall indicate accurately the dates of use, location, type of use, number of clients, number of staff, vehicles and livestock used, total receipts, and any deductions claimed. Penalty fees may be charged for late reports.
- B. Post Use Report: A Post Use Report shall be submitted as specified or within 30 days of the last day of use authorized or as specified on permit, on a form provided by the BLM, or an approved equivalent. The post use report shall indicate accurately the total number of clients served during the term of the permit, total staff and total use, total receipts and total deductions claimed, discounts for time off public lands, and describe any accidents or injuries occurred, and management problems or concerns. Penalty fees will be charged for late reports.
- C. Late Use Reports: Late submission of use reports may be cause for action against the permittee, including late fees, probation, suspension, and/or revocation, and criminal penalties.
- D. Non-Use: Zero use must be requested in writing prior to the issuance of Annual Operating Authorization. Minimum payments still apply. The authorized officer may cancel a permit after two consecutive seasons of non-use. In certain areas covered by Special Recreation Management Plans, travel management plans, or other site-specific plans, special provisions regarding non-use of permits may apply.

XI. INSPECTION OF RECORDS AND PREMISES

- A. The BLM, or duly authorized representative, may examine upon request any of the records, including but not limited to bookings, client registers, financial records, leases or contractual agreements, licenses, or other documents related to the permitted operations, as outlined in 43 CFR 2932.55.
- B. The BLM and its cooperators, including the Colorado Division of Wildlife, USDA Forest Service, and the Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, shall at all times have the right to enter the premises located on public land on official business. The permittee shall allow reasonable access to private lands owned or utilized in the permitted operation for purposes related to administration of the permit.
- C. The permittee and all employees shall post a copy of the Permit, Annual Operating Authorization in plain view at the base of operations and camps, where clients, BLM and Division of Wildlife officers have the opportunity to read it. All guides and employees must carry a copy of the Permit and Annual Operating Authorization while conducting operations on public lands, and they must be familiar with the Permit terms, conditions and stipulations that pertain to this permit.

XII. SIGNING AND ADVERTISING

- A. Signs or advertising devices on public land require advance approval on the location, design, size, shape or color, and message.
- B. All advertising shall be accurate and not misrepresent in any way the services or accommodations provided, or the area authorized for use. Brochures and other advertising materials shall include the following disclosure: All or part of this operation is conducted on Public Lands under special permit from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

XIII. CAMPSITES

- A. Camps may be set up for no longer than necessary, and no earlier than 5 days prior to the first day of use authorized and must be removed within five days after the authorized use period. No year-round, permanent camps may be established on BLM lands; only temporary facilities are permitted.
- B. Camps shall be located to avoid conflict with public road and trail traffic, and stream or lake access, and to the extent possible shall be located out of sight of major trails.
- C. All campsites and temporary improvements shall be as described in the approved operating plan.
- D. All campsite facilities including but not limited to tents, latrines, livestock control facilities, shall be located at least 200 feet from the nearest spring, stream, lake, pond or reservoir unless specifically authorized otherwise.
- E. All campsites must be approved prior to use. Clearances may be required, such as inventories for cultural resources and/or for threatened or endangered species.

XIV. CAMPFIRES

- A. Unless permanent fire rings are designated, open campfires shall be built only in areas free of hazardous fuels. Fire rings or pits shall be set on bare mineral soil. After use, fire rings or pits shall be obliterated and the site rehabilitated. Open fires may be prohibited during periods of extremely high fire hazard by order of the BLM, the applicable county or the State of Colorado.
- B. Campfires shall be completely extinguished when left unattended. The permittee is responsible for all fires started by him/her self, employees, or clients, and may be held responsible for fire suppression costs resulting from wildfire caused by his/her operations.
- C. An axe, shovel, water bucket or extinguisher for fire control shall be available at each campfire.
- D. Wildfire caused by the permitted operation shall be reported immediately to the nearest BLM office. The permittee is responsible for informing employees, clients, and participants of the current fire danger and required restrictions or precautions that may be in effect.

XV. LIVESTOCK USE

- A. Authorized pasture use of livestock is temporary and limited to transportation purposes, and will not establish a priority for future use of the range. Rangeland grazing may be restricted and feed may be required to be packed, all feed supplied as part of permitted operations must be certified weed free. The permittee shall prevent localized over grazing and damage to vegetation by permitted livestock.
- B. Construction of permanent fences or corrals is not permitted. Temporary livestock control structures may be erected with advanced approval, including corrals and hitching racks, provided they are dismantled after the use season.
- C. The permittee may be required to pay additional fees for forage consumed by livestock during the permitted operations. This fee will be at the current rate for grazing use.
- D. Livestock shall not be tied to trees for other than short term, temporary stops. Hobbles, pickets, high lines or corrals shall be used to control livestock.
- E. Livestock control structures (corrals, hitching racks, pickets, high lines) must be at least 200 feet from springs, streams, lakes, reservoirs or other water sources. Whatever method of livestock control is used, it will not result in removal or death of the under story vegetation.
- F. Pack stock may be grazed if permitted by the SRP. If electric fences are used, they will be moved every 3 days to a new area. If picket ropes are used, they will be moved every other day to a new area. If high lines are used, their location must be approved in advance.

XVI. EQUIPMENT CACHES

Food and/or equipment caches require advance authorization. When authorized, caches shall be neatly stored out of sight of roads and trails. Food caches must be "wildlife proof."

XVII. RESOURCE PROTECTION

- A. Aesthetics: Permittee shall protect the scenic and aesthetic values of the public lands used in the operations, and maintain premises on permitted areas to acceptable standards of repair, orderliness, and cleanliness.
- B. Rehabilitation: After camps and other temporary facilities are dismantled, insofar as practical, the area shall be left in a natural state. Reseeding with BLM approved seed mix may be required of any areas disturbed by campsites.
- C. Sanitation: Self contained or pit type toilets/privies, with or without tent coverings, shall be used at all campsites on public land. The permittee will be responsible for establishing a latrine for all permitted camps and for final rehab when the camp is removed. Waste from self contained toilets must be disposed of at a State approved sewage disposal facility. When abandoned, toilet pits shall be covered with a minimum of 12 inches of topsoil and back filled to pre-existing grade. While in use, human waste in pits shall be covered with a layer of topsoil or lime after each individual use.
- D. Trash Disposal: Camps and other permitted areas shall be regularly cleaned and no trash or litter shall be allowed to accumulate. Combustible trash may be burned when campfires are authorized. All non-combustible trash, including but not limited to tin cans, spent brass, glass bottles, foil, and wire shall be packed out. Trash shall not be buried on public land.

- E. Dead animals and their remains shall be disposed of at least 200 feet away from springs, streams, lakes, ponds, campsites, roads/trails.
- F. Waste or by-products of any kind shall not be discharged into any stream, reservoir, lake or pond.
- G. Soils: Permittee shall conduct the permitted operations in a manner which prevents rutting, or soil erosion.
- H. Vegetation Damage/Removal: All operations shall be conducted in a manner which prevents damage to or loss of vegetation cover. Poles may be cut for temporary facilities if these are authorized by permit on public land. Cutting, clearing or defacing of standing trees, alive or dead, or cleaning and cutting of shrub/groundcover for any other reason shall require specific advance authorization. When tree cutting is authorized, stumps shall be left no higher than 6 inches above ground level and slash shall be lopped and scattered. A separate permit is required for removal and transportation of woodland/tree products from public land.
- I. Firewood Cutting: Firewood may be cut on public land only for campsite use while on public land, and may not be transported off the public lands without a separate firewood cutting permit. Only dead and down trees shall be cut for firewood, with stumps left no higher than 6 inches above ground level, and the slash shall be lopped and scattered.
- J. Protection of Public Property: Signs, equipment, markers, fences, livestock watering facilities or any other property found on public land shall not be damaged, destroyed, defaced, removed, or disturbed.
- K. Cultural Resources: All persons associated with operations under this permit must be informed that any objects or sites of cultural, paleontological, and scientific interest, such as historic or prehistoric resources, graves or grave markers, human remains, ruins, cabins, rock art, fossils, or artifacts shall not be damaged, destroyed, removed or disturbed. If in connection with operations under this permit any of the above resources are discovered, the permittee shall immediately stop operations in the immediate area of the discovery, protect such resources, and notify the BLM authorized officer of the discovery. The immediate area of the discovery must be protected until the operator is notified in writing to proceed by the authorized officer.
- L. Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas (WSA): Use of electric generators, all motorized and mechanized equipment including chainsaws and vehicles is prohibited within a Wilderness or WSA. If supplemental livestock feed is used, cubed, pelletized, or processed feed or certified weed free hay shall be used.
- M. Permittee is responsible for knowing where Public Land, Wilderness, and WSA boundaries are and the restrictions that may apply to an area of operation within these boundaries. Maps and information concerning restrictions are available at the local Field Office.
- N. Facility Construction: Construction of permanent facilities or improvements of any kind, including but not limited to roads, trails or structures, is not approved by this permit and shall require separate written authorization.

XVIII. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

- A. The BLM shall conduct periodic inspections and performance evaluations of the permittee's operations and compliance with the terms, conditions and stipulations of the Permit.
- B. **Violations and Penalties:** Any violation of the permit terms, conditions and stipulations may be subject to penalties prescribed in 43 CFR 2932.40, which may include fines up to \$1,000 and/or imprisonment up to 12 months. Additionally, any such violation may result in permit termination, suspension, or probation. Violations may also be cause for the BLM to deny approval of a Special Recreation Permit or Operating Authorization for subsequent years. If a permit is terminated, permit applications will not be approved for any person connected to or affiliated with the operation under a terminated or suspended permit.

Acceptable means that the permittee has generally operated in accordance with the terms and conditions established for the permit

Probationary means that the permittee has not operated in full accordance with the terms and conditions of the permit. Corrective action by the holder is mandatory and continued operation at this level of performance is unacceptable. Permittee will only qualify for a 1 year permit. If this performance level is received 2 years in a row, the authorized officer may suspend or terminate the permit and/or deny future permit applications.

Unacceptable means that the permittee has not operated in accordance with the terms and conditions of the permit and cannot be allowed to continue. This performance level will result in suspension or termination of permit privileges as appropriate to the circumstances.

- C. Permit holders will be notified with a certified letter of any deficiencies in pre-season, permitted activities, or post-use requirements. If the requirement is not met within 15 days after receipt of certified letter, a penalty of \$100 will be assessed. After 30 days of the receipt of the letter, the penalty is \$200. If at the end of the 30 day period after receipt of certified letter, the deficiency is still not corrected and penalty fee not paid, the permit will be temporarily suspended, in whole or in part without compensation, for any failure to comply with the terms, conditions and stipulations. Operations on public land shall cease immediately upon suspension. After a permit is suspended, any commercial use of public lands shall be in violation of federal regulations. The BLM may reinstate the permit for use, after corrective action is taken by the permittee and the operation is in compliance with the terms, conditions and stipulations. Probationary status will follow for one year after the deficiency is corrected. Repeated permit violations may also result in suspension and/or termination.

XVIII. CERTIFICATION

I have read these terms, conditions and stipulations and understand that I must abide by them while performing activities in connection with the permitted operations.

Date _____ Signature _____

Print Name _____

Company Name _____