

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Royal Gorge Field Office  
3028 E. Main Street  
Cañon City, CO 81212**

# **Environmental Assessment**

## **South Cañon City Trail Development**

DOI-BLM-CO-F02-2014-0031 EA

January, 2016



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....	3
<b>1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.4 DECISION TO BE MADE.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.5 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.6 SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES .....</b>	<b>5</b>
CHAPTER 2 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES.....	6
<b>2.1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.2.1 Proposed Action.....	6
Proposed Action.....	6
2.2.2 No Action Alternative.....	15
2.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL.....	15
CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS .....	15
<b>3.1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1.1 Interdisciplinary Team Review .....	16
<b>3.2 PHYSICAL RESOURCES.....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.2.1 GEOLOGIC AND MINERAL RESOURCES .....	18
3.2.3 SOILS (includes a finding on standard 1).....	19
3.2.4 WATER (SURFACE AND GROUNDWATER, FLOODPLAINS) (includes a finding on standard 5) .....	20
<b>3.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.3.1 INVASIVE PLANTS*.....	21
3.3.2 THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE SPECIES .....	22
3.3.3 VEGETATION (includes a finding on standard 3) .....	23
3.3.4 WETLANDS & RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on standard 2).....	24
3.3.5 WILDLIFE AQUATIC (includes a finding on standard 3).....	24
3.3.6 WILDLIFE TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on standard 3) .....	25
3.3.7 MIGRATORY BIRDS .....	26
<b>3.4 HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.....</b>	<b>29</b>
3.4.1 CULTURAL RESOURCES .....	29
3.4.2 NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS .....	29
3.4.3 PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES.....	30
3.4.4 WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID.....	31
<b>3.5 LAND RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>32</b>
3.5.1 RECREATION .....	32
3.5.5 LAW ENFORCEMENT.....	32
<b>3.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>35</b>
CHAPTER 4 - CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION .....	36
<b>4.1 LIST OF PREPARERS AND PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>4.2 TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED.....</b>	<b>36</b>
CHAPTER 5 - REFERENCES .....	37
APPENDIX A – SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND RESPONSE.....	44

# **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION**

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT TITLE: South Cañon City Trail Development

PLANNING UNIT: Grape Creek

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: 6<sup>th</sup> P.M. T. 19 S., R.70 W. Sections 5 and 6

APPLICANT: Bureau of Land Management

## **1.2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

This EA has been prepared by the BLM to analyze the impacts of designating and constructing non-motorized trails and a trailhead off of New York Avenue in Cañon City, Colorado as well as constructing connection trails between other trail systems. Given its close proximity to Cañon City, over the years several social trails have developed within the project area that sees fairly regular non-motorized trail based recreation use both on BLM land and un-signed private land. In the past, the public has approached the BLM about formally designating and managing the trails in the area and constructing connections between trail systems. This has been unfeasible up to this point due to land ownership patterns combined with limitations of topography. Public access off of New York Avenue has also been a question due to limitations of existing surveys.

Recently the Cañon City Area Metropolitan Parks and Recreation District (Recreation District) acquired an easement for trails through one of the adjacent private properties and purchased another parcel. The recreation district hopes to build a trailhead on the land they acquired along with trails that provide connections between New York Avenue and Ecology Park that would cross BLM managed lands. User groups have also requested that a trail be constructed that connects the trails at Ecology Park with the Section 13 trail system. With the potential for resolving trespassing issues along with the connection to town to benefit the community, this request has become much more compelling.

## **1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED**

The overall goal of the project is to provide public access, high quality recreation opportunities and improve recreation management on the land between New York Avenue and Ecology Park and provide connections between other trails and neighborhoods in the area. This would be done by providing formal designated routes, high quality trails that are engaging and collaborating with local agencies. The routes would provide key connections between people's homes and

designated trail networks as well as Grape Creek and the Section 13 trail system increasing the availability of recreation opportunities, reducing automobile dependency, and improving the quality of life for the area's residents.

The need for the action stems from compliance with the multi-use and sustainable yield mandate of section 302 of the Federal Land Use and Policy Management Act (FLPMA) and resource objectives as define in the Royal Gorge RMP of 1996.

#### **1.4 DECISION TO BE MADE**

The BLM will decide whether to implement the proposed South Cañon City Trail Development project based on the analysis contained in this Environmental Assessment (EA). This EA will analyze the impacts of designating and constructing trails on the parcel of BLM land located between New York Avenue and Temple Canyon Road in Cañon City, Colorado. The BLM may choose to: a) implement the project as proposed, b) implement the project with modifications/mitigation, c) implement an alternative to the proposed action, or d) not implement the project at this time.

Components relating to this project are on lands owned by other entities including Fremont County, the Recreation District, and private land owners. The decision to authorize or make modifications is at the discretion of these entities and is outside the purview of the BLM and this document.

#### **1.5 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW**

**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: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 05/13/1996

Decision Number/Page: 10-39, 10-64, 10-66

Decision Language:

10-39: The transportation system will be improved and maintained to facilitate public access and monitoring through; providing access to all retention lands.

10-64: Recreation will be managed to provide for: a variety of recreational opportunities and settings; additional opportunities for mountain biking, hiking, off-highway vehicle use, interpretation, and horseback riding; facility development will be accomplished to reduce user conflicts and to improve visitor health and safety.

10-66: Various actions will occur to enhance recreation: upland recreation opportunities emphasizing a balance between resource protection and tourism; coordination with various volunteer and user groups; monitoring and visitor contacts to ensure visitor safety, resource protection, and visitor information availability; provide for acquisitions or easements to enhance water based recreation, mountain biking, off-highway vehicle use, hiking horseback riding, hunting, and natural/cultural resource interpretation.

In January 1997, the Colorado State Office of the BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health and amended all RMPs in the State. Standards describe the conditions needed to sustain public land health and apply to all uses of public lands.

Standard 1: Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes.

Standard 2: Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods.

Standard 3: 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.

Standard 4: 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.

Standard 5: 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.

Because standards exist for each of these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in Chapter 3 of this document.

## **1.6 SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES**

**1.5.1 Scoping:** NEPA regulations (40 CFR §1500-1508) require that the BLM use a scoping process to identify potential significant issues in preparation for impact analysis. The principal goals of scoping are to allow public participation to identify issues, concerns, and potential impacts that require detailed analysis.

Persons/Public/Agencies Consulted: The primary mechanism for input on this project was through a public meeting held on January 28, 2015 along with an associated public input period. Notification of the meeting was posted in the local newspaper and flyers were also distributed to nearby residences. 80 people attended the public meeting. Appendix A includes a summary of the comments that were submitted through the public input period.

This project was also posted on the Royal Gorge Field Office NEPA website to solicit additional input. The BLM coordinated the project with the Cañon City Area Metropolitan Parks and

Recreation District, Fremont County, the City of Cañon City, and the Lower Arkansas Mountain Biking Association.

Issues Identified: Internal and external scoping identified the following issues and concerns;

- Concerns over impacts to unique cultural resources
- Concern over an increase in trespassing and crime due to increased public access
- Desire to not overdevelop the area and retain the primitive feel of the area
- Concerns over increased traffic on residential roads
- Reduce trespassing on private land outside of easements
- Protect soils by providing an established trail network
- Reduce long term costs to BLM by coordinating management with other agencies
- Address public safety hazards
- Provide close to home recreation opportunities and connections between trail networks

A 30 day comment period on the draft EA held in October 2015 resulted in submissions by 16 commentors. While several comments were in support of the proposal others revealed concerns similar to those identified in scoping including conflicts between users, impacts to adjacent private lands, and general changes to the setting of the area. Comments also identified the need to revise the analysis to better address recreation conflicts and wilderness characteristics. Based on comments, the environmental consequences section of the EA was modified. Since the comment period new information regarding land ownership boundaries affected the proposal. This may potentially reduce some of the specific concerns about the proximity of trails to private property and was reflected in the analysis.

## **CHAPTER 2 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information on the Proposed Action and Alternatives. Alternatives considered but not analyzed in detail are also discussed.

### **2.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

#### **2.2.1 Proposed Action**

##### **Proposed Action**

The BLM proposes to establish a non-motorized trail network located between New York Avenue and Temple Canyon City Park outside of Cañon City, Colorado. The trail network would be comprised of existing social trails, old roads, and the construction of new trails to best meet the stated purpose and need. While specific trails have been identified the proposed action is intended to be somewhat conceptual in nature to allow for flexibility in the management of recreation in this area and additional connections or spurs could also be allowed in this area if warranted. Approximately 10 miles of new trails are proposed to be designated or constructed. All of the trails proposed would be open to foot, horse and bicycle use except for trail #5 that

travels to the top of ‘Sandy Hill’ and the old track, trail #3. All of the trails would be natural surface and designed to lie lightly on the land to retain the primitive feel of the area. Signing would be minimal to provide basic directions, discourage unauthorized use, and address trail ethics/conflicts between users.

Components relating to this project are on lands owned by other entities including Fremont County, the Recreation District, and private land owners. The decision to authorize or make modifications is at the discretion of these entities and is outside the purview of the BLM and this document.

The portions of the trail system that cross both BLM and the Recreation District easements or lands would be jointly managed between the two entities. An agreement would be established to outline the roles and responsibilities of each entity and this plan would be used as the guiding document for these trails. The entire trail network would be jointly maintained and managed through a variety of community partnerships including the Recreation District and Fremont Adventure Recreation. Cooperative management agreements would be established to formalize this relationship.

While still in the conceptual phase core trail system concepts have been identified as follows (see the Maps section for locations):

- Trail #1 - The existing trail that comes off of New York Avenue and crosses both BLM and private land along a ridge would be retained and designated except for the beginning where it travels near the dam and retention area. This approximately 1.25 mile trail is for the most part well located and only minor re-routes and maintenance would be performed. Private/easement boundaries would be well marked to prevent trespassing. It is intended to keep the somewhat ‘social trail’ character as currently exists with a more difficult and rustic trail management objective. Management controls including but not limited to signing, re-routes and barriers would be put in place to direct use and discourage trespass on adjacent private lands. Additional research revealed that the dam and subsequent retention area is not owned by the BLM therefore there is no public access. The beginning of this trail would originate at the trailhead and utilize trail #4 below along the abandoned ditch. If the owners of the dam and retention area wish to allow public access through this area the BLM would coordinate with these efforts to ensure that trails connecting to BLM lands are sustainable and trespass issues are addressed.
- Trail #2 - A western bench trail approximately 1 mile in length would be established. Portions of this trail would utilize the existing two-track road but the majority would be new trail construction parallel to the road in order to improve the user experience and reduce conflicts between different types of trail users. In order to accommodate multiple uses this trail would be 2’-3’ wide with gentle grades and open site lines. The trail would contour along the hillside and incorporate a number of grade reversals to improve drainage and reduce regular maintenance needs.

- Trail #3-The existing two-track road would be designated a trail to help reduce conflicts between different types of trail users. The long site-lines and relatively direct alignment make it more attractive to hikers and dog walkers and less attractive to those traveling via bicycle. Little improvements would be made other than check steps or other types of tread stabilization to reduce erosion. Bicycles would not be allowed. Per policy, the road would still be available for administrative and emergency access as needed. This travels through BLM, Schepp property easements and the Summit Brick property recently acquired by the Recreation District.
- Trail #4 – An approximately .25 mile trail utilizing portions of the old ditch alignment would connect trail #1 and #2. This would serve as the beginning of trail #1 since it was revealed that the dam and retention area are not managed by the BLM. This trail would be approximately 2' wide and more challenging than trail #2 above given limitations of the terrain. To minimize the amount of new disturbance it would use the old ditch for a sinuous and playful alignment.
- Trail #5 - A .25 mile trail would be established that travels to the top of 'Sandy Hill' to provide hikers another viewpoint destination. This trail would be 18" in width and be designed as a 'destination trail' with a fairly direct alignment to discourage short-cutting. A social trail is already being created that provides this same opportunity demonstrating a strong desire by the public wanting to take advantage of this viewpoint. Where not used for the final alignment the social trail would be closed and re-habilitated. This trail occurs on both BLM and through the Schepp Property easements. Bicycles would not be allowed on the trail.
- Trail #6 - An approximately 2 mile trail would be established that connects Ecology Park to Section 13. The trail would be 18"-24" in width and provide a more difficult opportunity with some rock obstacles that may be difficult for novice riders. Depending upon the final alignment there may be some level of exposure and bedrock making sections of it most difficult or require people to 'hike their bike'. The route would stay entirely on BLM managed lands and travel further up the hillside to avoid private lands. An easement through private land was pursued but at this time the land owner is not interested in a trail crossing their property. If an easement is secured then an additional trail would be established through this area providing an easier connection between the two trail systems. This would add approximately ½ mile of trails on BLM lands.
- Trail #7 – This trail would be approximately 1.75 miles in length and connect Temple Canyon Road to the Section 13 connection trail (trail #6). It would be 18" to 24" wide and designed to contour with reverse grade dips and moderate grades suitable for bicycle use. From a mountain bike perspective it would be intended to provide an intermediate trail experience with optional advanced lines where feasible and be more challenging than trail #8 below. It would be designed and constructed to provide high quality hiking and equestrian use as well. Comments identified the desire to construct the trail on the north side of a knoll to take advantage of views into Grape Creek. Due to unknown construction feasibility this is shown as an alternative trail alignment on the map and would be analyzed during trail layout and design.

- Trail #8 - Approximately 1.5 miles this trail would be designed to be less technically challenging than trail #5 above to better accommodate youth and beginner mountain bike riders. It would be 24" to 30" wide and designed to contour with reverse grade dips and moderate grades suitable for bicycle use and few small obstacles. Playful features would be incorporated into the trail where feasible. It would be designed and constructed to provide high quality hiking and equestrian use as well but would likely be less of a direct route than trail #7.
- Trail #9 – If Cañon City desires to develop a trail network within Temple Canyon Park as outlined in the Eastern Fremont County Trails and Open Space Plan a 1.75 mile trail would be constructed on BLM managed lands that connects Temple Canyon Park to trail #7.
- Trail #10 – This existing trail in the Ecology Park trail network would be re-routed to better meet the intended user experience and reduce erosion from steep alignments. The re-route would be approximately 2' wide and designed and constructed to have frequent grade reversals and provide a more interesting user experience.
- Trail #11 – The social trail through a slot canyon located on the southern end of county owned land in Ecology Park and then enters BLM would be designated. Bicycle use would be allowed. Approximately .10 mile is on BLM managed lands. The primitive nature of the trail would be retained with minimal improvements made to stabilize soils and the tread to facilitate highly technical and challenging bicycle travel. This would involve large sections of armoring using native rock found in the drainage. Due to concerns with the location, outside of the initial improvements to stabilize the tread, minimal maintenance would be performed. The BLM would work with the county to help meet these trail objectives. The trail would not be signed or included on maps due to concerns with ability to provide long term maintenance and meet user expectations.
- A trail was originally proposed that traveled along the ridge above Grape Creek on what is called the Eagle Wing. Based on public comments this trail would not be formally designated, signed or included on maps for the area. Hikers would still be able to travel this route and it would remain primitive and unimproved. If an increase in use results in erosion, water control features such as hardening or steps could be installed. They would be designed and constructed to retain the primitive feel and blend with the current character of the social trail.
- A comment was made that this project should involve a connection to the Dawson Ranch subdivision. Multiple opportunities exist that rely on the consent of private land owners or the City of Cañon City. If access is provided through these entities then the BLM would construct and designate a connecting trail where needed. Additional site specific NEPA or surveys may be necessary.
- The local fire district would be given access to the gates in case of the need for an emergency response.

- A small trailhead would be established off the corner of New York Avenue and Colburn Lane. This would primarily be located on the Summit Brick parcel but portions may occur on BLM managed lands depending upon survey results.
- The De-Weese ditch travels through this area and is mostly buried with openings. Several of these openings are only loosely covered and pose a safety hazard. Working in cooperation with the ditch company these openings would be secured prior to the trails being opened for public use.
- A dam associated with De-Weese Ditch is in close proximity to the proposed trail alignment. A portion has been breached leaving a large overhanging hole that poses a safety hazard for the public. It has been determined that the dam is not owned by the BLM. Depending upon the desires of the owner the existing trail through this area may be closed. An alternate alignment would be provided through trail #3 above. Safety measures would be put in place to discourage public use along and below the dam.
- Roads and trails located on BLM managed lands that are not designated through this plan, or other travel management plans, and are not required for administrative access would be actively closed and rehabilitated. Closure could include installation of barriers such as fencing and rocks as well as signing. Rehabilitation could include de-compacting the soil, seeding and mulching as necessary to achieve desired results.
- Coordination would also occur with the County in regards to Ecology Park to ensure that access is provided only in desired locations to prevent trespass and continued use of undesired social trails.
- There would be no changes in rules for pets on BLM lands. Dogs would continue to be required to be under control at all times. Users would be required to follow the leash laws of the other land owners/managers in the area.

As components of the project are finalized BLM would conduct site specific resource surveys as needed. Depending upon final design additional NEPA may be required.

All trail construction would follow industry accepted trail guidelines and standards to provide a sustainable high quality trail recreation opportunity. These include but are not limited to:

1. A trail's grade should not exceed half the grade of the hillside or side slope where it is located unless located on a suitable surface (i.e. bedrock);
2. An average trail grade of 10 percent or less is most sustainable;
3. Maximum trail grade should not exceed 10-20 percent and should be based on considerations such as soil type, number and type of users, and annual rainfall;
4. Frequent grade reversals (such as rolling dips, drainage dips, etc.) should be used to promote drainage of water; and
5. Trail tread should be out sloped (5 percent recommended) to encourage water to sheet across and off the trail.

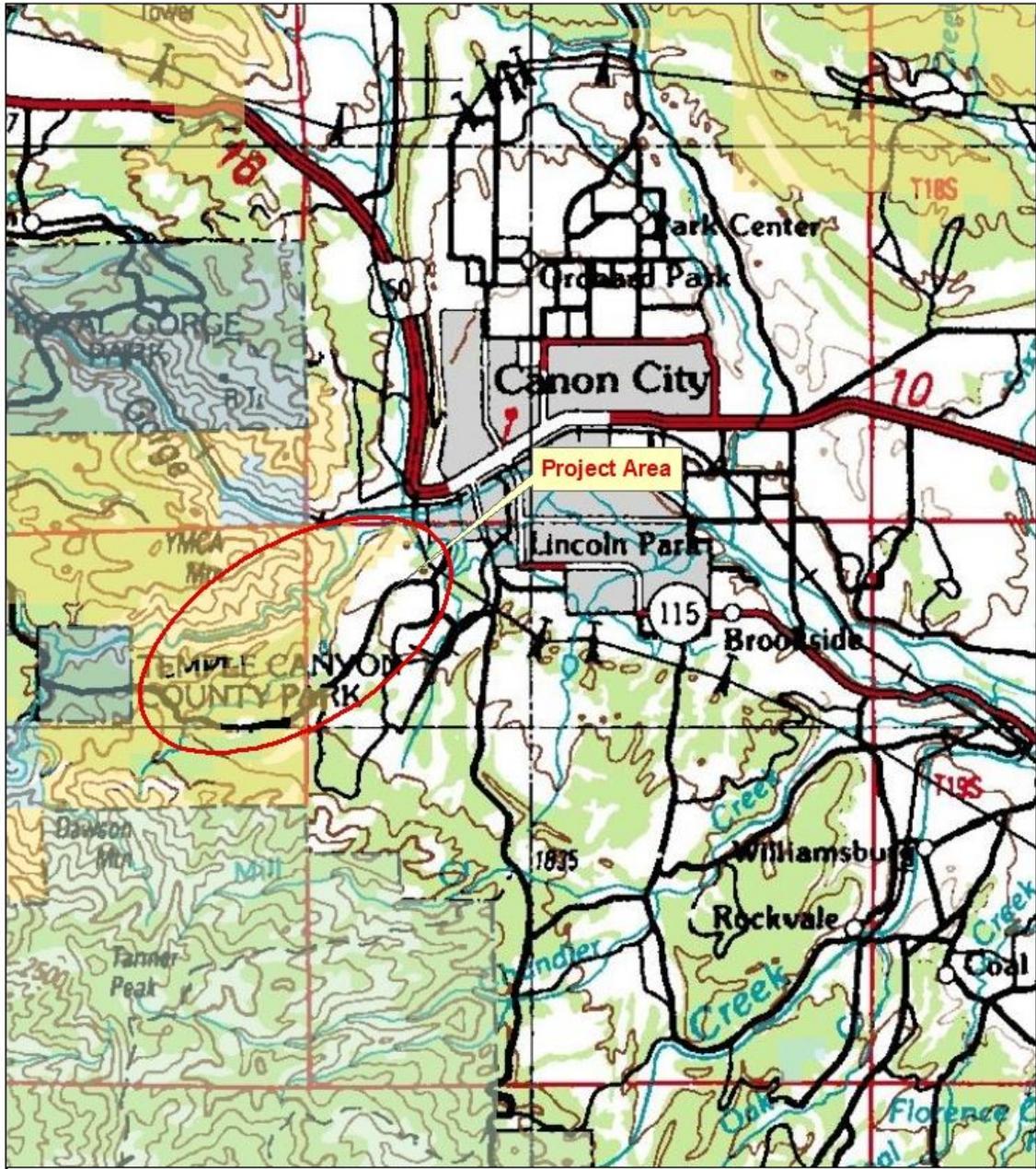
6. All trails will be designed to accommodate foot, horse and bicycle travel to the greatest extent possible. Some sections may be impassible to travel via bicycle or horse due to the presence of bedrock.

Trails and improvements would be built using a combination of hand crews, volunteers, and heavy equipment. Any equipment used for construction would be washed prior to being brought onto site to minimize the spread of noxious weed species. If gasoline powered equipment is used for construction, an adequate spill kit and shovels would be onsite during project implementation. Seeds used for restoration would be certified weed-free. The location of the trail would be located and designed to avoid highly erosive soils and sensitive plant species. Construction of the trails could begin as early as summer 2015 and continue until completed pending funding and personnel.

If paleontological resources are discovered during construction all construction activities would cease and BLM specialists would be brought in to advise and supervise. The trail will be monitored by a paleontologist, qualified to hold a Paleontological Resource Use Permit, on a cyclic basis of every 5 years to minimize any impact to protected fossil resources. The purpose of monitoring would be to identify and remove any exposed fossil resources from the trail corridor to reduce the chances of fossil theft. A qualified paleontologist shall also be present during any trail construction or trail maintenance that would encounter bedrock.

During construction vegetation disturbance would be avoided from May 15 through July 15. This is the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds.

Monitoring of the area would occur. This would focus on trail maintenance needs, off trail/user created routes, law violations, and user conflicts. Adaptive management strategies could be employed to address any issues that may arise. This would be done in coordination with management partners.



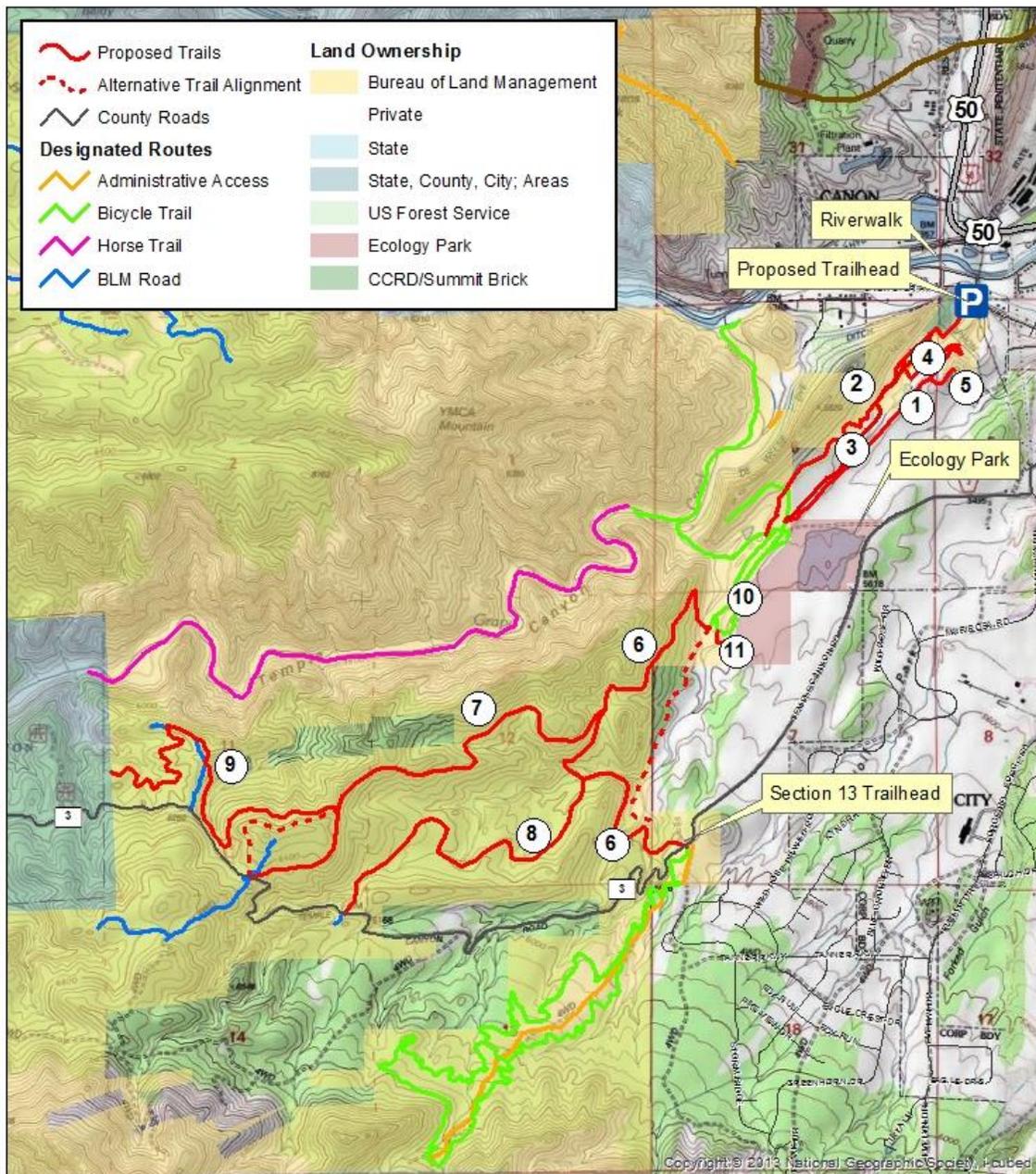
### Ecology Park Area Trail Development



DOI-BLM-CO-F02-2014-0031 EA  
 6th PM, T19S, R70W Sections 5, 6, 7  
 T 19S, R71W Section 11, 12, 14

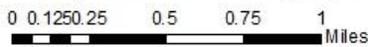


**NOTE TO MAP USERS**  
 No warrantee is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of the data layers shown on this map. The official land records of the data providers should be checked or current status on any specific tract of land.

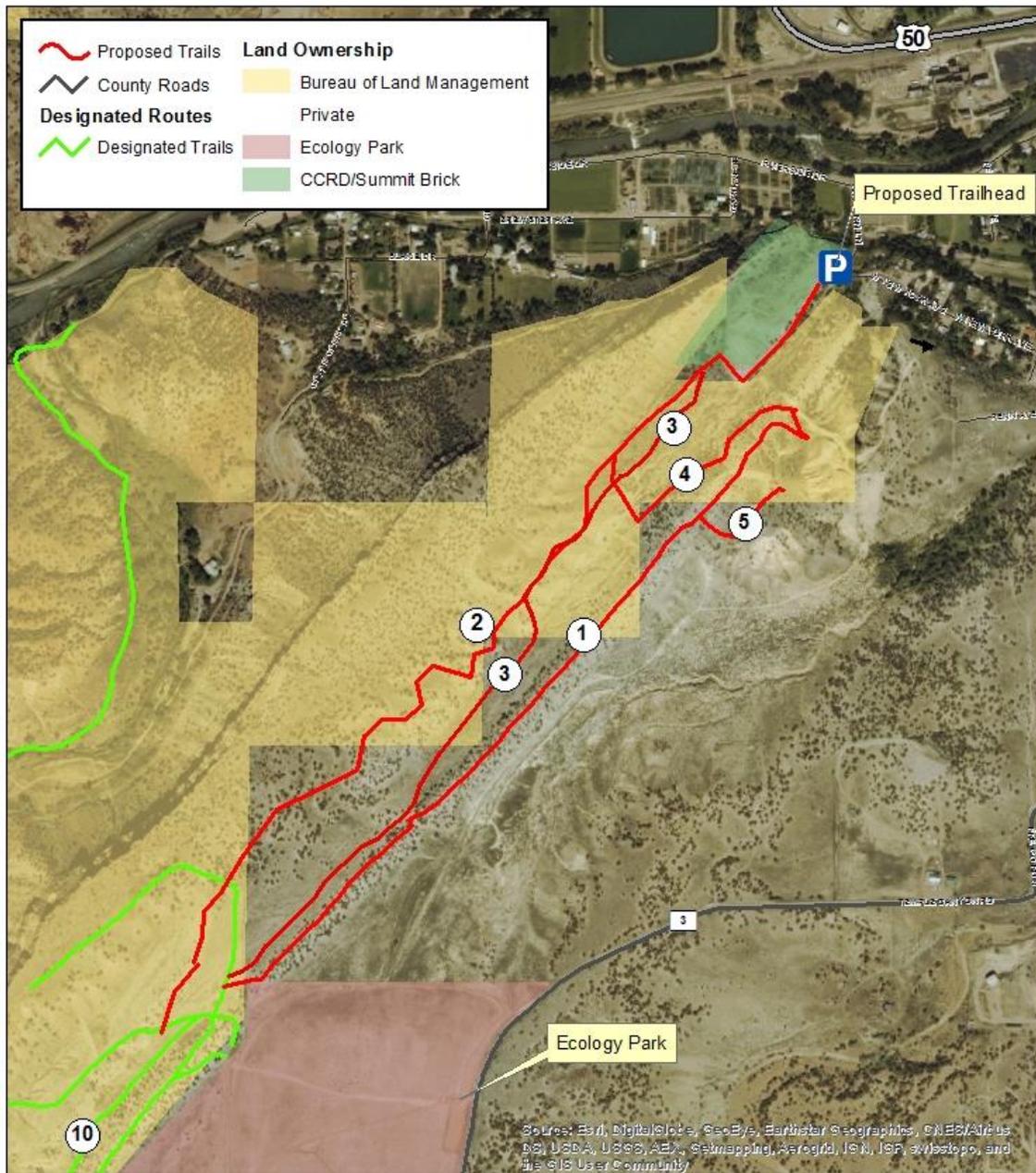


### South Cañon City Trail Development

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 6th PM, T19S, R70W Sections 5, 6, 7  
 T19S, R71W Section 11, 12, 14



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DOI-BLM-CO-F02-2014-0031 EA  
 6th PM, T19S, R70W Sections 5, 6, 7  
 T19S, R71W Section 11, 12, 14

0 0.042 0.085 0.17 0.255 0.34  
 Miles

**NOTE TO MAP USERS**  
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### **2.2.2 No Action Alternative**

The No Action Alternative would be to not designate any additional trails in this area or make improvements to the existing network. Since the Recreation District has acquired easements through the adjacent private land and purchased property in the area, the public would have legal public access via foot and horseback since travel through these means is not limited to a designated route network. Bicycle use would still be allowed on the designated trails in Ecology Park but not on any of the existing trails or old roads connecting with New York Avenue. A trailhead could still be developed if it is determined it occurs entirely on land owned by the Recreation District. If portions would occur on BLM managed lands a trailhead would not be developed. Safety issues related to the ditch network would still be addressed under this alternative.

### **2.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

A number of comments were submitted through the public input process. These were incorporated into the proposed action to the greatest extent possible. The original proposal called for a trail on the ridge overlooking Grape Creek but was removed from the proposed action based on comments to leave the area more primitive in a nature and have trails where bicycle use was not allowed. Other comments suggested making changes to the trail network that was established in the 2006 Arkansas River Travel Management Plan. These alternatives were not analyzed in detail since the previous planning effort already issued a decision based on public input and environmental review.

Not designating the existing two-track road as a trail was considered in order to reduce impacts to soils and reduce trail density. It was not considered further based on comments received that indicated a desire to keep this as a trail to reduce conflicts between users and its value for people walking dogs.

Several comments suggested additional trails and other improvements that were on land not managed by the BLM. Since these are outside of the BLM's jurisdiction they were not analyzed in detail in this document. This includes trail connections crossing private land, installing a toilet at the Ecology Park trailhead, and upgrading roads that would access the trailhead off of New York Ave. The BLM is working with the Recreation District, Fremont County, and Cañon City to follow-up on these suggestions however, the decision to follow through on these suggestions lies with the affected entity or private land owner.

## **CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action and presents comparative analyses of the direct, indirect and cumulative effects on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the actions under the Proposed Action and other alternatives analyzed.

### **3.1.1 Interdisciplinary Team Review**

The following table is provided as a mechanism for resource staff review, to identify those resource values with issues or potential impacts from the proposed action and/or alternatives. Those resources identified in the table as impacted or potentially impacted will be brought forward for analysis.

<b><u>Resource</u></b>	<b><u>Initial and date</u></b>	<b><u>Comment or Reason for Dismissal from Analysis</u></b>
<b><u>Air Quality</u></b> <i>Ty Webb, Chad Meister, Melissa Hovey</i>	TW, 2/24/14	This action will not result in any significant impacts to air quality.
<b><u>Geology/Minerals</u></b> <i>Stephanie Carter, Melissa Smeins</i>	MJS, 4/14/2014	See affected environment
<b><u>Soils</u></b> <i>John Smeins</i>	JS, 3/6/14	See Soils section
<b><u>Water Quality</u></b> <b><u>Surface and Ground</u></b> <i>John Smeins</i>	JS, 3/6/14	See Water Quality section
<b><u>Invasive Plants</u></b> <i>John Lamman</i>	JL, 04/22/2014	See affected environment
<b><u>T&amp;E and Sensitive Species</u></b> <i>Matt Rustand</i>	MR. 3/5/2014	See affected environment.
<b><u>Vegetation</u></b> <i>Jeff Williams, Chris Cloninger, John Lamman</i>	JL, 04/22/2014	See affected environment
<b><u>Wetlands and Riparian</u></b> <i>Dave Gilbert</i>	DG 4/8/2014	See affected environment.
<b><u>Wildlife Aquatic</u></b> <i>Dave Gilbert</i>	DG 4/8/2014	See affected environment.
<b><u>Wildlife Terrestrial</u></b> <i>Matt Rustand</i>	MR. 3/5/2014	See affected environment.
<b><u>Migratory Birds</u></b> <i>Matt Rustand</i>	MR. 3/5/2014	See affected environment.
<b><u>Cultural Resources</u></b> <i>Monica Weimer, Michael Troyer</i>	6/16/2015	See affected environment
<b><u>Native American Religious Concerns</u></b> <i>Monica Weimer, Michael Troyer</i>	6/16/2015	See affected environment

<b><u>Resource</u></b>	<b><u>Initial and date</u></b>	<b><u>Comment or Reason for Dismissal from Analysis</u></b>
<b><u>Economics</u></b> <i>Martin Weimer</i>	mw, 3/17/14	This action will not result in significant impacts to local socio-economics.
<b><u>Paleontology</u></b> <i>Melissa Smeins, Stephanie Carter</i>	MJS, 4/14/2014	See affected environment
<b><u>Visual Resources</u></b> <i>Kalem Lenard</i>	KL, 2/5/2014	The proposed action would introduce minor modifications to the environment. These modifications would not impact visual resources.
<b><u>Environmental Justice</u></b> <i>Martin Weimer</i>	mw, 3/17/14	The proposed action affects areas that are rural in nature. The land adjacent to the project area is open rangeland and the city of Cañon City. There are no minority or low-income populations in or near the project area or effected by the project. As such, the proposal will not have a disproportionately high or adverse environmental effect on minority or low-income populations.
<b><u>Wastes Hazardous or Solid</u></b> <i>Stephanie Carter</i>	MJS, 4/14/2014	See affected environment
<b><u>Recreation</u></b> <i>Kalem Lenard</i>	KL, 2/5/2014	See affected environment.
<b><u>Farmlands Prime and Unique</u></b> <i>Jeff Williams, Chris Cloninger, John Lamman</i>	JL, 04/22/2014	Not present
<b><u>Lands and Realty</u></b> <i>Richard Rotte</i>	RR, 12/2/14	DeWeese ditch is a ROW holder within the project area. They have been notified of the project. Steps are being taken to reduce safety concerns associated with additional public use in this area. No impacts to rights of way have been identified. Acquired lands are to be managed as adjacent land.
<b><u>Wilderness, WSAs, ACECs, Wild &amp; Scenic Rivers</u></b> <i>Kalem Lenard</i>	KL, 2/5/2014	Not Present.
<b><u>Wilderness Characteristics</u></b> <i>Kalem Lenard</i>	KL, 2/11/2016	In 2013 BLM conducted an inventory in this area and determined that wilderness characteristics were not present. Additional information was submitted by the public contending these findings. In 2015 the BLM reviewed this information. Despite the new information the BLM still found that the area did not possess wilderness characteristics largely due to the designated public road network on the south rim of the Royal Gorge. This resource is not present and was not analyzed further.
<b><u>Range Management</u></b> <i>Jeff Williams, Chris Cloninger, John Lamman</i>	JL, 04/22/2014	Not Present.
<b><u>Forest Management</u></b> <i>Ken Reed</i>	KR, 2/19/14	Minimize the cutting and pruning of pinyon trees from April 1 through October 1 due to pinyon IPS beetle outbreak.
<b><u>Cadastral Survey</u></b> <i>Dave Parker</i>	JC, 3/3/14	Cadastral survey has an ongoing survey in section 5, 6, and 7. This survey is key in the boundaries of the area for the relation between BLM and private lands.

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Initial and date</u>	<u>Comment or Reason for Dismissal from Analysis</u>
<u>Noise</u> <i>Martin Weimer</i>	mw, 3/17/14	This action will not result in any significant impacts due to noise or result in any increased noise levels.
<u>Fire</u> <i>Ty Webb</i>	TW, 6/26/15	This action should not result in significant impacts to human caused fire within the area. The action may aid in fire suppression activities through creating holding features and or access.
<u>Law Enforcement</u> <i>Steve Cunningham</i>	SC, 6/26/15	See affected environment.

The affected resources brought forward for analysis include:

- Geology/Minerals
- Soils
- Water Quality
- Invasive Plants
- T & E and Sensitive Species
- Vegetation
- Wetlands and Riparian
- Wildlife, Aquatic
- Wildlife, Terrestrial
- Migratory Birds
- Cultural Resources
- Native American Religious Concerns
- Paleontology
- Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
- Recreation
- Lands and Realty
- Law Enforcement

## **3.2 PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

### **3.2.1 GEOLOGIC AND MINERAL RESOURCES**

#### Affected Environment:

The proposed trails are located at the western margin of the Cañon City basin, along the Dakota hogback that is located along the eastern fringe of the Rocky Mountains. It extends in a north-south direction from southern Wyoming through Colorado and into northern New Mexico.

There are no current mineral interests in the proposed project area, however in the past clay was mined from the hogbacks. There are several clay mine openings that have been safeguarded in the vicinity of the proposed trail including: Temple Canyon #8 (UTM 13: 476465 E, 4251921 N), Temple Canyon #5A (UTM 13: 475885 E, 4250663 N), Temple Canyon #9- #13 (UTM 13: 477351 E, 4253025 N).

#### Environmental Effects

#### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: With increased visitation to this area where several abandoned clay mine openings have already been found and safeguarded, there is a possibility of finding additional openings. Additionally, existing safeguards can degrade over time; these should be monitored for changes that would make them unsafe.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Any new openings that are discovered should be reported to the BLM immediately so that they can be safeguarded. Existing safeguards should be monitored on a 5 year cyclic basis and any changes should be repaired.

Cumulative Impacts: None

No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Same as proposed action

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Same as proposed action

### **3.2.3 SOILS (includes a finding on standard 1)**

Affected Environment: The proposed trails would disturb approximately 0.9 acres and be located on several different soil types. The major soils are: Shingle very cobbly sandy loam, 10-40% slopes, the Travessila – Rock outcrop complex, 5-50% slopes, the Kim, cool, 3-8% slopes, and the Louviers-Travessila complex, 20-50% slopes. These trail erosion hazard for these soils is rated as moderate to severe depending on the soil. These are also rated as somewhat to very limited for natural surface hiking and horseback trails. The limiting factor for trails on these soils is mainly the slopes requiring bench cuts to build. They are also limited due to dustiness and large stone content.

#### Environmental Effects

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: The construction of these trails and parking area would permanently alter these soils and the removal of vegetation on them would lead to accelerated erosion. The proposed building guidelines such as outsloped trail tread, rolling grade dips, rock armoring, etc. would effectively limit the water collection and route runoff quickly from the trail tread resulting in limited erosion. Overall, even with the soils being classified as limited for trail development, the impacts to soils and subsequent long term erosion would be minimal.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: No further mitigation measures are required beyond what is contained in the Proposed Action and Water Quality section.

Cumulative Impacts: Overall, the area has a somewhat high degree of development in the form of historic roads, mines, subdivision, and land fill. Most of these impacts occurred in the past and have stabilized to an extent. The addition of these trails, along with the reclamation of some historic impacts would have a generally neutral impact on the area as a whole.

No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: If no action is taken, no new impacts would occur; however the continued use and development of social trails would continue. This could lead to higher

levels of impacts to soils from the proposed action depending upon the extent and nature of social trail development.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Monitor the site to determine the extent and nature of social trail development on BLM managed lands. Work with adjacent land owners to reduce impacts to soils if monitoring determines impacts are occurring.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Upland Soils: The Proposed Action would not cause the soils to fail to meet Public Land Health Standards.

### **3.2.4 WATER (SURFACE AND GROUNDWATER, FLOODPLAINS) (includes a finding on standard 5)**

Affected Environment: The Proposed Action would take place in a dry, upland location removed from perennial water ways. Average precipitation in the area is approximately 12 inches with July and August being the wettest months. The entire project area is tributary to the Arkansas River.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: The Proposed Action would construct new trails/facilities or designate existing non-motorized routes. Overall, new disturbance with the completion of the entire project is expected to be approximately 0.9 acres, including some designation of existing routes; therefore a Stormwater Protection Plan (SWPP) is not required. The construction of trails such as these can lead to increased runoff and erosion resulting in increased sedimentation to local waterways. Proper location and construction of the tread surface is essential to minimizing or eliminating this potential. The Proposed Action lists construction techniques that would be employed to properly construct these trails. In addition to the increased erosion from the tread, the construction spoils can also contribute to increased sediment until vegetation stabilizes the site. For the most part, trails such as the ones being proposed don't generate many spoils, but in certain circumstances they could be an issue. Overall, the Proposed Action would have very little, if any, effect on water quality.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Depending on the site specific conditions the following mitigation measures may be applied:

- Existing vegetation would be preserved where possible to limit exposed soil.
- Trail treadways would be constructed and shaped to shed water to provide sheet flow to vegetated areas for filtration and infiltration.
- Stabilization of exposed soil on backslopes and/or downslope spoils will include seed, mulch, or blankets, or similar measures.
- Rock hardening in concentrated flow areas.

Cumulative Impacts: Overall, the area has a somewhat high degree of development in the form of historic roads, mines, subdivision, and land fill. Most of these impacts occurred in

the past and have stabilized to an extent. The addition of these trails, along with the reclamation of some historic impacts would have a generally neutral impact on the area as a whole.

#### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: If no action is taken, no new impacts would occur; however the continued use and development of social trails would continue. This could lead to higher levels of impacts to water quality from the proposed action depending upon the extent and nature of social trail development.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Monitor the site to determine the extent and nature of social trail development on BLM managed lands.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Water Quality: The Proposed Action would not cause area waters to fail to meet Public Land Health Standards.

### **3.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

#### **3.3.1 INVASIVE PLANTS\***

Affected Environment: Invasive plants are common in the area due to historical agricultural and mining practices. The native plant community has been altered due to the historical practices in the area. The ecological sites that make up the project site are prone to a variety of weed infestations if soil surface disturbance occurs. Invasive plants within 7 miles of the project area include but are not limited to: dalmation toadflax, Russian knapweed, perennial pepperweed, salt cedar, white top, Russian olive, Canada thistle, and yellow toadflax.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Due to the long-term exposure of the project area to historical practices, expected impacts are thought to be minor.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Equipment used to implement the proposed action should be washed prior to entering the project area to remove any plant materials, soil, or grease. Areas disturbed by project implementation will be monitored for the presence of weeds on the Colorado State Noxious Weed list. Monitoring is required for the life of the project. Identified noxious weeds in disturbed areas will be treated.

Cumulative Impacts: None.

##### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Same as the proposed action.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None

\*Invasive plants are plants that are not part of (if exotic), or are a minor component of (if native), the original plant community or communities that have the potential to become a dominant or co-dominant species on the site if their future establishment and growth are not actively controlled by management interventions, or are classified as exotic or noxious plants under state or federal law. Species that become dominant for only one to several years (e.g., short-term response to drought or wildfire) are not invasive plants.

### **3.3.2 THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE SPECIES**

Affected Environment: See the Migratory Bird section for habitat descriptions.

Threatened and endangered species are managed under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (PL 93-205, as amended). The Endangered Species Act requires Federal agencies to ensure that all actions which they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitat. In addition, BLM policy requires that BLM sensitive species are given the same consideration and protection as listed species. There are no records of any listed species but there is one record of a BLM sensitive plant species near the area of the proposed trails.

Golden Blazing Star's (*Mentzelia chrysantha*) global distribution is limited to the Arkansas River Valley in Fremont and Pueblo counties. It is known from 28 occurrences along 40 miles of the Arkansas River in the vicinity of Cañon City and Pueblo. The total population of *M. chrysantha* is approximately 5,400 plants. It is typically found on barren slopes and road cuts of limestone, shale, or alkaline clay. Because it is always found on alkaline, calcium-rich substrates, it is probably a calciphile. The habitat consists of moderately disturbed, wasting slopes such as those above the Arkansas River. Slopes are usually moderately steep in the shale barrens of the Arkansas River, averaging 20 to 25 percent; no particular aspect is favored. It occupies slopes and road cuts, where it grows prolifically and is often the only plant species growing in large numbers.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Since this plant is known to occur in this area, it could be present where the trails are proposed. The trail system could result in impacts to individuals of this species but would not substantially impact the viability of the population or its overall habitat.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: The location of the proposed trails should be surveyed for the presence of this plant. Relocation of the trail may be necessary if large numbers of this species are found.

Cumulative Impacts: This project would result in a long-term, moderate intensity disturbance in a small area. The proposed trail construction is not anticipated to result in negative cumulative impacts to TES species when viewed in conjunction with those activities currently occurring and reasonably certain to occur on adjacent State and private lands.

##### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: If no action is taken, no new impacts would occur; however the continued use and development of social trails would continue. This could result in impacts to plant species known to occur in the area.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Monitor the site to determine the extent and nature of social trail development on BLM managed lands.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: Implementing the Proposed Action will not affect the Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species.

### **3.3.3 VEGETATION (includes a finding on standard 3)**

Affected Environment: The project area supports Blue grama, galleta, cholla, threeawn, ring muhly, and alkali sacaton with cool season remnants. The native plant community has been altered due to historical agricultural and mining practices.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Due to the long-term exposure of the project area to historical practices, expected impacts are thought to be minor.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Equipment used to implement the proposed action should be washed prior to entering the project area to remove any plant materials, soil, or grease. Areas disturbed by project implementation will be monitored for the presence of weeds on the Colorado State Noxious Weed list. Monitoring is required for the life of the project and for three years following project completion. Identified noxious weeds in disturbed areas will be treated.

Cumulative Impacts: This project would result in a long-term, moderate intensity disturbance in a small area. The proposed trail construction is not anticipated to result in negative cumulative impacts to vegetation when viewed in conjunction with those activities currently occurring and reasonably certain to occur on adjacent State and private lands.

##### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Same as the proposed action.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities: Standard 3: Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitats 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. Based on the recent health assessment, the project area is currently meeting Public Land Health Standard for Upland Plant Communities.

### **3.3.4 WETLANDS & RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on standard 2)**

Affected Environment: The Proposed Action to build trails as discussed would occur in upland habitat away from wetlands, however related public use by way of loop travel of the Grape Creek Trail would likely increase. The new trails are otherwise removed from public land riparian and wetland resources.

#### Environmental Effects:

##### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: The Arkansas River Travel Management Plan analyzed and authorized a trail below Ecology Park to the Arkansas River along Grape Creek. Use of that trail was assumed to grow as the community of Cañon City grew and public knowledge of the trail system expanded. Recently in an unrelated action, Colorado Parks and Wildlife leased land that allows legal access directly from the town of Cañon City to the lower Grape Creek Trail (Pink House Lease). Prior to that lease, accessing the Grape Creek trail was predominately from Ecology Park (shown on the map). This action to construct new trails off New York Avenue will likely add additional loop traffic from recreationists using a new defined trail system. Public use from Ecology Park has been long established, but likely added use is predicted along Grape Creek. Use rates will remain within ranges anticipated within the Arkansas River Travel Management Plan.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Monitor and control for erosion impacts on the associated Grape Creek trail if use on that trail does create erosion.

Cumulative Impacts: Trail use and disturbance of wildlife species within riparian areas will increase on this trail system; however use here likely lessens use and disturbance at other trails within BLM because the overall regional use likely remains unchanged.

##### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Not building the trails sustains the existing situation and there is no association with wetland resources.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None required for protection of wetlands.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Riparian Systems: Riparian resources are not directly affected; those indirectly affected are sustained in Proper Functional Condition and meet this BLM Land Health Standard.

### **3.3.5 WILDLIFE AQUATIC (includes a finding on standard 3)**

Affected Environment: See Wetland\Riparian section above.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Similar to Wetland\Riparian section above, but with slight added disturbance to aquatic wildlife species at actual trail crossings at Grape Creek.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None required as disturbance will be insignificant.

Cumulative Impacts: No substantial impact.

#### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Since trail crossings at Grape Creek are a separate action approved in the Arkansas River Travel Management Plan, impacts would be similar to the proposed action.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None required for protection of aquatic wildlife.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities: No change to aquatic wildlife species as part of Standard 3.

### **3.3.6 WILDLIFE TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on standard 3)**

Affected Environment: This project area is occupied by a habitat type that consists primarily of pinyon pine and juniper. Open areas of mountain grassland are interspersed throughout the area and mountain shrubs such as currant and mountain mahogany are abundant, especially on south slopes. Foothills riparian vegetation is found only in a few isolated pockets. In this area the riparian vegetation is dominated by narrowleaf cottonwood. The understory of these systems is typically rich, with a wide variety of shrubs and herbaceous plants.

Wildlife species occupying the area are typical of the pinyon-juniper forest and include mule deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, coyote, badger, cottontail rabbit, and rock squirrel. Common bird species are listed in the Migratory Bird section of this EA. Habitat in the area could also support a small number of raptors because suitable habitat exists in the rocky cliffs that are found in nearby drainages. Raptors that would be common include red-tailed hawk, kestrel, and golden eagle.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: The discussion presented in the migratory bird section applies. To summarize, the proposed action would create a managed trail system, minimizing the creation and use of trespass routes. However, a managed trail system will likely increase the human activity, reducing the quality of wildlife habitat.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

Cumulative Impacts: This project would result in a long-term, moderate intensity disturbance in a small area. The proposed trail construction is in addition to current existing trails and is introducing additional human presence to the project area. Because the project area currently contains a developed trail system, the proposed action is not anticipated to result in an additive negative cumulative impact to wildlife.

### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: The project location is currently subject to trespass bicycle and hiking trails that intersect BLM managed and private lands. The no action alternative will likely keep recreation visits less than the proposed action. Impacts would be similar to the proposed action but to a lesser degree.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities: Authorizing this project will not affect the health standard for plant and animal communities.

### **3.3.7 MIGRATORY BIRDS**

#### Affected Environment:

The elevation of the proposed trail system area is about 5,800 to 6,200 feet with an annual precipitation of 12 inches. Pinyon-juniper is the dominant vegetation with smaller amounts of mountain shrub and grassland.

The Colorado Bird Conservation Plan identifies 13 vegetation habitat types important to birds in Colorado. The habitat classifications and assignment of bird species to the habitats were developed by Colorado Bird Observatory (CBO) staff along with individuals who contributed to early development of the conservation prioritization scheme. Bird species were assigned to specific habitats based on their restriction to, or strong representation within, that habitat type. Of these 13 habitat categories, 3 (grassland, mountain shrubland and pinyon-juniper) are found within the proposed project area. Bird species typically found in these habitats are described for each habitat type.

Grasslands provide habitat for many species. The severity of the semi-arid climate produces contrasts in vegetation. Grassland birds thus evolved in a shifting landscape mosaic, with access to patches of vegetation in a variety of successional stages and conditions. Species that are typically found in the grassland habitat in the planning area are Cassin's sparrow, lark bunting, grasshopper sparrow, McCown's longspur, western meadowlark, great-horned owl, golden eagle, common raven, mourning dove and American kestrel.

Mountain shrubland habitat provides valuable food and cover for many wildlife species. Many shrub species produce edible fruits, and they provide a large selection of forage types. Often the soil moisture is enough for shrubs to grow densely. Gambel oak acorns are an important mast crop in many areas. Birds such as band-tailed pigeon, wild turkey, Lewis's woodpecker, Steller's jay, western scrub-jay, and green-tailed towhee feed on the acorns. Other birds such as the Virginia's warbler utilize mountain shrub habitat for resting, feeding, and nesting. Dusky flycatcher, Virginia's warbler, and green-tailed towhee are associated with Gambel oak and other shrub habitat.

Pinyon-juniper habitat supports the largest nesting bird species list of any upland vegetation type in the West. Lowland riparian habitats will, across an entire year, harbor more species of birds

due to their importance to migrants. A single ponderosa pine stand typically supports more species than a single pinyon-juniper stand. Aspen stands may hold a higher density of birds. However, the richness of the pinyon-juniper vegetation type is important due to its middle elevation. Survey tallies in pinyon-juniper are similar in species diversity to the best riparian. Several species are found in the pinyon-juniper habitat and include: black-chinned hummingbird, gray flycatcher, Cassin's kingbird, gray vireo, pinyon jay, juniper titmouse, black-throated gray warbler, Scott's oriole, ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick's wren, mountain chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, and chipping sparrow.

The following birds are listed on the US Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) – 2002 List for BCR 16-Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau: golden eagle, flammulated owl, northern harrier, prairie falcon, Williamson's sapsucker, Virginia's warbler, and Grace's warbler. These species have been identified as species that may be found in the area, have declining populations and should be protected from habitat alterations.

### Environmental Effects

#### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: The following discussion also applies to the Terrestrial Wildlife section. Impacts to migratory birds from trails are variable depending on a number of factors. Typically, impacts to birds from trails are not as great as those from intensive development where large areas of habitat are altered. However, impacts do occur and even passive recreation such as hiking, horseback riding, running, jogging and biking can affect birds and bird habitat in a variety of ways, both short and long term.

Impacts can be defined as direct and indirect. Direct impacts are those that result from close encounters with birds and cause a flight reaction. The reaction is a function of the species, closeness, type and intensity of the encounter, time of day, time of year, type of habitat, vegetation screening, trail location, surrounding land use, and many other variables. Bird characteristics, including species, group size, age and sex, also determine the response to a disturbance. Disturbance by humans can cause nest abandonment, decline in parental care, increased stress, shortened feeding times, and potentially lower reproductive success.

Indirect impacts are defined as impacts to habitat that do not directly impact the bird itself. The construction of a trail results in a loss of habitat. Vegetation removed in the process of building a trail is no longer available for use by birds. Indirect impacts also occur as birds avoid habitat along trails to reduce their exposure to negative stimulus associated with human uses. While the habitat may provide for the needs of the species, it may not be utilized because of its proximity to a trail.

Another form of indirect impact is the fragmentation of habitat that occurs with increasing trails. Wildlife species prefer larger blocks of undisturbed habitat rather than smaller fragmented pieces. Habitat fragmentation is considered to be the greatest threat to biological diversity. Determining when a trail causes habitat fragmentation and how it contributes to a reduction in biological diversity is extremely difficult.

Preventing fragmentation of habitats also contributes to the maintenance of wildlife movement corridors. Wildlife movement corridors are defined as linear habitat whose primary function is to connect two or more significant habitat areas. Corridor use is influenced by topography, vegetation, and species of interest and nearby human activities. A wildlife corridor should serve to provide for several functions such as providing wide-ranging animals an opportunity to travel, migrate and locate mates, allow plants to propagate, provide for genetic interchange, allow for populations to move in response to environmental changes, and to allow for individuals to re-colonize suitable habitats. Corridors are needed to maintain connectivity among formally contiguous habitats.

Public lands are an increasingly important source of land for providing the connectivity of habitats that is important to many wildlife species. In addition, they provide some of the only remaining large blocks of contiguous wildlands (core habitat) in many areas. In recent years private lands are being sold to developers and becoming subdivisions that include roads, home sites and other support facilities. As homes are built and people move into the wildlands, wildlife species are being displaced and forced to move from traditional ranges. The only large habitat areas left are those that occur on public lands.

The area of the proposed trails is relatively small, about 200 acres, in an ex-urban environment, a highly used county road and large blocks of BLM and USFS lands. The BLM and USFS lands are large contiguous parcels that provide core habitat for many wildlife species.

The proposed action would create a managed trail system, minimizing the creation and use of trespass routes. However, a managed trail system will likely increase the human activity, reducing the quality of wildlife habitat. The Proposed Action would result in a higher density of routes and will likely increase impacts to migratory bird species from increased disturbance and habitat fragmentation.

**Protective/Mitigation Measures:** In order to be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, BLM must avoid actions that result in a “take” of migratory birds. Generally, this requires a seasonal restriction that requires that all vegetation disturbances be avoided from May 15 through July 15. This is the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds.

**Cumulative Impacts:** This project would result in a long-term, moderate intensity disturbance in a small area. The proposed trail construction is in addition to current existing trails and is introducing a new human presence to the project area. Because the project area currently contains a developed trail system, the proposed action is not anticipated to result in an additive negative cumulative impact to migratory birds.

#### No Action Alternative

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:** The project location is currently subject to trespass bicycle and hiking trails that intersect BLM managed and private lands. The no action alternative will likely keep recreation visits less than the proposed action. Impacts are anticipated to be similar to the proposed action but to a lesser degree.

**Protective/Mitigation Measures:** None.

## **3.4 HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

### **3.4.1 CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Affected Environment: Both prehistoric and historic sites are present in the vicinity of the area of potential effect [see Report CR-RG-14-096 P and CR-RG-15-115 P]; only historic sites are located within the APE itself. Although the historic Temple Canyon Kiln Site (5FN2865), an abandoned historic livestock corral (5FN2824), and a historic road segment (5FN2908.1) were recorded during the cultural resources inventory, they are not eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, and therefore, do not qualify as a historic properties. Moreover, while the eligible DeWeese Dam #2 (5FN1558.5) was also recorded during the inventory, research revealed it is not on lands managed by the BLM. Any actions taken to address safety issues associated with the dam is outside the scope of this document. Therefore, no historic properties will be affected by the proposed undertaking.

Moreover, while some of the proposed trail segments are only conceptual at this point, additional inventory will be required. When the conceptual trails are designed and implemented, BLM will require a Class III inventory for cultural resources in all uninventoried areas. BLM will then follow standard National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 procedures for identification, evaluation, consultation, and resolution of adverse effects (if any).

Lastly, while the Temple Canyon Kiln Site (5FN2865) is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, it is still meaningful to some local people, and impacts to the resource should be avoided if possible. The trail does not pass through or adjacent to the site, and is around 100 meters removed, but may pass through areas where the site would be visible. Accordingly, once the relevant trail segments are designed and implemented (segments 5 and 10), BLM will locate the trail/s so as not to increase visibility of the site. The trail will be located outside the viewshed of the resource so it will not increase impacts directly or indirectly.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: None.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Avoid increasing visibility of the Temple Canyon Kiln Site (5FN2865) – see above.

##### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: None.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

### **3.4.2 NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS**

Affected Environment: Although aboriginal sites are present in the vicinity of the area of potential effect, none are within the area of potential effect itself and no possible traditional

cultural properties were located during the cultural resources inventory (see Cultural Resources section, above). Tribal consultation was conducted for this project (CR-RG-15-121 NA). BLM consulted with the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Cheyenne River Lakota Tribe, Comanche Tribe of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Northern Ute Tribe, Oglala Lakota Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Shoshone Tribe, Southern Ute Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. There is no other known evidence that suggests the project area holds special significance for Native Americans. When the remaining trails are designed and implemented, BLM will require a Class III inventory for the remaining APE and will consult with the relevant tribes regarding potential impacts to aboriginal sites pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

### Environmental Effects

#### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: None.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

#### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: None.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

### **3.4.3 PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

#### Affected Environment:

The proposed trails are located at the western margin of the Cañon City basin, along the Dakota hogback that is located along the eastern fringe of the Rocky Mountains. It extends in a north-south direction from southern Wyoming through Colorado and into northern New Mexico.

The proposed project area does contain paleontological resources and therefore this is a class 5 paleontological formation, according to the BLM's Potential Fossil Yield Classification (PFYC). Class 5 indicates highly fossiliferous units that consistently and predictably produce federally protected vertebrate fossils that are at risk of human-caused adverse impacts or natural degradation.

### Environmental Effects

#### Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: The proposed project area does contain paleontological resources. Potential impacts to fossil localities would be both direct and indirect. Direct impacts to or destruction of fossils would occur from unmitigated activities conducted on formations with high potential for important scientific fossil resources. Indirect impacts would involve damage or loss of fossil resources due to the unauthorized collection of scientifically important fossils by workers or the public due to increased access to fossil localities in the Project Area. Adverse impacts to important fossil resources would be long-term and significant since fossils removed or destroyed would be lost to science. Adverse significant impacts to paleontological resources can

be reduced to a negligible level through mitigation of ground disturbing activities. It is possible that the proposed project would have the beneficial impact that ground disturbance activities might result in the discovery of important fossil resources.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: The recreation team should work with the local paleontology specialist to ensure that the trail avoids the existing paleontological resources in the area. If trail construction encounters bedrock, a paleontologist should be on site to ensure that paleontological resources are not damaged.

Cumulative Impacts: The project area does contain paleontological resources and there is a possibility that ground disturbing work in the area may uncover fossil resources. Adverse significant impacts to paleontological resources can be reduced to a negligible level through mitigation of ground disturbing activities. It is possible that the proposed project would have the beneficial impact that ground disturbance activities might result in the discovery of important fossil resources.

No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Same as proposed action

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Same as proposed action

#### **3.4.4 WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID**

Affected Environment: It is assumed that conditions associated with the proposed project site are currently clean and that no contamination is evident. No hazardous material, as defined by 42 U.S.C. 9601 (which includes materials regulated under CERCLA, RCRA and the Atomic Energy Act, but does not include petroleum or natural gas), will be used, produced, transported or stored during project implementation.

#### **Environmental Effects**

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts: None

Cumulative Impacts: None

Mitigation/Residual Effects: Since this project involves some type of oil or fuel use, transfer and/or storage, an adequate spill kit is required to be onsite. The project proponent will be responsible for adhering to all applicable local, State and Federal regulations in the event of a spill, which includes following the proper notification procedures in BLM's Spill Contingency Plan.

No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: None.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

## **3.5 LAND RESOURCES**

### **3.5.1 RECREATION**

Affected Environment: The project area and its trail system is highly valued by residents of Canon City for the outdoor setting close to town making it perfect for exercise or relieving stress after work. People participate in a number of trail based activities including walking dogs, hiking, trail running, bicycle riding and horseback riding. While the area sees fairly steady use it would rarely be considered busy or crowded with a relatively small number of encounters with other groups. While the majority of visitors start their visit from Ecology Park, those who live close by access the area through neighborhood connections including New York Avenue.

The overall area would not be considered 'natural' with chain link fencing, old roads, water ditches, mining disturbances and an improved surface trail but, based on comments received, people still value it for the outdoor setting and the natural feel. As you get further from the trailhead both along Grape Creek and south of Ecology Park the area is primarily natural and there is little evidence of past disturbance or use.

Currently BLM management is fairly minimal. The area is not regularly patrolled other than along Temple Canyon Road and very little maintenance occurs on the trail system other than to repair major drainage issues following severe weather. Trails are generally not signed and there is no enforcement signing. There are very few travel restrictions in the area and trail users travel throughout the parcel and trespass on adjacent private land. While bicycle use is limited to designated trails, social trails (trails created by general travel) are found throughout the parcel and often used by the bicycle traffic.

#### **Environmental Effects**

##### **Proposed Action**

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:** By developing and formalizing trails in the area the proposed action would result in a number of changes in the area affecting recreation both positively and negatively. The area would likely see an increase in the number of visitors and in turn the number of encounters with other users. The increase in volume of use is unknown but other areas have seen use double by developing high quality trails. Some comments indicated that this type of change would result in decreased satisfaction from recreation outings for those visitors who value the area for its current character. This increase in use may be seen as a positive for other visitors who feel safer recreating where others are present. Past research has found that people are consistently satisfied with their outdoor recreation experiences (FHWA, 1994) throughout the country despite increases in use and evolving technology. BLM staff experience echoes these findings. Trail development in other nearby areas has not resulted in a decrease in satisfaction. This is not to say there have not been conflicts and users have been required to cope with these changes as detailed below. This same result is anticipated for this project.

Comments expressed concerns about an increase in conflicts between users traveling by bicycle and those on foot and horseback. People who traditionally use the area to walk dogs off

leash have also expressed concerns about conflicts. An abundance of research has been conducted on the subject of conflicts between users and can be realized for multiple reasons that are applicable for this project and project area (Federal Highways Administration, FHWA 1994). Differences in use of technology, which is often one-way, where people dislike uses that are faster and more mechanized than their own will likely apply to this project. The other likely cause of conflict which comments revealed are related to resentment toward newcomers that is often expressed by traditional trail users. Researchers have called this the “last settler syndrome” where visitors want a particular place to remain the way it was when they first arrived. As witnessed in nearby areas, by developing trails there will likely be an increase in all forms of travel, including bicycle use. This has the potential to introduce conflicts related to differences in technology and will largely be felt by people who hike in the area, including dog walkers. Conflicts will also likely arise for people who have used the area for the current qualities and dislike the changes. The FHWA report suggests people use three types of coping strategies, all of which changed the character of the experience for the user forced to cope: users adapt and accept the conditions they find; users change their behavior (e.g. use the area less frequently, use at off-peak times, etc. . . ) or are displaced altogether and either stop the activity or stop visiting the area. This of course is largely dependent upon the individual’s attitude and coping strategies will vary but all of these will likely occur due to the proposed action at various levels.

The summary of research conducted by FHWA suggests multiple strategies to reduce and address these conflicts several of which are incorporated into the proposed action. By offering adequate trail mileage opportunities for a variety of trail experiences congestion will be reduced and allow users to choose the conditions that are best suited to the experiences they desire. The proposed action includes trails that are both open to bicycle use and some that are closed to bicycles allowing users to choose their desired experience. It is anticipated that conflicts will be lessened by designating the existing two-track and a parallel trail, somewhat separating uses and providing more alternatives. Multiple trailheads and trails leading out of these will assist in reducing the number of contacts and potential for conflicts. Trail etiquette and responsible trail behavior will also be promoted to help reduce conflicts.

By adding trails, including signage, there will be a slight change in the overall ‘feel’ of the area which will affect people’s experiences. Again, for those who desire the current condition they may be displaced and recreate elsewhere, or more likely have a decreased satisfaction per outing. In general, people have expressed a strong desire for trails in the area not only for the access but also the experience that the trails would provide. However, they still value the relatively primitive feel of the area and do not want to see it overdeveloped. For those seeking trail based experiences the proposed action will have a tangible benefit not only for individuals but also households and the community. These potential benefits include increased property values for nearby homes, increased spending from visitors, improved health of residents and improved family bonding.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Minimize directional and control signing to minimize alteration of the area. Ensure that trails not open to bicycle use are designed and constructed for hiking use and not conducive to bicycle use and sign accordingly. Promote trail etiquette and responsible trail behavior.

**Cumulative Impacts:** With the development of trails in this area along with other nearby areas there are general cumulative impacts to users who desire more primitive experiences with fewer contacts with others. These users will have a harder time finding opportunities for solitude close to their home and will have to travel further to find these opportunities. In general, trail development near homes has been found to increase property values and improve the health and fitness of individuals.

#### No Action Alternative

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:** Impacts from the no action alternative would be similar to the proposed action but to a lesser degree. Easements and agreements with adjacent private land owners through outside entities would still occur if the no action alternative was chosen. Recreation use would still be allowed although it would be limited to foot and horse use based on current regulations for the area limiting bicycle travel to designated routes. These trails would not be signed or put on maps so increases in use would be less. Given that users traveling by bicycle know about the area and use the current trails, this type of use would likely continue if the no action alternative were chosen. Conflicts between users traveling on bicycles and others would be similar to the proposed action, especially if people do not expect to encounter bicycle travel. Since little trail management would occur in the area it is likely that there will be an increase in the creation of social trails. The community and individual benefits identified in the proposed action would likely still occur but at greatly reduced levels. If trails are not constructed or existing trails not signed or mapped fewer people will use them and know of their existence.

**Protective/Mitigation Measures:** Install signs on the existing social trails informing users that bicycle use is not allowed.

### **3.5.5 LAW ENFORCEMENT**

**Affected Environment:** Within the project area the majority of BLM law enforcement issues center on Temple Canyon Road with dumping of household waste and unauthorized vehicle use being the major offenses. Once off of Temple Canyon Road in areas without vehicle access minimal violations have been noted. The most common offenses are littering and graffiti.

#### Environmental Effects

##### Proposed Action

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:** Public comments expressed concern about an increase in crime related to an increase in public use and access in the area. Several studies and BLM staff experience indicate that this will likely not be realized. Suzanne Webel with the Boulder Area Trails Coalition compiled four studies from throughout the country that looked at the impacts that trails have on public safety and neighborhoods. Results found that neighborhoods adjacent to trails generally saw an increase in property values or improved the ability to sell homes. “Concerns that trails might adversely affect public safety and property value in surrounding neighborhoods are not substantiated by the results of this study. The effect of a trail is beneficial, rather than detrimental”. Trail development at Oil Well Flats just north of Cañon City is an example where BLM staff has seen a reduction in violations. In this area, the BLM witnessed a change in visitor type from people traveling to the area to dump trash and drive in the mud to responsible recreationists who often report violations.

It is anticipated that the proposed action will not result in an increase in violations, especially within the trail system outside of vehicle access points. There may be an increase in complaints from users simply due to an increase in use but these would likely be contributed to conflicts between users, not necessarily violations of laws.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.  
Cumulative Impacts: None.

#### No Action Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Impacts from the no action alternative would likely be similar. Since few violations occur in the project area currently, this trend is likely to continue. An increase in complaints from visitors would likely to occur at the same level as the proposed action as awareness of the social trail network increases.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

Cumulative Impacts: None.

### **3.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY**

The majority of the land managed by the BLM was acquired approximately 20 years ago. The area has a somewhat high degree of development and actions include mining, grazing, and somewhat recently recreation. Irrigation ditches traverse the parcel and portions are directly adjacent to a now capped landfill. The parcel is directly adjacent to medium density housing.

Recreation is largely the current use where it is valued as a natural area close to town. People travel on social trails and old roads participating in hiking, horseback riding, trail running, dog walking, and bicycle riding. Mine shafts have been collapsed for human safety. There is no grazing in the area.

It is anticipated that recreation use will still be the primary activity occurring in the area. This type of use is anticipated to evolve and likely increase as the population of Colorado continues to grow and the demand for leisure activities increases.

Cumulatively the addition of trails and the increase in recreation in the area would have a neutral impact on soils in the area if use is managed and trail networks are maintained. The proposed action is not anticipated to result in negative cumulative impacts to threatened and endangered species, vegetation, wildlife (both upland and riparian) or migratory birds. A neutral cumulative impact is also anticipated to paleontological resources where the construction of trails may uncover new fossil resources.

With the development of trails in this area along with other nearby areas there are general cumulative impacts to people who desire more primitive experiences with fewer contacts with others. These users will have a harder time finding opportunities for solitude close to their home

and will have to travel further to find these opportunities. In general, trail development near homes has been found to increase property values and improve the health and fitness of individuals and positive cumulative impacts are anticipated.

## **CHAPTER 4 - CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

### **4.1 LIST OF PREPARERS AND PARTICIPANTS**

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Please see Interdisciplinary Team Review list for BLM Participants

### **4.2 TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED**

Lower Arkansas Mountain Bike Association  
Cañon City Area Recreation and Park District  
Fremont County  
City of Cañon City  
Colorado Parks and Wildlife

## CHAPTER 5 - REFERENCES

Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 1996. Royal Gorge Resource Area; Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan. Royal Gorge Field Office. Cañon City, Colorado.

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Federal Highway Administration and The National Recreational Trails Advisory Committee. 1994. Accessed via web 1/6/2016. Conflicts on Multiple Use Trails: Synthesis of the Literature and State of the Practice. [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational\\_trails/publications/conflicts\\_on\\_multiple\\_use\\_trails/conflicts.pdf](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/publications/conflicts_on_multiple_use_trails/conflicts.pdf)

## **Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

### **DOI-BLM-CO-200-2014-0031 EA**

Based on review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects from any alternative assessed or evaluated meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined by 43 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below:

#### **RATIONALE:**

**Context:** The proposed action was selected in response to community demand for access and trail opportunities in the area and need to manage recreation use to reduce impacts to soils, vegetation, and adjacent properties. Located directly outside of Cañon City, Colorado adjacent to medium density housing developments the area is important to the local community for the natural setting and recreation opportunity it provides. The project does not have significance outside of the local community.

#### **Intensity:**

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the South Cañon Trail Development Project decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

##### **Impacts that may be beneficial and adverse:**

Minor negative impacts are anticipated to wildlife (upland, riparian and avian), soils, and vegetation. It is acknowledged however that since recreation use in the area is already occurring these impacts are not anticipated to greatly increase those that would occur through any of the action alternatives and would serve to bring some of that use under control. Both positive and negative impacts are anticipated to occur for recreation resources. For those seeking solitude and desire less developed areas the proposed action will result in decrease in satisfaction. For those who see development as positive and welcome the legal public access and the opportunities that a new trail system will provide the action will be seen as a positive contribution to individuals and the community. It is anticipated that impacts to law enforcement will be neutral since the area sees very little violations currently and increases are not anticipated.

##### **Public health and safety:**

Indirectly, the proposed action would result in improvements to public health and safety. Though not specifically addressed in this plan, the planning effort highlighted a number of safety concerns. These have either been addressed or will be addressed through future actions.

**Unique characteristics of the geographic area:**

The area does not have any unique characteristics that need to be considered.

**Degree to which effects are likely to be highly controversial:**

The effects of trail development and recreation management are long established and there is no disagreement on the effects that this project would have on other resources.

**Degree to which effects are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:**

The effects of trail development and recreation management are long established and well known. The effects of the proposed action are not highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

**Consideration of whether the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts:**

This decision is like one of many that have previously been made and will continue to be made by BLM responsible officials regarding trail development and recreation management on public lands. The decision is within the scope of the Resource Management Plan and is not expected to establish a precedent for future actions. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

**Consideration of whether the action is related to other actions with cumulatively significant impacts:**

Cumulative impacts have been determined to be mostly neutral for most resources due to the relatively small extent and net positive impact it will have to recreation management.

**Scientific, cultural or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:**

A cultural resource inventory was conducted for the project area and no significant cultural or historical resources were identified to be impacted.

**Threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat:**

Golden Blazing Star's (*Mentzelia chrysantha*) is known to occur in the project area and could be present where the trails are proposed. The impact analysis indicated that the trail system could result in impacts to individuals of this species but would not substantially impact the viability of the population or its overall habitat. To mitigate impacts it is recommended that a survey be conducted in the area and the trails would be designed to avoid known populations.

**Any effects that threaten a violation of Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment:** The proposed action conforms with the provisions of NEPA (U.S.C. 4321-4346) and FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) and is compliant with the Clean Water Act and The Clean Air Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Endangered Species Act.

NAME OF PREPARER: Kalem Lenard

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: Kyle Sullivan (acting)

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: Kyle Sullivan (acting)

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: /s/ Martin Weimer

DATE: 2/26/16

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

  
Keith E. Berger, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 3/10/16

APPENDICES:  
ATTACHMENTS:

**UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
ROYAL GORGE FIELD OFFICE**

**DECISION RECORD**

Project Name

**DOI-BLM-CO-200-2014-0031-EA**

**DECISION:** It is my decision to authorize the Proposed Action as described in the attached EA. The BLM will construct or designate 9 separate trails, totaling 9.75 miles in the Ecology Park area outside of Cañon City, Colorado. This trail system would be managed through a cooperative management agreement with the Cañon City Area Metropolitan Recreation and Parks District where appropriate to utilize shared services and access. To meet the desired experiences specific trail management objectives were established in the proposed action and new construction would follow best management practices such as contouring design and frequent reverse grade dips. Where necessary, trails would not be established unless an easement across private property is obtained. The overall management goal is to retain the somewhat primitive feel of the area desired by community residents. Certain social trails were specifically not designated to help retain primitive opportunities and provide options for exploration. All authorized trails would be natural surface and signing would be minimal. Roads and trails not needed for administrative access would be closed and steps taken to allow for re-vegetation. Vehicle access would still be allowed for administrative or emergency access.

Steps would also be taken to reduce impacts to other resources. Vegetation removal would not be allowed during the migratory bird nesting season and construction equipment would be washed prior to entering the site to reduce the spread of noxious and invasive plant species. A spill kit will also be on site to quickly address contamination that could otherwise occur. Monitoring would occur to identify any paleontological resources that may be uncovered during construction.

This decision is contingent on meeting all mitigation measures and monitoring requirements listed below.

- Any new mine openings that are discovered should be reported to the BLM immediately so that they can be safeguarded. Existing safeguards should be monitored on a 5 year cyclic basis and any changes should be repaired.
- Existing vegetation would be preserved where possible to limit exposed soil.
- Trail treadways would be constructed and shaped to shed water to provide sheet flow to vegetated areas for filtration and infiltration.
- Stabilization of exposed soil on backslopes and/or downslope spoils will include seed, mulch, or blankets, or similar measures.
- Install rock hardening in concentrated flow areas.

- Equipment used to implement the proposed action should be washed prior to entering the project area to remove any plant materials, soil, or grease.
- Areas disturbed by project implementation will be monitored for the presence of weeds on the Colorado State Noxious Weed list. Monitoring is required for the life of the project. Identified noxious weeds in disturbed areas will be treated.
- The location of the proposed trails should be surveyed for the presence of T&E plant species. Relocate the trail if large numbers of this species are found.
- Monitor and control for erosion impacts on the associated Grape Creek trail if use on that trail does create erosion.
- In order to be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, BLM must avoid actions that result in a “take” of migratory birds. Generally, this requires a seasonal restriction that requires that all vegetation disturbances be avoided from May 15 through July 15. This is the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds.
- The recreation team will work with the local paleontology specialist to ensure that the trail avoids the existing paleontological resources in the area. If trail construction encounters bedrock, a paleontologist should be on site to ensure that paleontological resources are not damaged.
- Since this project involves some type of oil or fuel use, transfer and/or storage, an adequate spill kit is required to be onsite. The project proponent will be responsible for adhering to all applicable local, State and Federal regulations in the event of a spill, which includes following the proper notification procedures in BLM’s Spill Contingency Plan.
- Minimize directional and control signing to minimize alteration of the area. Ensure that trails not open to bicycle use are designed and constructed for hiking use and not conducive to bicycle use.

The development of the proposed action and response to comments was coordinated with Fremont County, the Cañon City Area Metropolitan Recreation and Parks District, and the City of Cañon City. A number of comments were received during the public scoping period. Several of these were incorporated into the proposed action while others were not analyzed in detail or carried forward because they were outside of the scope of the project or did not meet the stated purpose and need.

This office completed an Environmental Assessment and reached a Finding of No Significant Impact.

**RATIONALE:** This decision was reached due to the community desire for legal public access and high quality trail systems close to where people live and the minimal impacts that it would create. Recreation use in the area is already occurring and is anticipated to increase. This use is resulting in undesirable impacts to soils, vegetation, and adjacent private property. By formally designating routes in this area the BLM can increase management addressing impacts to resources while providing improved conditions for recreation use. The partnership with the recreation district to provide the needed legal access in this area further emphasized the community desire and the decision for selecting the proposed action. These trails and the access

in this area was also identified in the recently completed Eastern Fremont County Trails and Open Space which was developed in large part by the community.

MITIGATION MEASURES\MONITORING: Several mitigation measures and monitoring requirements were incorporated into the decision. See above for specifics.

APPEALS: 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 Royal Gorge Field Office, 3028 E. Main St., Canon City, CO 81212 with copies sent to the Regional Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, 755 Parfet St., Suite 151, Lakewood, CO 80215, and to the Department of the Interior Board of Land Appeals, 801 North Quincy St., MS300 QC, Arlington, VA, 22203. 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 at the above address within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

  
Keith E. Berger, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

3/10/16

ATTACHMENTS:

## APPENDIX A – SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND RESPONSE

Comment	Response
Has concerns about the archeological resource within project area, wants project put on hold until proper documentation of archeological survey has been completed.	Surveys for cultural resources are required for all ground disturbing activities on federally managed land. A survey was conducted for this project and the cultural resources section of the environmental assessment identifies cultural resources in the area. This section identifies anticipated impacts of the proposed action and any mitigation necessary to reduce impacts.
With the anticipated increase in traffic to the proposed trailhead these two roadways are too narrow woefully underdeveloped for any more traffic than what uses them today.	Improvements to roads are outside of BLM's jurisdiction and therefore are not addressed in this plan. The county and the city have been made aware of the concern and management partners are actively working to determine the extent of the concern and potential solutions.
The South Cañon Ditch is adjacent to the trailhead. Has the Ditch Company weighed in on this?	The Recreation district has been actively working with the ditch company and addressing any concerns they may have including installing signing and fencing.
How will the connection from the new trailhead to the riverwalk be made?	This connection is outside of the jurisdiction of the BLM. However, at this time no improvements are planned to make this connection. Users wishing to travel from the river walk to the trailhead would travel on Colburn Lane. Signing on the riverwalk may be installed to notify people of the access point.
Connection from the Ecology Park south across Temple Canyon Rd to Dawson Ranch and Dawson Ranch stables should be included in this plan	The trail identified in this comment is located on private land and is therefore outside of the scope of this document and BLM management oversight. This connection was identified in the Eastern Fremont County Trails and Open Space Plan and the Recreation District is exploring options for providing this connection.

<p>One improvement that I would like to see would be a stream crossing over Grape Creek, just below where the current trail cuts through the hogback.</p>	<p>The 2006 Arkansas River Travel Management Plan designated a trail that travels along Grape Creek with portions being open to foot and horse travel and other sections open to bicycle travel as well. Specifics of crossings (if any) were not spelled out in the Arkansas River Travel Management Plan. Given the complicated nature of bridges and floodplains, the cost to construct and maintain bridges, and the potential conflicting views of increasing development in this area this document does not address trails along Grape Creek or crossings of the creek.</p>
<p>Any chance we could have a good hiking/training steep hill (like the incline in Manitou or Mt. Sanitas in Boulder?)</p>	<p>While the terrain within the planning area is not suitable for this type of opportunity the Eastern Fremont County Trails and Open Space does identify other trails that may meet this type of demand including a trail that connects Tunnel Drive to Fremont Peak. If this trail crosses BLM managed lands an additional planning effort would be required along with additional NEPA analysis and opportunity for public input.</p>
<p>Concerned about lack of restrooms at Tunnel Drive and/or the Eco Park.</p>	<p>Ecology Park is on county managed land and is outside the jurisdiction of the BLM. The county has been made aware of the concern. A decision to supply a restroom at Ecology Park lies with Fremont County.</p>
<p>One idea that we're going to float with the biking community in particular is that of a bike race with proceeds to benefit the trail building and maintenance efforts going on.</p>	<p>The BLM manages commercial and competitive events through a Special Recreation Permitting process. This is separate from this planning effort. If there is a desire for holding an event on BLM managed lands the applicant would need to follow the BLM permitting process, including NEPA documentation.</p>
<p>I do not believe the trail on Eagle Wing Ridge is a good idea. I believe the ridge should be considered primarily wildlife habitat and left undeveloped. It is currently accessible enough to be used by a small number of people. Building a trail on it will invite too many people into an important ecological hideaway.</p>	<p>The proposed action was modified and this trail was removed. It will be left in its current condition and considered a social trail. If an increase in use results in vegetation loss and increases in erosion some maintenance would be performed to stabilize the tread while retaining the primitive trail character. The trail would not be signed or included on maps.</p>

<p>I do not believe there should be bicycles allowed in Grape Creek. This is an important riparian ecosystem and corridor that should be managed as such and limited to low impact usage.</p>	<p>The 2006 Arkansas River Travel Management Plan designated a trail that travels along Grape Creek with portions being open to foot and horse travel and other sections open to bicycle travel as well. Therefore, the decision to allow bicycle travel along at least a certain section was established in a previous planning effort and is outside the scope of this document. However, given the complicated nature of creek crossings and floodplains and the potential conflicting views of increasing development in this area any work on trails in the Grape Creek area outside of basic maintenance would likely undergo additional planning efforts and opportunity for public input.</p>
<p>Put another entrance in at the other end of the lot (Ecology Park). Would make getting a horse trailer in/out easier. Is there a plan for making the lot larger if needed?</p>	<p>The Ecology Park trailhead is on county managed land and is outside the jurisdiction of the BLM. The county has been made aware of the concern. A decision to make changes to the trailhead would be up to Fremont County.</p>
<p>You may want to designate which trails are for bikes and which are not. Bikes are pretty quiet and might cause problems with surprising hikers or horseback riders. I have no problems with bikers but if you're putting them on trails that might have drop offs on one or both sides of the trail...</p>	<p>The 2006 Arkansas River Travel Management Plan established allowed uses on trails in the Ecology Park area. This plan does not attempt to alter decisions established in the previous planning effort. Based on other input, all of the trails identified in this planning effort would be open to bicycle travel except for trail #3 that travels to the top of Sandy Hill. The proposed action was modified to not designate a trail that travels along the Eagle Wing to provide primitive opportunities where bicycles would not be allowed. The recreation section of the Environmental Assessment addresses the potential for conflicts between user groups. The BLM found that trail systems throughout the west, including locally, have multiple uses where hikers and horseback riders share trails with bicycles. While there is potential for conflict, in general it is minimal and limited to a social context. With the limited vegetation screening and open sight lines safety conflicts are not anticipated.</p> <p>Alternative 1 includes designating the existing two-track road as a trail. The analysis indicates that this alternative could help distribute use by type reducing conflicts.</p>

<p>How is the cell phone reception in the area?</p>	<p>The Fire Department and Emergency Response has been coordinated with on this project. They have been given keys that access the area to provide emergency response if necessary. In general there has been limited emergency response needs in this area.</p>
<p>Are the FD and EMS providing input in case of rescue ops?</p>	<p>The Fire Department and Emergency Response has been coordinated with on this project. They have been given keys that access the area to provide emergency response if necessary. In general there has been limited emergency response needs in this area.</p>
<p>Ask that the BLM consider adjusting the north/west most proposed conceptual trail to travel on the north flank of the high point adjacent to Temple Canyon Road. Ask that the BLM consider including a spur from the western most trail intersection with Temple Canyon Road, west to the City's property boundary.</p>	<p>The proposed action was modified to include this alignment as an alternative and could be utilized after further inspection and design to determine which aspect makes better sense from a trail perspective including user experience and construction cost.</p>
<p>On the south side of the Ecology Park is an existing social trail through a slot type canyon that ultimately enters into BLM lands. We ask that a spur from the proposed conceptual trail be included in this location in order to allow this unique social trail to become a legitimate travel route.</p>	<p>The trail identified in this comment is mostly located on land owned by Fremont County with a small portion on BLM. The proposed action was modified to include this trail in the BLM's trail system if the county decides to do so. Fremont County has been made aware of the proposal and BLM will coordinate with them.</p>
<p>In order to provide a trail connection between the proposed trail alignments which would not require use of New York Avenue, we ask that the BLM include a short connector trail somewhere at the north end of the project area.</p>	<p>A short connector trail utilizing the old ditch and connects between the two main trails on the north end of the property was added to the proposed action.</p>
<p>We are looking into offering trail riding in the future from our Dawson Ranch facility. We also have some other ideas for events from our ranch that would bring people in from surrounding areas and out of state to our community.</p>	<p>A connection between Dawson Ranch facilities and Ecology Park was identified in the Eastern Fremont County Trails and Open Space Plan. The Recreation District is exploring options for providing this connection. This connection would be located entirely on private land and is therefore outside of the scope of this document and BLM management oversight.</p>

<p>Would like to leave old 2-track Schepp trail fairly open &amp; straight.</p>	<p>The proposed action identifies the need to re-route this trail in order to improve experiences for a more diverse user base and improve drainage. In order to reduce conflicts between trail users and dog walkers the proposed re-route would be 3' wide. Given the limited vegetation and gently rolling topography the re-route would still allow for open site lines.</p> <p>Alternative 1 considers designating the old 2-track as a trail in addition to constructing a trail to the west. The alignment of the 2-track would not be changed under this alternative.</p>
<p>Concerned about traffic on New York. Could Coburn be paved and used as main access? (Fewer children and pets).</p>	<p>Improvements to roads are outside of BLM's jurisdiction and therefore are not addressed in this plan. The county and the city have been made aware of the concern and management partners are actively working to determine the extent of the concern and potential solutions.</p>
<p>Would like a multi-use trail but a separate mountain bike trail.</p>	<p>The 2006 Arkansas River Travel Management Plan established allowed uses on trails in the Ecology Park area. This plan does not attempt to alter decisions established in the previous planning effort. Based on other input the majority of the trails proposed would be open to bicycles. However the proposed action was modified to not allow bicycles on trail #3 which travels to the top of Sandy Hill and a trail was not designated along the ridge of the Eagle Wing partly in response to this concern. The recreation section of the Environmental Assessment addresses the potential for conflicts between user groups. The BLM found that trail systems throughout the west, including locally, have multiple uses where hikers and horseback riders share trails with bicycles. While there is potential for conflict, in general it is minimal. With the limited vegetation screening and open sight lines conflicts are not anticipated. In this area, bicycle use is limited to designated trails while foot and equestrian use is not. People wishing to avoid bicycles on trails could travel off of established trails.</p> <p>Alternative 1 includes designating the existing two-track road as a trail. The analysis indicates that this alternative could help distribute use by type reducing conflicts.</p>
<p>Please allow plenty of horse trails.</p>	<p>All of the trails within the planning area would be open to horseback use.</p>

<p>Would like a horse trail past the private property on Grape Creek.</p>	<p>The 2006 Arkansas River Travel Management Plan designated a trail that travels along Grape Creek with portions being open to foot and horse travel and other sections open to bicycle travel as well. This included connecting to the confluence with the Arkansas River past the private property. However, given the complicated nature of creek crossings and floodplains and the potential conflicting views of increasing development in this area any work on trails in the Grape Creek area outside of basic maintenance would likely undergo additional planning efforts and opportunity for public input. It is outside of the planning area and therefore not addressed in this plan.</p>
<p>Please loop some trails, especially horse trails.</p>	<p>All of the trails within the planning area would be open to horseback use and multiple loop opportunities are identified.</p>
<p>Need bathrooms at Ecology Park and somewhere in Tunnel Drive area.</p>	<p>Ecology Park is on county managed land and is outside the jurisdiction of the BLM. The county has been made aware of the concern. A decision to supply a restroom at Ecology Park lies with Fremont County.</p>
<p>Please put speed bumps on New York Ave.</p>	<p>Improvements to roads are outside of BLM's jurisdiction and therefore are not addressed in this plan. The county and the city have been made aware of the concern and management partners are actively working to determine the extent of the concern and potential solutions.</p>

<p>Make the connecting trails <u>without</u> adding extra trails to challenge bike riders, making swiss cheese of the habitat.</p>	<p>A number of comments were received identifying the desire to have mountain bike opportunities in this area as well as hiking and horseback. The proposed action attempts to balance the desire for a variety of recreation opportunities while at the same time not greatly disrupting the natural setting of the area that attracts people to the area. No trails are identified in the proposed action that are simply proposed to challenge people riding bicycles. The trails in the proposed action are identified to provide connections between trails systems and create additional loops for a variety of non-motorized uses including bicycles.</p>
<p>Concerned about tax increase.</p>	<p>Any increases in taxes is outside of the authority of the BLM and is therefore not addressed in this plan. At this point in time there is no direction on requiring fees to access or use trails within the planning area. The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act specifically does not allow the BLM to charge fees for simply accessing areas.</p>
<p>Concerned about impacts to wildlife</p>	<p>Impacts to wildlife from the proposed action are addressed in the wildlife section of the document.</p>
<p>Concerned about increase in traffic with the proposed parking lot.</p>	<p>Improvements to roads are outside of BLM's jurisdiction and therefore is not addressed in this plan. The county and the city have been made aware of the concern and management partners are actively working to determine the extent of the concern and potential solutions.</p>

<p>Concerned about people tampering with ditch head gates.</p>	<p>The recreation district has been working with the ditch company to address any concerns they may have with designated trails in the area. The Law Enforcement section of the Environmental Assessment addresses impacts of the proposed action including the effect that establishing trails has on crime and safety in neighborhoods. The BLM found that several studies have been done on this subject and that in general "concerns that urban trails might adversely affect public safety and property value in surrounding neighborhoods are not substantiated. The effect of a trail is beneficial, rather than detrimental." Another study found that "only a small number of minor infractions" in association with a trail in a neighborhood. The EA does not anticipate an increase in crime in association with the proposed action.</p>
<p>Concerned about protection of fossil tracks in area.</p>	<p>The Paleontological Resources section of the Environment Assessment identifies anticipated impacts to this resource in association with the proposed action along with mitigation measures. It calls for working with the local paleontology specialist to ensure that the trail avoids the existing sites and that a specialist is on-sight during construction to ensure resources aren't damaged.</p>

<p>Wants to see patrolling of trails at night.</p>	<p>The Law Enforcement section of the Environmental Assessment addresses impacts of the proposed action including the effect that establishing trails has on crime and safety in neighborhoods. The BLM found that several studies have been done on this subject and have found that in general "concerns that urban trails might adversely affect public safety and property value in surrounding neighborhoods are not substantiated. The effect of a trail is beneficial, rather than detrimental." Another study found that "only a small number of minor infractions" in association with a trail in a neighborhood. The EA does not anticipate an increase in crime in association with the proposed action. The BLM does enforce violations of laws occurring on BLM managed lands and would respond to issues as appropriate.</p>
<p>Doesn't care for any of this trail business, go somewhere else, leave well enough alone.</p>	<p>The proposed action is in response to the desire for legal trail opportunities and connections in this area. The Eastern Fremont County Trails and Open Space Plan, which had a variety of opportunities for public input, also identified the desire for legal trails in this area. The No Action Alternative analyzes the impacts of not establishing trails in this area and not securing legal public access through private land.</p>
<p>Wants you to leave well enough alone.</p>	<p>The proposed action is in response to the desire for legal trail opportunities and connections in this area. The Eastern Fremont County Trails and Open Space Plan, which had a variety of opportunities for public input, also identified the desire for legal trails in this area. The No Action Alternative analyzes the impacts of not establishing trails in this area.</p>
<p>Likes connecting trails, especially two from Colburn/New York Ave. to Ecology Park</p>	<p>The proposed action identifies trail opportunities that would make this connection.</p>
<p>Also a trail continuing to Section 13.</p>	<p>The proposed action identifies trail opportunities that would make this connection.</p>

<p>Would like a trail along Grape Creek.</p>	<p>The 2006 Arkansas River Travel Management Plan designated a trail that travels along Grape Creek with portions being open to foot and horse travel and other sections open to bicycle travel as well. There are currently social trails in this area. Given the complicated nature of creek crossings and floodplains and the potential conflicting views of increasing development in this area any work on trails in the Grape Creek area outside of basic maintenance would likely undergo additional planning efforts and opportunity for public input. It is outside of the planning area and therefore not addressed in this plan.</p>
<p>Trail on top of Eagle Wing is unnecessary, would lead to fairly high trail density. Would like to leave some of area more rugged/less used for sake of many animals that are active there.</p>	<p>The proposed action was modified and this trail was removed. It will be left in its current condition and considered a social trail. If an increase in use results in vegetation loss and increases in erosion some maintenance would be performed to stabilize the tread while retaining the primitive trail character. The trail would not be signed or included on maps.</p>
<p>Golden Blazing Star's (<i>Mentzelia chrysantha</i>) global distribution is limited to the Arkansas River Valley in Fremont and Pueblo counties. The project area might contain habitat that is conducive to the plant.</p>	<p>The location of the proposed trails would be surveyed for the presence of this plant. Relocation of the trail may be necessary if large numbers of this species are found.</p>

<p>Off leash dog walking is the primary reason we visit Ecology Park, would prefer trails don't connect towards town to retain setting. Concern about ability to continue to walk dogs in area. Suggest adding trails on the other side of Grape Creek. Please don't make leash laws</p>	<p>The purpose and need of the action is to connect the existing trail system to town to facilitate increase in outdoor recreation participation, improving individual health and contribute to the local economy. Not connecting towards town would not meet the purpose and need of the project. Other comments suggested that trail development not occur along Grape Creek due to the primitive opportunities the area provides. The terrain suggested is incredibly steep and rugged and not necessarily conducive to trail development. Conflicts for people who traditionally have walked their dogs in this area is addressed in the recreation section of the EA. It is anticipated that this type of user will realized conflicts and their response will be dependent upon the individuals attitude and perception. Leash laws are not being proposed at this point in time.</p>
<p>Oppose the plan since it was developed without consideration of private property and developing economic opportunity in Fremont County. Trails are proposed to and through an area being looked at for mining. This project will threaten the development of the mining operation.</p>	<p>It was clarified that the comment was directed at the Eastern Fremont County Trails and Open Space plan which this project is separate from. The trails and open space plan did have trails shown on the south side of Temple Canyon Road, close to the referenced mining development. However, this plan only proposes trails on the north side of Temple Canyon road and would not affect the proposed mining operation. This plan does not approve or propose any trails on or through private land where an easement is not already in place. Any trails that connect to this trail system through private land would be outside the scope of this document and BLM management.</p>
<p>Suggests that if more trails are built they should be designed and constructed to accommodate beginners and families.</p>	<p>Several of the trails identified in the proposed action would be designed and constructed to accommodate beginners and young bicycle riders that would be excellent for families. Due to terrain and land ownership patters trails further south in the system will likely be more challenging and beginner trails would not be feasible.</p>
<p>The analysis did not address Wild Connections' Lands with Wilderness Characteristic inventory for the Grand Canyon Hills, which the project overlaps.</p>	<p>BLM originally conducted inventories for lands with wilderness characteristics in 2013 and found the Grand Canyon Hills unit to not possess wilderness characteristics. In 2015, Wild Connections submitted information countering the BLM's findings. In 2015 the BLM reviewed this information but still found that the area did not possess wilderness characteristics, largely due to the designated road network in the western portion of the unit. The document was updated to reflect this information and background.</p>
<p>It is reprehensible to infringe on someone else's property to accommodate public</p>	<p>The project does not cross any private land where an easement was not willfully granted by the private land</p>

<p>hiking. Concern about loss of privacy and peace and quiet from the proposed action.</p>	<p>owner. All attempts were made to have trails and other public use areas as far from private residences as possible while still meeting the purpose and need. With a trail not going through the dam/retention area public use will be even further away from private residences. Signing will also be installed to attempt to reduce trespass onto adjacent private land.</p>
<p>Concern about a trailhead or trail near private property as it would affect their way of life. Concern that a trail will attract more traffic and people into a neighborhood area and affect safety.</p>	<p>The project as proposed is not in close proximity to the property in question and would not impact this private property owner. However, future plans by other entities have identified a desire to connect the Dawson Ranch neighborhood to Ecology Park which would be near this residence. This is outside of the scope of this document and would address by other entities in the future in easements through private property are pursued.</p>
<p>Consider impacts to globally imperiled plant species that are known to occur in the area.</p>	<p><i>(Lesquerella calcicola and Pellaea wrightiana)</i> were not addressed in the EA as neither is considered a special status species, i.e. Federally listed or proposed, and/or Bureau sensitive, which include both Federal candidate species and delisted species with five (5) years of delisting (Manual 6840, the Special Status Species Management Manual for the Bureau of Land Management).</p>
<p>Identify management partners to ensure long term stewardship is viable.</p>	<p>The document was modified to better identify community partners and management agreements to ensure long term stewardship.</p>
<p>The document does not adequately analyze the impacts that the project will have on user conflicts including management strategies and monitoring to reduce these impacts.</p>	<p>The analysis in the document was revised to better reflect the anticipated conflicts between users as a result of the project. The proposed action was also modified to better clarify monitoring, signing, and other strategies that will assist in reducing and identifying conflicts between users in the area. The document was modified to clarify rules for pets in the area.</p>