

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Royal Gorge Field Office
3028 E. Main Street
Canon City, CO 81212**

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-F02-2014-032 CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT NAME: SRP- Mountain Bike Tours, Gold Belt

PLANNING UNIT: Gold Belt Sub-region #5, Arkansas River Sub-region #1

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Oil Well Flats: Fremont County, 6th P.M.

T. 17 S., R.70 W. Sections 26, 27, 34, and 35

T. 18 S., R. 70 W., Section 3

Section #13: Fremont County, 6th P.M.

T. 19 S., R. 71 W., Section 13

Booger Red: Fremont and Teller Counties, 6th P.M.

T. 15 S., R. 70 W., Section 31

T. 15 S., R. 71 W., Sections 25 and 36

T. 16 S., R. 70 W., Section 6

T. 16 S., R. 71 W., Section 1

Gold Belt By-Way: Fremont and Teller Counties, 6th P.M.

T. 15 S., R. 69 W., Sections 19, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33

T. 15 S., R. 70 W., Sections 13, 14, 24, 25, 35, and 36

T. 16 S., R. 69 W., Sections 4, 5, 9, 16, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 32, and 33

T. 16 S., R. 70 W., Sections 3, 9, 10, 15, 16, 22, 27, 28, 33, and 34

T. 17 S., R. 69 W., Sections 4, 9, 10, 14, 15, 22, 27, 28, 29, 32, and 33

T. 17 S., R. 70 W., Sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 28, 30, 31, 32, and 33

T. 18 S., R. 69 W., Sections 4, 5, 9, 10, 16, 21, 28, 30, 32, and 33

T. 18 S., R. 70 W., Sections 3, 10, 15, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 32, and 33

APPLICANT: James Wick, Royal Gorge Mountain Bike Tours

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

Royal Gorge Mountain Bike Tours has submitted an application for a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) for commercially guided mountain bicycling tours with overnight camping. The Proposed Action would issue a SRP for one year and upon a satisfactory annual compliance report, up to five years. The areas proposed for use are Oil Well Flats, Section 13, Booger Red, Shelf Road and Phantom Canyon Road (see attached maps 1, 2, 3 & 4).

The Proposed Action would authorize day use guided mountain bicycling tours on BLM designated routes only. The identified areas support trails designed and open to bicycle travel as defined by the Gold Belt Travel Management Plan (TMP) and Arkansas River TMP. Any routes approved through the NEPA process in the Oil Well Flats recreation area before the proposed action is approved will be allowed for guided tours.

The applicant proposes to operate day-use guided bicycling tours, year round weather permitting and trail conditions. The tours will vary in difficulty from beginner to expert, depending on the location of the ride. Bicycle helmets will be available for all participants.

The proposed tours on Shelf Road and Phantom Canyon Road would drop off clients and guides at the north end of the route and pick up on the south end. The tours will consist of a minimum of two guides, who will perform lead and “sweep” rolls. A safety vehicle will follow the riders. Guides will wear reflective clothing for visibility. In the occasional event of heavy traffic, guides will pull the riders off the road to allow vehicles to pass. Tours will stop at developed interpretive sites and restroom facilities.

Proposed areas; Oil Well Flats, Section 13 and Booger Red would provide a single track experience for clients. Oil Well Flats would be more heavily used. Booger Red offers a scenic short trip and would receive intermittent use of approximately 6 tours per year. A stipulation would limit use during hunting season to tours between noon and 4:00 pm.

Areas where the applicant proposes dispersed camping are Phantom Canyon Road and Oil Well Flats. The permittee will carry individual solid human waste disposal units on these trips since there are no facilities. The permittee is responsible for educating participants on the “Pack it in-Pack it out” philosophy for trash removal. The applicant would be responsible for camping fees at Shelf Road Recreation Area developed sites. A stipulation for NO camping on weekends in May, the first weekend in June, weekends in September, and the holiday weekend in October would be added for the developed sites.

Guides will carry basic first-aid kits as well as 2-way radios and cell phones for communication. Before all tours, guides will instruct clients on bicycling safety protocols. Guides will give technical guidance as well as providing interpretation of historic and culturally significant sites along the tour.

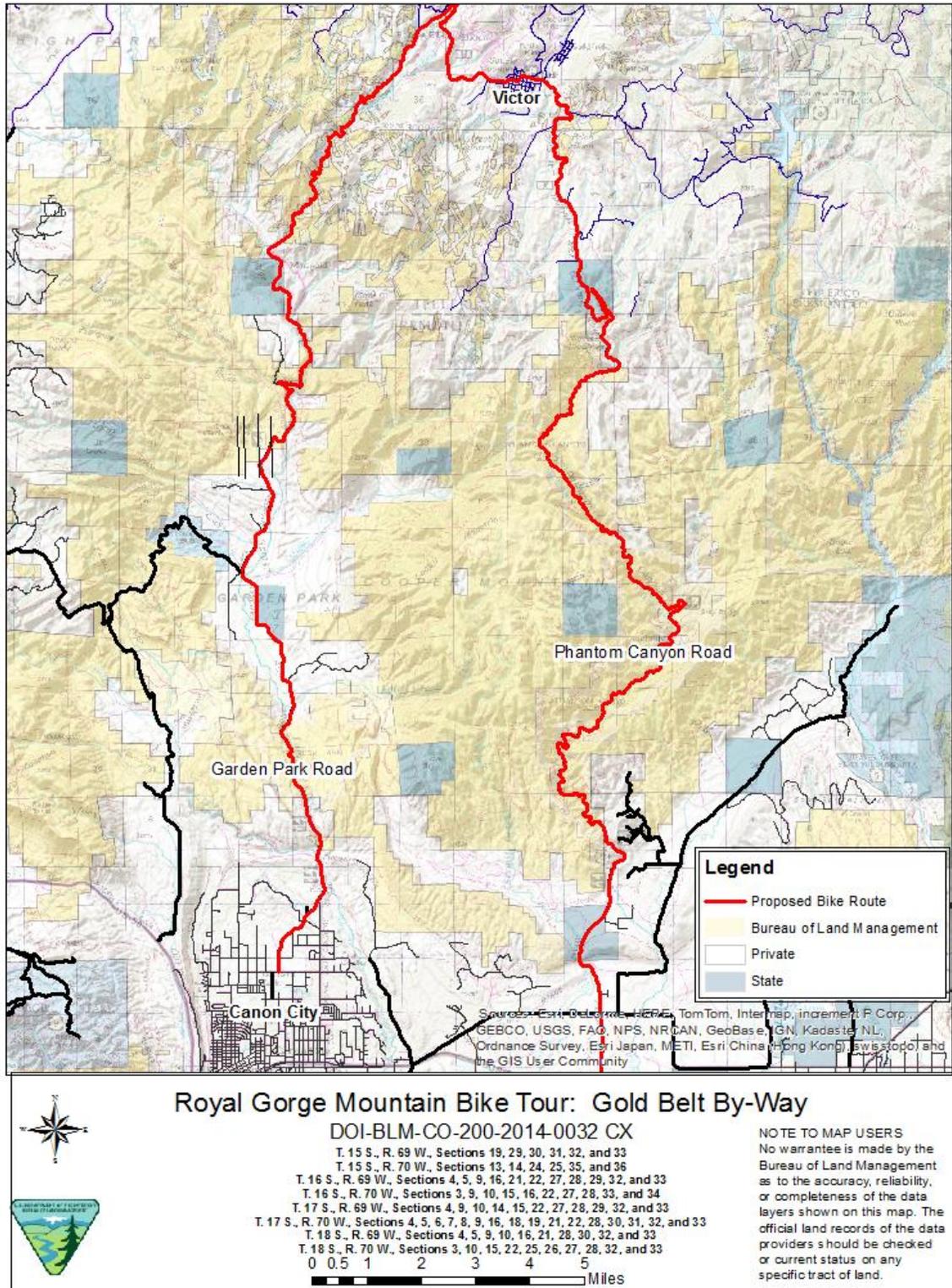
Compliance with the standard stipulations for all permits is required. The permitted activity will be monitored by the BLM for adherence to the stipulations. Use of BLM public land is non-exclusive; designated routes in the area will be open and available to the public unless a temporary closure is deemed necessary for public safety.

The Proposed Action would only authorize use on BLM public land only. The applicant is responsible for obtaining signed agreements or permits with United States Forest Service (USFS), Fremont and Teller Counties, State Highway Patrol, and/or private property owners.

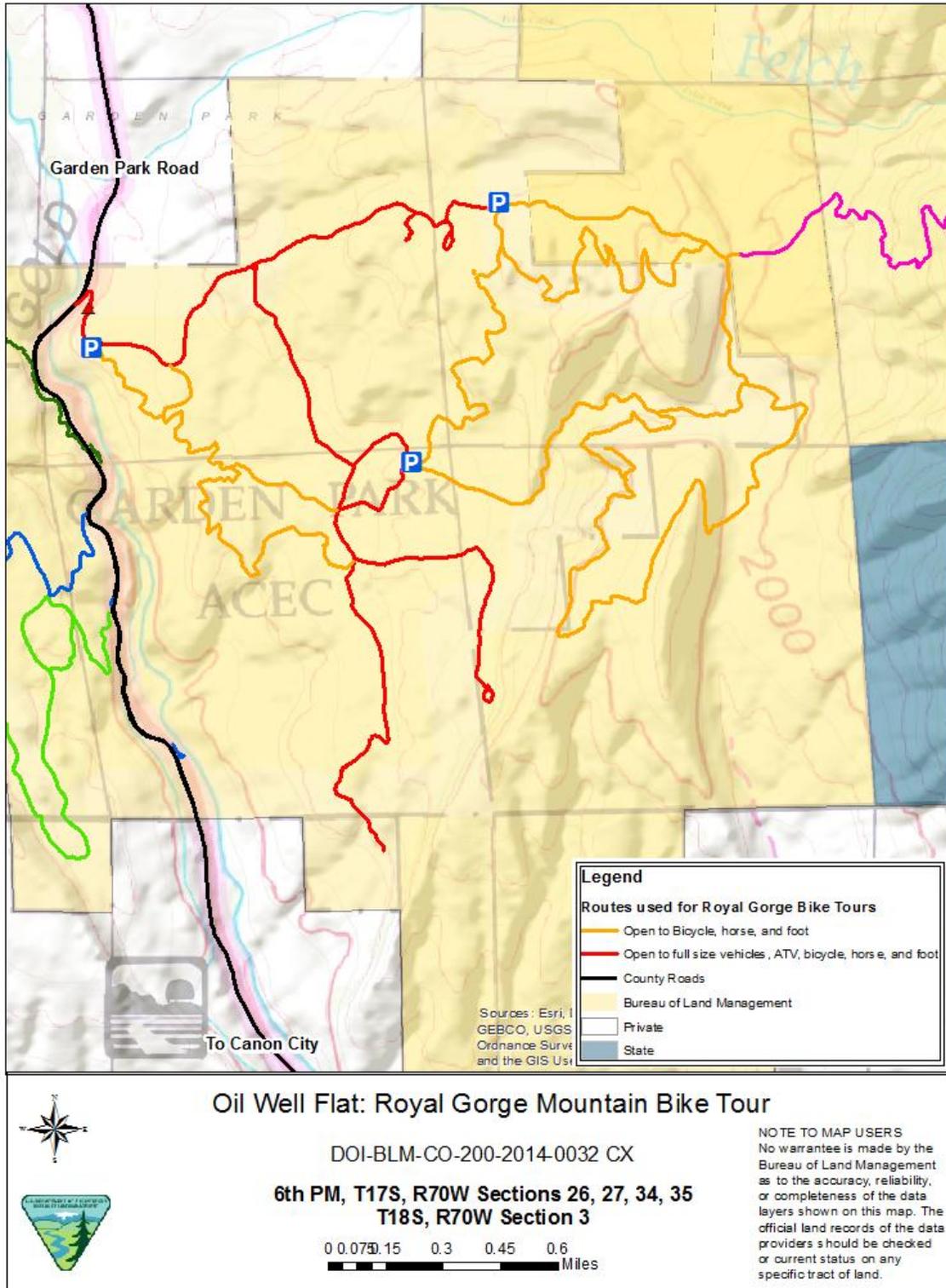
Authority to issue SRP's is found in BLM Handbook H-2930-1 and 43 CFR Part 2930. Issuing an SRP is a discretionary action with final approval by the authorized officer. Applications may

be denied based upon factors such as non-compliance with land use plans or designations; a moratorium on permits issued as part of a planning process; the results of an environmental analysis; other resource values; an allocation system; public health and safety concerns; applicant's past performance; or the inability of the managing office to issue, manage, and monitor the proposed use.

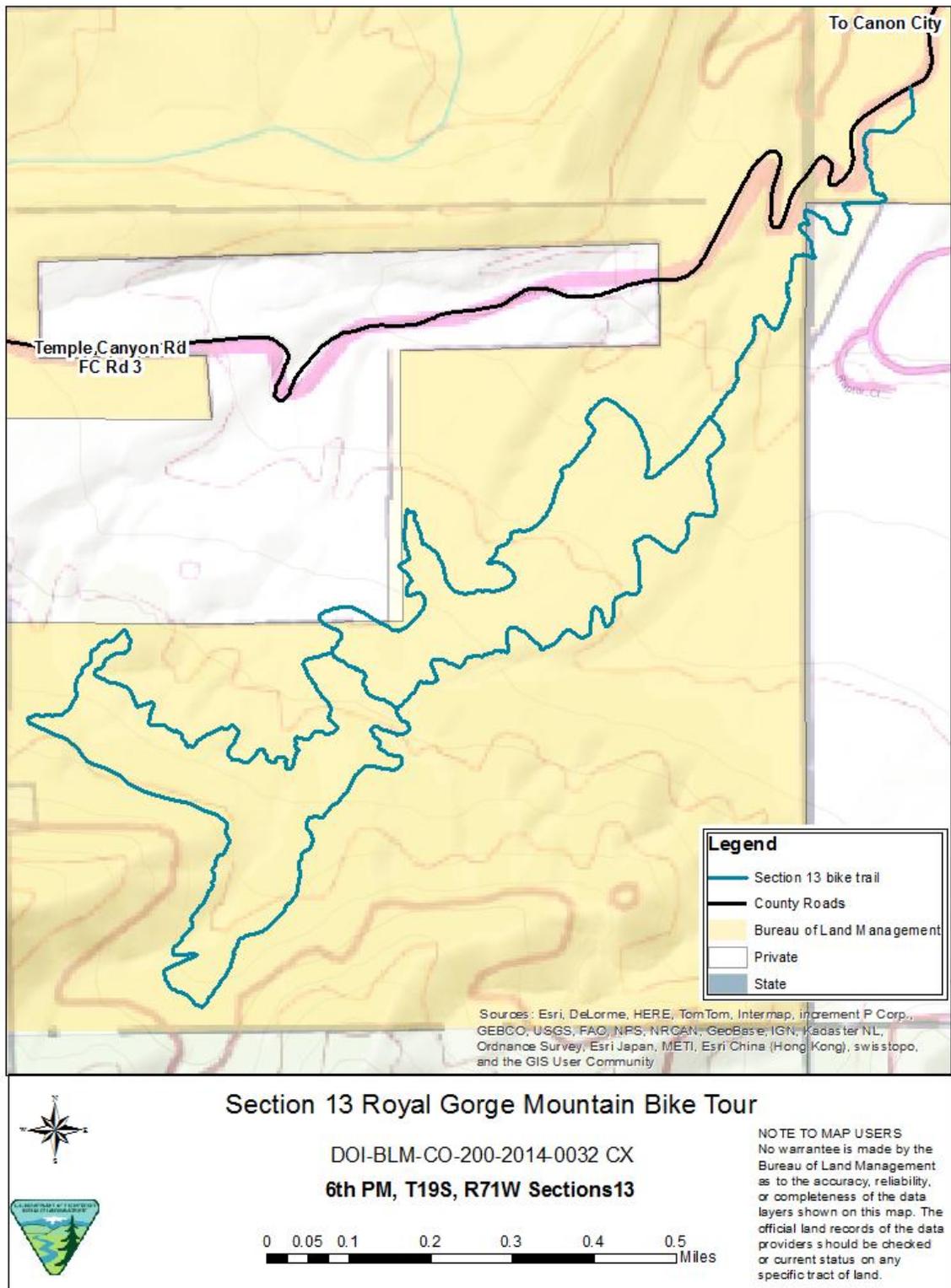
Map 1: Proposed bicycle route along Phantom Canyon and Shelf Road



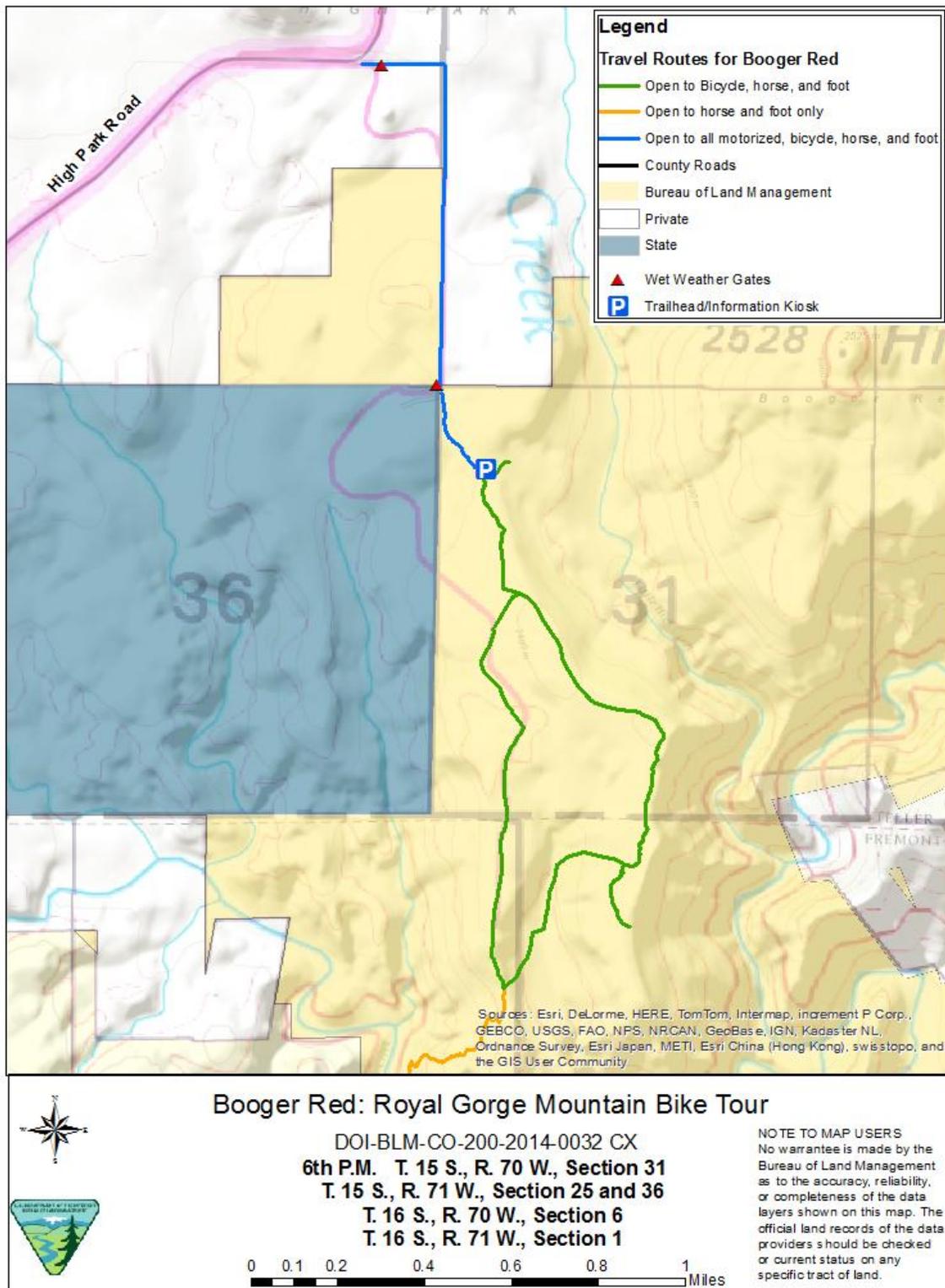
Map 2: Proposed bicycle routes in Oil Well Flats:



Map3: Proposed bicycle route in Section #13



Map 4: Proposed bicycle route in Booger Red



PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:

Name of Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 5/13/1996

Decision Number: 1-82, 5-86

Decision Language:

1-82, 5-86 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.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: This proposed action is listed as a Categorical Exclusion in DOI Departmental Manual Part 516 Chapter 11.9H (1). None of the following exceptions in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Exclusion Criteria	YES	NO
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; lands with wilderness characteristics; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.		X
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		X
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		X
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.		X
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal		X

lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.		
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.		X

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM REVIEW			
NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	Initials/date
Matt Rustand	Wildlife Biologist	Terrestrial Wildlife, T&E, Migratory Birds	MR, 3/11/2014
Jeff Williams	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	-----
Chris Cloninger	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	CC, 3/11/2014
John Lamman	Range Management Spec.	Weeds	JL, 03/21/2014
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife, Riparian/Wetlands	DG, 3/11/14
Stephanie Carter	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology, Waste Hazardous or Solid	SSC, 3/24/14
Melissa Smeins	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology	MJS, 4/11/2014
John Smeins	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights, Soils	JS, 03/11/2014
Ty Webb	Prescribed Fire Specialist	Air Quality	TW, 3/13/2013
Jeff Covington	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey	JC, 3/13/14
Kalem Lenard	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers,	KL, 3/11/2014
John Nahomenuk	River Manager	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers	-----
Ken Reed	Forester	Forestry	KR, 3/10/14
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	-----
Michael Troyer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	MDT 3/10/14
Greg Valladares	Realty Specialist	Realty	GDV, 05/06/2014
Steve Cunningham	Law Enforcement Ranger	Law Enforcement	-----
Dennis Page	Acting Fire Management Officer	Fire	DP, 3/20/14

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: The APE has been previously inventoried (see report CR-RG-14-103 L). More to the point, the proponent proposes to utilize two historic thoroughfares (currently county roads) for bike travel (The Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad Grade - 5FN.485/5TL.56 and the Shelf Road Toll Road 5FN.486). Both roads are presently maintained for vehicle travel, and bike use represents a very minimal impact by comparison. Because of the highly limited nature

of the undertaking and the fact that the undertaking will occur only on existing roads, or previously inventoried trails, there is no risk of adverse impacts to historic properties.

Native American Religious Concerns: No possible traditional cultural properties were located during any of the cultural resources inventories (see CR-RG-14-103 L). There is no other known evidence that suggests the project area holds special significance for Native Americans.

Threatened and Endangered Species: The SRP is authorizing use along existing routes approved for bicycles. Impacts to TES species were analyzed when the routes were authorized. No additional impacts to TES species are expected.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics: The areas identified within the proposed action have been inventoried for wilderness characteristics. They were found to not possess these characteristics therefore there is no impact to this resource.

Minerals: The federal minerals in the proposed project area are open to mineral location, therefore requiring coordination between surface uses as applicable. If there are unpatented mining claims that are active in the proposed project location, any associated claim markers encountered during project implementation cannot be disturbed (reference CO-2012-013). As of March 2014, there are active claims in the Section 13, Fremont County and Booger Red project areas.

Paleontological Resources: There are paleontological resources present within the proposed project area at Oil Well Flats; however, the proposed action will not have an adverse impact on these resources because it is proposed for existing trails only. Dispersed camping at Oil Well Flats may have potential impacts to fossil localities, 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 the public due to increased access to fossil localities in the proposed project area. If a vertebrate fossil is found the proponent must contact the BLM immediately.

COMPLIANCE PLAN (optional):

NAME OF PREPARER: Janine Prout

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: Melissa K.S. Garcia

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: /s/ Martin Weimer

DATE: 5/12/14

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed this Categorical Exclusion and have decided to implement the Proposed Action.

This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 10 criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an exception and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

/s/ Keith E. Berger
Keith E. Berger, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 5/13/14