

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)

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: