

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 81401**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2012-19 EA

Location: This project is located within T.45N, R14W, Sec. 8, 9, 13-16, 22-27, 33-35; T44N, R14W, Sec. 1-4; T45N, R13W, Sec. 18-20, 29-32; T44N, R13W, Sec. 5-6.

Project Name: Norwood-Burn Canyon Comprehensive Travel Management Plan

Planning Unit: San Miguel and Montrose Counties, West of Norwood, CO

Applicant: BLM and Norwood Park and Recreation District

Background

In 2010, Norwood Park and Recreation District proposed a single track route system for trail users. They felt the development of a single track route system would enhance the lives of the residents of Colorado's Western Slope and numerous visitors from outside the region. It could also contribute to the local economy as a stopping point for tourists between Telluride and Moab. At that time, BLM was already working on a priority travel management plan (Dry Creek Travel Management Plan and Ridgway Travel Management Plan) and Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendments for field office-wide travel management area designations which needed to be completed before any additional comprehensive travel management plans could be undertaken.

The BLM initially held public scoping for the proposed single track system in April 2012. As a result of receiving numerous comments from the public requesting BLM to complete a more comprehensive analysis of the area, BLM made the decision to complete a comprehensive travel management plan to look at all routes (existing and proposed) in the area. A second public scoping period for the Norwood plan began in August 2012. Comments from both periods of public scoping were considered during alternative development and the route by route analysis.



Finding of No Significant Impact

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2012-0019. Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA, I have determined that the Proposed Action, Alternative 1, Alternative 2, and the No Action, with the design specifications, will not have a significant effect on the human environment.

Rationale

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context:

The Norwood-Burn Canyon travel management plan (TMP) includes an area of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands that total approximately 9,852 acres. The Norwood-Burn Canyon Area is located approximately 2-3 miles west of the Town of Norwood and is bounded on the south by U.S. Forest Service lands, and the north, east and west by private lands. There is one private land in-holding (160 acres), and one parcel (640 acres) managed by the Colorado State Land Board within the Norwood-Burn Canyon area. There are 12.6 miles of County Roads (W35, Z39, and 38Q) located within the planning area.

The Norwood-Burn Canyon area is currently seeing increased use by mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, and hunting due to the increasing popularity of these recreational activities for the local communities and tourism industry. The current level of use is especially high during hunting season. Norwood Park and Recreation District and the citizens from the Town of Norwood have expressed an interest in an inter-connecting route system and increased recreational opportunities, especially single track routes.

The TMP would identify and designate a system or network of routes. This action designates the specific routes for motorized and non-motorized vehicles and devices, establishes conditions of use for designated routes, such as seasons of use, provides for rehabilitation of routes, and recommends the design and construction of facilities and improvements to support the Transportation Plan.

Under the Proposed Action, Alternative 1, and Alternative 2, the OHV designation would be changed to Limited to Designated Routes Yearlong or with Seasonal Restrictions.

Intensity:

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The beneficial effects of the Norwood-Burn Canyon Comprehensive Travel Management Plan include the designation of routes, which should dramatically slow the proliferation of user-created routes. This would slow the increase in resource impacts and habitat fragmentation

occurring in this area. It will also provide support facilities for motorized and non-motorized users, which will help to distribute use and potential impacts.

Adverse effects include impacts to wildlife habitat and increased motorized and non-motorized use of designated routes that may result in soil compaction as well as the potential crowding of routes that would have vehicle use limitations and other conditions of use.

2) Degree of effect on public health and safety.

The designation of routes separates some of the conflicting recreational uses. Signing and maps will clearly define which uses will be allowed on each route, so that users can be informed of the potential safety hazards of using a particular route. Closing and rehabilitating certain routes will remove potentially hazardous routes from the route network. Designing and constructing support facilities will help distribute use, which will potentially create a safer and more enjoyable experience for all users.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There are no prime or unique farmlands or Wilderness/WSAs in or near the planning area. Naturita Creek is within the planning area and has been determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. The Proposed action and alternatives would not affect the ORV's or change the preliminary classification.

4) Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The BLM attended several public meetings, distributed maps for public consideration, solicited and received public comments, conducted some on-the-ground meetings, and held individual meetings and interviews to discuss and address the effects of the action on the human and natural environment.

While opinion differs on which alternative to select, effects on the quality of the human environment are not controversial. The Proposed Action, Alternative 1, and Alternative 2 fulfill the legal and regulatory mandates required of BLM to protect the public lands from significant resource impacts and provide a safer environment for the public. The Proposed Action and alternatives also provides travel opportunities that satisfy the goals and objectives established while reducing environmental effects in the long run, and resolve transportation issues identified by the public.

The Proposed Action will restrict mechanized and motorized entry onto BLM lands from private lands (limited to designated routes) into the area during seasonal closures (December 1 to April 30), which could be controversial to some of the public, but receive support from many others.

The EA follows established mandates outlined in the BLM national policy on Comprehensive Travel Management Planning, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and BLM Colorado standards for public land health.

5) *Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.*

The effects described in the EA are not highly uncertain. Limiting travel to designated routes is anticipated to improve the overall quality of the human environment.

6) *Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The Travel management Plan will not establish a precedent for future actions. By policy, all of the Uncompahgre Field Office will have travel management planning completed. The Burn Canyon Travel Management Plan is only one of several areas that will receive travel management planning.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

Analysis in the EA does not identify any individual or cumulatively significant environmental impacts. Adverse impacts occurring from current management (the no-action alternative) are expected to be reduced.

8) *The degree to which any of the alternatives may adversely affect district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

Adverse effects to any National Register or otherwise eligible historic property were not identified during research or analysis for the EA.

9) *Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.*

Adverse effects to any endangered, threatened or federally protected species or habitats were not identified during research or analysis for the EA.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The Travel Management Plan will not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Determination

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the alternatives, individually or in combination, will not have significant environmental impacts; and 2) the Proposed Action, alternative 1 and 2 are in conformance with the Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan, as amended; and 3) the alternatives do not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Approved:


Barbara Sharrow
Field Manager
BLM, Uncompahgre Field Office

11-14-14
Date

