

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

**Decision Record**

**(DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2011-0011 EA)**

**DECISION:** It is my decision to implement the proposed action, modified by including 1.7 miles of non-motorized route analyzed in Alternative 1, and decreasing Administrative Use route by 0.1 mile.

- 1) Change the Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) area designation on public lands within the Ridgway Travel Management Planning Area from Limited to Existing Routes to Limited to Designated Routes Yearlong or with Seasonal Restrictions. Routes with seasonal restrictions are located within the Ridgway Area.
- 2) Close all routes in the Ridgway Area to all modes of travel (including equestrian and foot) from December 1 to April 30 to prevent disturbance to wintering big game. Any variances to the listed dates will be made by the authorized officer in conjunction with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and will be implemented according to appropriate notification and posting, and or according to other appropriate regulations.
- 3) Designate:
  - 2.4 miles of routes in the Open to Full Sized 4WD/2WD Vehicles Only category.
  - 18.3 miles of non-motorized routes consisting of
    - 0.4 miles in the Hiking Single Track travel use category for hiking only;
    - 16.8 miles in the Non-Motorized Single-Track travel use category for hiking, horseback riding, and mechanized use;
    - 0.9 miles of Mechanized Single Track for mechanized and hiking only; and
    - 0.2 miles in Non-Motorized Single Track and Administrative Use travel use category for hiking, horseback riding, mechanized use, and full size motorized administrative use.
  - 0.9 miles of route in the Administrative Uses Only category; motorized or mechanized uses by the public will not be allowed.
  - 6.1 miles of existing routes closed to all motorized and mechanized travel and 1.5 miles closed to all modes of travel except for authorized users.
  - Approximately 14.5 miles of proposed non-motorized route construction.

4) Construct two Travel Management Support Facilities. Each area will include a hardened graveled parking area/staging area, trailhead, gates, and kiosk. These facilities will be a maximum of one acre each of disturbed surface. Facilities could also include restrooms, fencing, hitching rails, vehicular control devices, native landscape islands, erosion and drainage control devices, and hardened access trails. See the "Decision" map for locations of the facilities.

5) Apply the following management to this decision:

- No new routes, except for the proposed ones authorized by this Travel Management Plan (TMP), will be permitted to be constructed or established unless reviewed, analyzed and authorized by the BLM. See the final decision map identifying routes and restrictions. User created routes not identified in the Ridgway TMP will be closed upon discovery.
- Construction of new routes identified in this travel management plan will be coordinated and administered by BLM.
- Access onto Public Lands from Private Lands Motorized and mechanized travel onto public lands from adjacent private lands will be limited to the public access points and designated routes provided. User created or constructed hiking or horseback riding trails will not be allowed off private lands onto public lands.
- Any administrative motorized vehicle or equipment use off authorized routes on BLM Public Lands will require prior notification and approval by the authorized BLM official. In the case of an emergency, contact will be made with the authorized BLM official within 72 hours following emergency entry.
- The use of wheeled, muscle-powered game carts or wagons will be permitted off designated routes to retrieve big game only during Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) authorized big game and mountain lion hunting seasons. Motorized vehicles will not be permitted off designated routes to retrieve big game.
- All public lands (except within the Ouray County Ridgway Gravel Pit boundary) will be available for horseback riding and hiking on routes or cross-country.
- Snowmobile use will be prohibited throughout the planning area.
- Advanced Technology - Any advanced technology in regards to motorized or mechanized vehicles will adhere to the specified route width restrictions mentioned within the Definitions of Travel Use Categories found in Appendix 1 of DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2011-0011 EA.
- Parking - In order to limit resource impacts and help prevent new user-created routes, users will be allowed to park motorized or mechanized vehicles, appropriate to mode of

travel immediately adjacent and parallel to available BLM designated routes. Parking will be limited to one vehicle-width from the edge of the route. Users will be encouraged to park motorized or mechanized modes of travel in already disturbed areas where possible, consider safety and keep routes passable for other users.

- Gates - Locked gates will be maintained at all trail heads in the Ridgway Area from December 1 to April 30 to protect wildlife with appropriate signing to inform the public of the area closures and the rationale for the closures. Locked gates will be maintained at the Ouray County Ridgway Gravel Pit Area to restrict public access throughout the year. BLM will also work cooperatively with Colorado Parks and Wildlife including Ridgway State Park for assistance with monitoring and implementation decisions.
- Maintenance - Any existing or future road use or maintenance agreements with Ouray County will continue according to the terms and conditions of those agreements. Designated routes will be incorporated into BLM scheduled maintenance plan.
- Animals must remain on a leash at all trailheads and under audible or physical control in all other areas with the exception of the Uncompahgre Riverway Area. Within the Uncompahgre Riverway Area, animals must remain on a leash at all times.
- Maps, brochures, and educational material would be developed and made available for the public in print and on the internet.
- The use of motorized or mechanized modes of travel, including snow machines during the execution of a land use authorization or permit, such as rights-of-way maintenance or construction, would be subject to the terms and conditions of each individual authorization. Additional environmental documentation and analysis will be required in some cases for these authorizations.
- Any existing or future road use or maintenance agreements with the county will continue according to the terms and conditions of those agreements.

5) Apply the following design features to reduce or eliminate impacts to resources.

- Surveys for nesting raptors will be conducted annually early (April 1- May 15) in the nesting season for five years following this decision. The purpose is to document new nest attempts or if nesting occurs in the known nest site. If nesting attempts are detected those routes that occur within 100 meters of the nest site will be closed until fledging occurs - typically July 15th.
- Impacts to currently known eligible cultural properties will be avoided, minimized or mitigated in consultation with State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO), and stipulations contained in applicable existing laws and protocols will be applied to known Sacred Sites and Traditional Cultural Properties. Where National Register eligible sites, or where Sacred Sites and Traditional Cultural Properties are known to be

in danger or are currently being impacted by travel activities, routes will be closed to travel if necessary until the appropriate mitigation has been implemented.

- Routes, parking areas and other facilities to be constructed will be intensively inventoried for cultural resources and surveyed for special status plant/animal species and habitat prior to construction or use. Where existing cultural inventories are sufficient, standard discovery stipulations will apply.
- Re-routes or re-locations needed for erosion or other mitigation will be limited to a corridor 125 feet wide on either side of the centerline of all designated routes.
- New routes and relocation of routes will be constructed using sustainable trail building practices.
- Design, construction and maintenance work for routes will be subject to the conditions and guidelines that create sustainable, low maintenance routes and maintain quality recreation.
- Construction and maintenance of routes will be performed according to the Implementation and Monitoring Plan to be prepared, BLM annual work plans, and as funding permits
- Proposed routes will be designed and located such that Visual Resource Management Class Objectives will be met in order to reduce visual contrast and impacts. Surface disturbance will be kept to a minimum in order to maintain sufficient vegetation to protect soils, and the number of stream crossings will be kept to a minimum, in order to reduce impacts to wetlands and riparian areas.
- Route improvements will be implemented at drainage crossings to reduce channel and riparian impacts.
- Closures, rehabilitation and/or re-vegetation of routes will be performed according to the Implementation and Monitoring Plan to be prepared, BLM annual work plans, and as funding permits. This could include reseeding, planting vegetation, and/or constructing barriers. If any ground disturbance is required, such as ripping existing routes, digging post holes for fences, or using rangeland drills, the appropriate clearances will be completed prior to implementation.
- Restoring natural drainage patterns, surface topography, and vegetation will be implemented as needed during rehabilitation of routes that are relocated or closed to travel.
- During rehabilitation, seeding with a BLM-approved seed mix will occur where areas of compaction exceed 3 feet in width, and natural re-vegetation is unlikely to occur over the next 3 years. Seed will be scattered on the surface and raked in.

- Prepare and implement a weed management plan that identifies all weed infestations and concerns on all routes and an action plan to eliminate or reduce noxious weeds. Noxious weed surveys will be completed on trails at a minimum every three years to determine if noxious weeds are establishing away from staging areas or Ridgway State Park. Noxious weed educational materials will be placed at all staging areas. Staging areas will be kept free of noxious weeds.
  - Complete a noxious weed strategic plan with the Ridgway State Park prior to construction of new trails that connect the two areas. Noxious weed survey, monitoring and treatment will occur in coordination with the Ridgway State Park when trails connect the two areas.
  - If necessary, as use increases, dust generated in localized areas and from specific uses, seasons, or events will be reduced by watering or treating routes during certain times with approved dust abatement chemicals, or installing obstacles or rerouting trails in certain locations in a safe manner to reduce speeds and resultant dust.
  - Informational/Directional signs will be installed where needed throughout the planning area. This includes kiosks on entry routes as appropriate. Signing for designated routes will be implemented by BLM over time and as funding allows.
  - All trailheads and routes will be appropriately signed with allowed uses and seasons of use. Because signs are at times vandalized or removed, the user is responsible for determining the correct mode of travel based on official maps. Official maps will be made available to the public.
- 6) Apply adaptive management - BLM can further restrict travel and use, by mode of transportation or season, on any route to protect resources (natural or other) or infrastructure from being impacted from vehicular use in the event of extreme winters, wet conditions, to reduce safety hazards, or in other unforeseeable situations, or to better manage and protect sensitive resources or other values, such as big game or nesting raptors. These actions can include emergency closures of routes, permanent or additional seasonal closures of routes, or relocation of routes. These actions would be taken following appropriate emergency closure or after appropriate site-specific NEPA analysis.

Over time, changes may need to be made to the approved and adopted Travel Management Plan in terms of adding, re-designating, relocating, or closing certain routes, maintenance needs, and seasonal or other use restrictions on routes. These changes would be documented using appropriate BLM Land Use Planning regulations and NEPA procedures.

Additional actions will occur in the future:

Public access will be pursued in the Ridgway Travel Management Planning area as opportunities arise.

BLM administrative functions related to a variety of natural resource management objectives (e.g., wildlife habitat and species monitoring and management, noxious weed eradication, resource enhancement and restoration, and fence repair) that could potentially require cross-country travel using motorized vehicles or equipment off designated routes will be addressed at the project level with appropriate project specific and site specific environmental documentation and assessment.

Applications for Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) will be considered, subject to the approved Travel Management Plan designated route system, the existing approved Resource Management Plan and Amendments, and appropriate environmental documentation and stipulations that will be developed during the processing of these applications.

BLM will develop and maintain partnerships with key stakeholders to assist with managing and implementing travel decisions.

The BLM, in cooperation with other agencies and organizations, will prepare and implement a public education program in a variety of formats to promote wise use on public land, and will include information regarding controlling noise levels while recreating on public lands. Colorado noise level standards pertaining to the operation of motor vehicles, including provisions in Colorado Senate Bill 08-063, and any pertinent regulations that would be promulgated will be incorporated. Accurate maps and other information relevant to travel management for public land visitors as well as contacting visitors on-site by BLM staff, volunteers, and partners will be a part of this program.

#### MONITORING:

An Implementation and Monitoring Plan and schedule will be prepared; it will include timeframes for completion (completed in phases (see Appendix 7)). Route signing, route construction and maintenance, trailhead construction, and facility construction will be covered in implementation.

The plan will also include a schedule for monitoring. Levels of use, type of use, and natural resource conditions such as soil erosion, spread of noxious weeds, and impacts to vegetation will be monitored. Monitoring baseline conditions will determine if quality of recreation, protection of sensitive resources, and land health are being achieved in order to meet management goals and objectives. Monitoring tools could include traffic counter data, motion activated cameras, on-site patrols, surveys, and analysis of use.

Implementation and monitoring are dependent on funding (internal or external) and specialists' capability to work with contractors and volunteers. All implementation and monitoring projects will require BLM oversight and administration.

### RATIONALE:

The management actions are intended to balance recreational demands with resource needs, planning goals, and compliance with Public Land Health Standards. It addresses the key issues identified from scoping and provides a route system which will meet the project area's management goals and objectives. The plan was developed with careful consideration of BLM travel management strategies and policies and subjected to a thorough analysis of potential impacts to the area's resources and the route system's effect on public land health standards. The plan also remains consistent with adjacent public land agencies (Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Bureau of Reclamation, and Town of Ridgway) regulations, policies, and management.

### COMPLIANCE WITH MAJOR LAWS:

This decision is in compliance with the Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan (1989), as amended in 2009, and applicable laws, regulations and policy, including the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (P.L. 94-325); Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended (16 U.S.C. 703-712); Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948 (Clean Water Act), as amended (33 U.S.C. Chap. 26); Clean Air Act of 1963, as amended (P.L. 88-206); Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, as amended (P.L. 93-629, 7 U.S.C. 2801 *et seq*); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (P.L. 89-665); Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 (P.L. 86-253); Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended (P.L. 96-95); and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-601).

This decision is in conformance with BLM policy and guidance, under which designation of roads and trails are considered implementation decisions.

1. BLM policy on Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV) use of public land as covered under Executive Order 11644 and Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 8340 0-5), and
2. BLM Colorado guidance on *Comprehensive Travel Management Planning and OHV Designations* as defined under BLM Instruction Memoranda No. CO-2007-020 (2/12/2007) and No. WO-2008-014.

### FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICAN IMPACT:

A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was prepared, 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 decision (Proposed Action modified with parts of Alternative 1) will not have significant environmental impacts; 2) the decision is in conformance with the Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan, as amended; and 3) the Decision does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

### PUBLIC COMMENT:

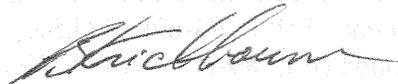
BLM provided a public scoping and comment period from March 30 through May 18, 2012. BLM received 47 comments, which were addressed in the EA. BLM also provided an additional

comment period from December 11, 2012 to February 1, 2013 for the public to review and comment on the preliminary environmental assessment. BLM received 140 comments from a motorized group, a non-motorized group, interested individuals including adjacent landowners, and local, state, and federal governments. Some changes were made to the proposed action and route designations based on the comments received. This decision is based largely on the proposed action, but after considering public comment, also includes some routes analyzed in alternative 1.

**APPEALS:**

Within 30 days of this decision, you have the right of appeal to the Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR 4.400, and specifically, 43 CFR 4.410. Appeal and stay procedures are outlined in Form CO-1840-191. Appeals must be made in reference to specific route designations and other decisions made in this Decision Record.

NAME OF PREPARER: Julie Jackson

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:  Bruce Krickbaum

DATE 5-10-13

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL



Barbara Sharrow  
Field Manager  
Uncompahgre Field Office

DATE SIGNED 5-10-13

ATTACHMENT: Final Decision Map for Route by Route Designations and locations of Travel Management Support Facilities.