

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

**Decision Record
(CO-150-2008-33 EA)**

PROJECT NAME: Dry Creek Travel Management Plan

INTRODUCTION: BLM has completed an environmental assessment (EA) for the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan. The EA analyzes two decisions: 1) an RMP amendment change to OHV designations; and, 2) implementation of route designations and other associated travel management regulations.

BLM issued a proposed decision in May 2009 to amend the 1989 Uncompahgre Basin RMP, which changed OHV Area Designations for the Dry Creek area from open and limited to limited. One valid public protest was received; this protest was denied and documented within the Director's Protest Resolution Report which can be found online at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/protest_resolution/protestreports.html. The RMP amendment was made final with the signing of the Decision Record by the BLM Colorado Acting State Director on December 1, 2009.

This document describes my decision to implement a designated network of roads and trails analyzed in the environmental assessment for the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan.

BACKGROUND: The Dry Creek Travel Management Planning Area (planning area) is located on the lower east flank of the Uncompahgre Plateau and extends south from 25-Mesa Road/Delta-Nucla Rd to Dave Wood Road. The planning area is near Montrose, Olathe, and Delta, Colorado and contains approximately 110,500 acres of public land and approximately 4,500 acres of private land. The decision is for public lands only and does not apply to private lands without easements.

The Dry Creek Travel Management Plan/Environmental Assessment is available for review on the Uncompahgre Field Office web page at: <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/ufo.html>.

DECISION: It is my decision to implement travel management actions and route designations described in the Proposed Action (Alternative 2) of EA # CO-150-2008-33 EA, which are briefly outlined below:

Travel Designations: Implement the Dry Creek comprehensive travel management network as depicted on the attached Proposed Action (Alternative 2) map – Entire travel management planning area.

The BLM transportation system in the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan will consist of:

- 317 miles of routes in the Motorized Single-Track, ATV-2-Track, and 4WD-2WD travel use categories for motorized and non-motorized travel.
- 9 miles of routes in the Specialized Trails travel use category for Technical 4WD and Motorized and Mechanized Trials bike uses.
- 67 miles of non-motorized routes consisting of 44 miles in the Non-Motorized & Non-Mechanized, Single Track travel use category for hiking and horseback riding, and 23 miles in the Non-Motorized Single-Track travel use category for hiking, horseback riding, and mechanized uses.
- 42 miles of routes in the Administrative Uses Only category available for hiking and horseback riding, but not for public motorized or mechanized uses.
- 8 miles of designated routes to allow users to travel off-route a distance no greater than 300 feet to camp or park. The centerline of these routes will be the point from which the 300 feet will be measured.
- 258 miles of routes to be closed to all motorized and mechanized travel.
- Approximately 16 miles of proposed route construction.
- 62.8 miles seasonally closed to motorized and mechanized travel from December 1 to April 15 or December 1 to March 31 to prevent disturbance to wintering big game. Any exceptions to the listed dates will be made by the authorizing officer and will be implemented according to appropriate notification and posting, and or according to other appropriate regulations.

Design Features: The following design features will be applied in the implementation of this decision.

- BLM re-routes or re-locations needed for erosion or other mitigation will be limited to a corridor 25 feet wide on either side of the centerline of all designated routes.
- 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. They will also be located away from riparian and wetland areas. 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.
- Ingress and egress locations for specialized routes will be kept to the minimum and constructed to reduce sediment to the greatest extent possible.
- Restoring natural drainage patterns, surface topography, and vegetation will be

considered and implemented as needed during rehabilitation of routes to be relocated or closed to travel.

- Improvements will be implemented at stream crossings to reduce channel and riparian impacts.
- If necessary, as use increases, dust generated in localized areas and from specific uses, seasons, or events will be reduced by either hardening surfaces on certain high use routes, watering or treating routes during certain times with approved dust abatement chemicals, or installing speed bumps or obstacles in certain locations in a safe manner to reduce speeds and resultant dust.
- Impacts to currently known eligible cultural properties will be avoided, minimized or mitigated in consultation with State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO). Where National Register eligible sites 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. Proposed routes, parking areas and other facilities to be constructed under these alternatives will be intensively inventoried prior to construction or use. Where existing inventories are sufficient, standard discovery stipulations will apply.
- Stipulations contained in applicable existing laws and protocols will be applied to known Sacred Sites and Traditional Cultural Properties. Where such properties are known to be in danger or are currently being impacted by travel activities, routes will be closed to travel until the appropriate mitigation has been implemented. Proposed routes, parking areas and other facilities to be constructed under these alternatives will be intensively inventoried prior to construction or use. Where existing inventories are sufficient, standard discovery stipulations will apply.
- Informational/Directional signs will be installed where needed throughout the planning area, which will include kiosks on entry routes into sub-regions as appropriate. Signing for designated routes will be implemented by BLM over time and as funding allows.
- All 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.
- 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. Maintenance of routes will be performed according to the implementation and monitoring plan to be prepared, BLM annual work plans, and as funding permits.
- 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, such as willows,

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 conducted prior to implementation.

Monitoring & Implementation: An implementation and monitoring plan will be completed. The implementation and monitoring plan will contain schedules and frequencies necessary to monitor and implement all decisions in the travel management plan.

Monitoring data will be used to assess resource conditions, identify resource conflicts, determine if resource objectives including land health standards are being met, and to periodically refine and update desired future conditions and specific management actions in a process known as adaptive management. Monitoring tools will include, but will not be limited to, traffic counter data, on-site contacts and patrols, surveys, and analysis of use occurring.

Enforcement: The official agency map made available to the public showing designated routes will be used to determine if travel is permitted and authorized on a particular route during any part of the year. Signs may be posted on routes that provide information as to whether travel on a particular route is permitted. However, users will be responsible for understanding and following the restrictions on the map(s). Implementation of the approved travel management plan will include a strategy of educating users, utilizing law enforcement efficiently, developing maps for the public, and other tools to communicate that driving off of designated routes for motorized or mechanized uses is not permitted.

Follow-on Actions: The following actions will be implemented:

- Provide seven new staging areas, eight new trailheads, three new hardened camping areas, upgrade one existing staging area, and portal signs where needed.
- Maps, brochures, and educational material will be developed and made available for the public, in print and on the internet.
- Public access will be pursued in the Dry Creek 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 on a case-by-case basis and 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.

- All proposed routes in the approved Travel Management Plan will have the appropriate level of environmental analysis and documentation prepared, required clearances, and any necessary mitigation completed for cultural resources and special status plant/animal species and habitat before construction starts. Construction and maintenance work will be subject to the conditions and guidelines that create sustainable, low maintenance routes. These conditions will apply to any proposed route, regardless of the purpose of the route, and will help:
 - Ensure that the designated routes in the approved Travel Management Plan will be considered in planning for new additional routes,
 - Prevent impacts to public lands and resources, and
 - Ensure that routes will be located properly and constructed with good design and planning.
- A weed management plan will be prepared and implemented that will identify all weed infestations and concerns on all routes and an action plan to eliminate or reduce noxious weeds.
- 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 will 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.

RATIONALE: The travel management plan will provide for a manageable mix of motorized and non-motorized uses. 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 Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment; this has been documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact dated April 9, 2009, and thus, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Best available data was used in the preparation of this EA, including the findings and analysis completed by the interdisciplinary team, supporting documentation and reports, and extensive public participation and open houses held throughout the process. BLM held an initial 30-day

public scoping period followed by two additional public comment periods within a 22-month period. An EIS for this project would not, in all likelihood, provide any significant new information.

COMPLIANCE: This decision is in compliance with the Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan (1989), as amended in 2009, and major laws to minimize environmental impacts to public lands, including: 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.

APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES: 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 ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Bruce Krickbaum

Review Date 12/9/2009

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL

Barbara Sharrow
Barbara Sharrow
Field Manager
Uncompahgre Field Office

12-10-09
Date