

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

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

**DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2008-0064  
Environmental Assessment**

**Background**

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office has completed an Environment Assessment (EA) which analyses the environmental effects of changing current off highway vehicle (OHV) area designations on all public lands in the planning area. The proposed action would amend the 1989 Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the 1985 San Juan-San Miguel RMP, and is in compliance with BLM planning regulations in CFR 1601.0-1 to 1610.8 and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The current acreage of OHV designations on public lands (No Action Alternative) include:

- 410,351 acres OHV Open
- 46,842 acres Limited to Designated Routes 5/1 to 11/30; Closed 12/1 to 4/30
- 3,374 acres Limited to Designated Routes 6/16 to 4/30; Closed 5/1 to 6/15

Under the proposed action, the OHV designations within the planning area would be:

- 0 acres OHV Open
- 410,351 acres Limited to Existing Routes Yearlong
- 46,842 acres Limited to Existing Routes 5/1 to 11/30; Closed 12/1 to 4/30
- 3,374 acres Limited to Existing Routes 6/16 to 4/30; Closed 5/1 to 6/15

The travel use conditions, design features, and implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management measures described in the proposed action would also be implemented.

**Finding of No Significant Impact**

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment CO-150-2008-64. After consideration of the potential environmental impacts described in the EA, I have determined that the proposed 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 approximately 460,567 acres of public land in the planning area is located in portions of Montrose, Delta, Gunnison, San Miguel, Mesa, and Ouray Counties. No private lands are within the boundary of the planning area.

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

All existing routes would be available for vehicular use, either yearlong or seasonally. The beneficial effects of the amendments include not allowing travel off of existing routes; such travel can lead to a proliferation of user-created routes. Beneficial impacts would be fewer resource impacts and habitat fragmentation occurring in this area, and existing disturbed routes would not be widened or enlarged further as a result of improper vehicle use. The amendments would also result in any new routes being properly designed, located so as to mitigate resource impacts, and subject to environmental analysis. Implementation of the approved RMP amendments would include a strategy of educating users and enforcing regulations, including the development of easily understood maps and other tools for effectively communicating that it is not permissible for operators of motorized or mechanized modes of travel to drive off of existing routes.

The UFO would implement a public education program in a variety of formats to promote responsible use of public land. This would include educational information on “Stay the Trail” and “Tread Lightly” ethics, noxious weeds and best management practices, and information regarding controlling noise levels while recreating on public lands.

Adverse effects include continued and potentially increasing vehicular use on all existing routes that may result in overuse of some routes.

*2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*

Prohibiting new user-established routes would result in routes not being created in unsafe locations. Signing certain routes and making existing route maps available will clearly define the route network.

*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 wild and scenic rivers or prime or unique farmlands on public lands in the planning area. There are not any roads in areas of critical environmental concern. The Camel Back Wilderness Study Area, the Tabaguache Special Management Area, the Dominguez Escalante National Conservation Area and Wilderness, the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area and Wilderness, and the Black Canyon Wilderness are near the planning area thus providing improved protection for those areas with the proposed action. The proposed action would protect historic and cultural resources from impacts from user-created routes.

*4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The BLM held numerous public meetings, distributed maps for public consideration, solicited and received public comments, and held individual meetings and interviews to discuss and

address the affects of the action on the human and natural environment.

The effects on the quality of the human environment are controversial for some people but not for others. The proposed action fulfills the legal and regulatory mandates required of BLM to protect the public lands from resource impacts and provides a safer environment for the public. The proposed action also helps resolve the issues identified by the public. 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) The degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The effects of the proposed action are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

Implementing the proposed action would discontinue unregulated motorized and non-motorized travel, on-route and cross-country, and is anticipated to eliminate the creation of new and unplanned routes, some in locations that are and could be hazardous to human health.

*6) The 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.*

This action sets the stage for future travel management plans whereby all roads and trails will be designated. A future action that may occur is the preparation of additional travel management plans on specific land areas in the UFO and Dominquez Escalante National Conservation Area.

*7) Consideration of the action in relation to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The proposed action does not produce any individual or cumulatively significant environmental impacts. The proposed action is anticipated to reduce the adverse impacts occurring from the current situation. The proposed action would contribute to and complement the positive impacts from implementing the nearby Dry Creek Travel Management Plan, which when implemented, would limit travel to specific designated routes on approximately 100,000 acres of public lands.

*8) The degree to which the proposed action 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.*

The UFO operates under a programmatic agreement between the applicable local governments, the Colorado State Historical Society, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Site specific environmental documentation and assessment, and site surveys are completed for individual projects that involve ground disturbance.

The overall affect of implementing the proposed action is positive for the preservation of historically, culturally and scientifically significant resources. Existing regulations and policies and the proposed action will provide protection to these important resources.

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

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Biological Opinion (BO) that concurred with the UFO's Biological Assessment (BA) "may affect, is not likely to adversely affect" determinations for the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*) and its critical habitat, humpback chub (*Gila cypha*), bonytail (*Gila elegans*), and razorback sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*) and its critical habitat. This concurrence is based on all of the conservation measures and rationale included in the BA.

The BO also determined that the proposed action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of Colorado hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*) or clay-loving wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum pelinophilum*) in the project area or the continued existence of the species. Although the proposed action did not meet the threshold of insignificant or discountable effects necessary in order to meet a "may affect, not likely to adversely affect determination", very few individual plants are expected to be negatively impacted. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's conclusions are based on the rationale and conservation measures in the BA (BLM 2009). Conservation measures are also incorporated as Proposed Action Design Features.

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

The proposed action 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) implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts; and  
2) the Proposed Action does 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  
Uncompahgre Field Office

2-25-10

Date