

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-110-2011-0138-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: N/A

PROJECT NAME: Dragon Trail Interpretive Sites

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T 1S, R 102W, Sec. 8, 15, 16, and 19

APPLICANT: BLM White River Field Office

PURPOSE & NEED FOR THE ACTION:

The purpose of the action is to protect important cultural sites while providing information and additional services to the public. The need for the action is that these sites are well known to the public and some vandalism has occurred in the past. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) needs to protect the sites while continuing to encourage the public to visit the sites.

Decision to be Made: The BLM will decide whether or not to construct and maintain the improvements to the three rock art sites.

SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AND ISSUES:

Scoping: Scoping was the primary mechanism used by the BLM to initially identify issues. Internal scoping was initiated when the project was presented to the White River Field Office (WRFO) interdisciplinary team on 6/14/2011. External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 6/15/2011. Additionally, a press release was issued 7/21/2011 for public comments, with a comment period of 7/21/2011 to 8/15/2011. No comments have been received as of 9/16/2011.

Issues: No issues were identified during public scoping.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: Three rock art sites, 5RB106- Carrot Men Site, and 5RB2499- Fremont Ridge Site, and 5RB3010- Crook's Brand Site, along the Dragon Trail southwest of Rangely Colorado receive heavy visitor use (see Figure 1). The location of these archaeological

resources is freely available to the public. The BLM WRFO has attempted to withdraw the locations from public view; however, directions to the site still remain available through pamphlets, rock art books, and numerous websites. Both the Crook's Brand and the Carrot Men sites have had geocaches placed in them by the public, and are listed on the Geochaching.com website, encouraging further visitation. Additionally, the area surrounding the Crook's Brand Site has been a popular camp site for years, and has had vandalism damage to the rock art.

Proposed Action:

Carrot Men

Portions of the existing trail at the Carrot Men site are beginning to erode and require some minor modifications to prevent future soil erosion. The site lacks a clearly defined trail from the parking area downslope to the mainstem trail. This has resulted in several user created routes, and people not using any trail, causing soil erosion on the hillside. As such, minor improvements are needed. No new trails will be constructed and no surface disturbance beyond that which already exists will occur.

The existing half-moon parking area at the Carrot Men site will continue to be used for parking without any new or additional surface disturbance (see Figure 2). Small rocks will be placed to outline the half-moon, providing visitors with a visual cue to the exact area vehicles should park. Placement of these rocks will prevent vehicles from inadvertently driving over the surrounding vegetation and will provide a sense of formality to the area. From the parking area the existing trail leading down the rock face of the hillside will be formalized as the official route to access the mainstem trail in the wash bottom. No new surface disturbance will occur, however small rock cairns will guide visitors along the designated route to the mainstem trail. A wooden sign identifying the Carrot Men site will be placed near the start of the trail at the parking area.

Minor erosion control measures and trail stabilization mechanisms will be placed on the mainstem of the Carrot Men trail. Two small (approximately 6 inches deep and 3 feet across), rock lined, recessed waterbars will be placed along steeper portions of the trail at points where erosion and rutting are beginning to appear. Additionally, in two areas where the trail is beginning erode on the sideslope and at sharp corners, small (approximately 12 inches high) trail stabilizations will be placed using native rock. A new rock art interpretation sign will be installed on a podium alongside the trail directly in front of the rock art panel.

Fremont Ridge

The existing trail at Fremont Ridge leading to the rock art panel is in good condition and only requires a few minor soil erosion control measures and minor trail stabilizations (see Figure 3). These can be achieved through recontouring dirt along the trail in such a way to prevent runoff and reinforce the trail. No new surface disturbance will occur. A small sign indicating the start of the trail will be placed at the trailhead. A new rock art interpretation sign will be placed near the rock art panel itself.

Crook's Brand

Overall, enhancements and infrastructure needed to formalize the site are minor and will be natural in appearance. The overall intent is to provide visitors with a self-guided, natural

interpretive experience while providing protection for the cultural resources in a subtle yet suggestive way. No trails will be constructed, allowing visitors to wander the site freely. Visitor control measures will consist primarily of signage and education with some physical controls, such as fences and vehicle deterrents, where needed (see Figure 4).

A buck and rail fence will be placed at the entrance of the site, just prior to where the two track route climbs the incline and threads the pinyon-juniper (PJ) line. This fence will be approximately 12 feet in length on either side of the two track and is intended to establish a designated entry point to the site in a subtle manner. A sign will be installed adjacent to the fence announcing the recreation area and informing the public that it is an archaeological site and protected as such. All areas beyond the sign and within the Crook's Brand site will be designated as the recreation area and potential future day use only area. No gate will be installed; rather signage and education will be used to deter camping and driving in the site.

Just beyond the entry fence and up the incline to the west a parking area will be established. This will be approximately 60 feet by 40 feet, capable of accommodating 3 full-size passenger vehicles, including adequate space for safely turning vehicles in and out of the area. No new ground disturbance will occur. The perimeter of the parking area will be delineated by a series of rocks large enough to deter driving beyond the parking area, approximately 1 square foot in size. These will be collected sporadically from the BLM lands in other areas of the WRFO. On the south edge of the parking area a buck and rail fence, approximately 15 feet in length, will be constructed along the top of the incline where there is a break in PJ to discourage motorized vehicle entry. In the northeast corner of the parking area an old two track route veers off towards the wall containing the Ute art. Rocks similar in size to those delineating the parking area will be placed across the two track to prevent motorized access to the rock wall. A new interpretation sign will be placed in this location providing the visitor with an overview of the site, general background information, and additional regulatory information.

Along the western edge of the parking area a small, metal or wood picnic ramada will be constructed. The ramada will be approximately 10 feet by 10 feet in size and require ground disturbance of an area approximately 15 feet by 15 feet. The pad will be natural surfaced with a small diameter stone and the border delineated by natural timbers. The ramada will require up to two support beams to be counter-sunk into the ground at a depth of 4 to 6 feet and anchored with concrete. The ramada will be painted a natural color intended to blend with the surrounding visual environment.

Along the western edge of the Crook's Brand site, running north and south, a buck and rail fence will be constructed. The fence will run from the base of the rock wall on the northern edge of the site, approximately 100 feet to a point where the topography drops steeply on the southern edge of the site. This fence is intended to provide a visual and physical barrier for the Crook's Brand site on the western edge. The fence will also deter undesired motorized vehicle entry into the area as well as give the entire site a more formalized visual appearance.

Surrounding the rock art itself, a short buck and rail fence will be placed approximately 3 to 4 feet back from the wall to deter visitors from physically touching the art. This fence will be

approximately 30 to 40 feet in length. A new interpretation sign will also be placed at this location describing the significance of the rock art.

Design features common to all sites:

- All fence construction will be buck and rail, which involves no ground disturbance. All excavations, like digging holes for podium placement and trail work, will be done with hand tools or a hand-held mechanized augur. No heavy equipment will be used.
- All ground disturbances will be monitored by a WRFO Archaeologist, and all disturbed soils/backdirt will be screened for artifacts.
- All project activity shall cease when soils or road surfaces become saturated to a depth of three inches or ruts of greater than 3 inches are created by project vehicles.
- The BLM project lead is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts. If archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the WRFO Archaeologist must immediately be contacted.
- In order to protect public land health standards for upland soils, erosion features such as rilling, gullying, piping and mass wasting on or near trails or parking areas will be addressed after observation by developing a plan and implementing best management practices to achieve soil stabilization.
- Each of these sites will be monitored for potential visitor use impacts and vandalism, by archaeological and/or law enforcement staff, in the future.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative would be to not do the interpretation project. The public would continue to use the sites as is the current practice and there would be no protections to try and deter vandalism.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (White River ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-43 to 2-44

Decision Language: “A cultural resource interpretive program will be developed for sites in the Canyon Pintado, Duck Creek & Colorow Wickiup areas, Moosehead Mountain ACEC, Dragon Trail, and Dripping Rock Cave areas, among others.”

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Standards for Public Land Health: In January 1997, the Colorado BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, special status species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis (EA). These findings are located in specific elements listed below.

Cumulative Effects Analysis Assumptions: Cumulative effects are defined in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1508.7) as “...the impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions.” Table 1 lists the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the area that might be affected by the Proposed Action; for this project the area considered was the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) 5th Level Watershed. However, the geographic scope used for analysis may vary for each cumulative effects issue and is described in the Affected Environment section for each resource.

Table 1. Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

Action Description	STATUS		
	Past	Present	Future
Livestock Grazing	X	X	X
Wild Horse Gathers	X	X	X
Recreation	X	X	X
Invasive Weed Inventory and Treatments	X	X	X
Range Improvement Projects : Water Developments Fences & Cattleguards	X	X	X
Wildfire and Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation	X	X	X
Oil and Gas Development: Well Pads Access Roads Pipelines Gas Plants Facilities	X	X	X
Power Lines	X	X	X
Seismic	X	X	X
Vegetation Treatments	X	X	X

Affected Resources:

The CEQ Regulations state that NEPA documents “must concentrate on the issues that are truly significant to the action in question, rather than amassing needless detail” (40 CFR 1500.1(b)). While many issues may arise during scoping, not all of the issues raised warrant analysis in an environmental assessment (EA). Issues will be analyzed if: 1) an analysis of the issue is

necessary to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, or 2) if the issue is associated with a significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impact, or where analysis is necessary to determine the significance of the impacts. Table 2 lists the resources considered and the determination as to whether they require additional analysis.

Table 2. Resources and Determination of Need for Further Analysis

Determination¹	Resource	Rationale for Determination
Physical Resources		
NI	Air Quality	The proposed project may create some minor and localized fugitive dust during construction, but is likely to improve the overall stability of the sites and therefore result in no or maybe less fugitive dust production over the long term.
NI	Geology and Minerals	The proposed project of protecting the sites and maintaining the trails would not impact the geologic or mineral resources.
PI	Soil Resources*	See discussion below.
NI	Surface and Ground Water Quality*	These archaeological sites are in uplands and headwaters of ephemeral drainages. Proposed actions will result in minimal soil disturbance and are likely to improve the overall soil stability of the areas by reducing travel near the sites.
Biological Resources		
NP	Wetlands and Riparian Zones*	There are no riparian or wetland resources in the project area that have the potential to be impacted by the Proposed Action.
NI	Vegetation*	Vegetation disturbance associated with the proposed project will be minimal and is not likely to affect the overall health and stability of plant communities in the project area. Placement of fencing, interpretive signs, and delineating the parking areas will likely prevent damage to vegetation in the project area from overland vehicle travel.
NI	Invasive, Non-native Species	Completion of the proposed project is not anticipated to affect the ability to maintain or control invasive vegetation species within the project area. Monitoring and maintenance of the areas will allow for early detection of invasive vegetation species within the project area should they become established.
NI	Special Status Animal Species*	There are no threatened or endangered animal species that are known to inhabit or derive important use from the project area. BLM sensitive species, northern goshawk and Brewer's sparrow, fall under the Migratory Birds resource.
NP	Special Status Plant Species*	There are no special status plant species associated with the Proposed Action.
NI	Migratory Birds	Mature components of pinyon-juniper woodlands surrounding the sites may provide nesting substrate for woodland raptors. Work is scheduled to take place during the fall, well outside the nesting season for migratory birds and involves little to no vegetation removal.
NP	Aquatic Wildlife*	There are no aquatic habitats within the project area that have potential to be influenced by the Proposed Action.
NI	Terrestrial Wildlife*	The project area is generally used by big game during the winter months. This short-term project (~1 day per site) involves little to no vegetation removal and will be completed prior to heavy occupation by big game.

Determination ¹	Resource	Rationale for Determination
NI	Wild Horses	Two of the three project areas are within the West Douglas Herd Area but will not be of such size, duration, or anticipated to affect the wild horses that may utilize the area.
Heritage Resources and the Human Environment		
PI	Cultural Resources	See discussion below.
NI	Paleontological Resources	The project area is mapped as the Undifferentiated Upper Mesa Verde Formation, a Potential Fossil Yield Class 5 formation, but there are no paleontological sites in the project area that will be impacted by the Proposed Action (Armstrong and Wolny 1989, Tweto 1979).
NI	Native American Religious Concerns	Tribal Consultation was done to assure Native American Religious Concerns were addressed during this project.
PI	Visual Resources	See discussion below.
NP	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	The proposed project will not result in the use, storage, transportation, or disposal of any hazardous/solid wastes.
NI	Fire Management	Project sites are within the B5W – Douglas Creek Fire Management Polygon wherein all fires are managed with an aggressive full suppression initial response and Resource Objectives are to “Protect oil and gas facilities and cultural resource sites when threatened by public land fires.”
NI	Social and Economic Conditions	There would not be any substantial changes to local social or economic conditions.
NP	Environmental Justice	According to the most recent Census Bureau statistics (2000), there are no minority or low income populations within the WRFO.
Resource Uses		
NI	Forest Management	The Proposed action does not request the modification or removal of pinyon-juniper.
NI	Rangeland Management	Livestock grazing is present in the area of the project, however, it is not likely that maintenance of trails and construction of short buck and pole fencing will affect proper livestock grazing management in the area. There are also range improvement projects in the area of the proposed project, primarily pit reservoirs and fencing; the Proposed Action will not likely impact these projects.
NP	Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights	The Proposed Action will not impact perennial waters, will result in minor insignificant changes in local surface hydrology, and will not impact floodplains or water rights.
NI	Realty Authorizations	Access road rights-of-way in T1S, R102W, Section 19 are authorized to Encana Oil & Gas (USA) Inc. and Locin Oil Corporation. It is not likely that maintenance of the trail and the parking area at the Carrot Men site will affect the rights-of-way.
PI	Recreation	See discussion below.
PI	Access and Transportation	See discussion below.
NP	Prime and Unique Farmlands	There are no Prime and Unique Farmlands within the project area.
Special Designations		
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	There are no Areas of Critical Environmental Concern near or within the project area.

Determination ¹	Resource	Rationale for Determination
NP	Wilderness	There are no WSAs in the area.
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	There are no Wild and Scenic Rivers in the WRFO.
NP	Scenic Byways	There are no Scenic Byways within the project area.

¹ NP = Not present in the area impacted by the Proposed Action or Alternatives. NI = Present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required. PI = Present with potential for impact analyzed in detail in the EA.

* Public Land Health Standard

SOIL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The classification of soils that may be impacted by the project near the cultural sites, improved trails and the proposed parking areas is Rentsac-Moyerson-Rock Outcrop complex soils on slopes that can be between 5 to 65 percent. The range description is Pinyon Pine and Juniper on clayey soils. Runoff on these soils can be medium to rapid and the hazard for water erosion is very high. There are no fragile soils or lands prone to landslides that will be impacted by this project.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Improving the parking lots, fixing erosion problems, installing water bars, improving trails, placing rocks and installing fences, signs and other infrastructure will temporarily disturb soils. Compaction due to the public use of trails and parking areas would reduce aeration, permeability, and water-holding capacities of soils in some areas. An increase in surface runoff can be expected from compacted soils due to the runoff properties of Rentsac-Moyerson-Rock Outcrop complex soils (clayey soils). Not allowing construction activities in wet conditions with saturated soils will protect soils from impacts during the installation of the improvements.

Improving public use for parking and interpretive trails near these cultural sites should limit future disturbance on the steep slopes near the cultural sites and will likely reduce disturbance and subsequent erosion compared to current conditions at each of the sites. The Proposed Action includes improving some areas that are currently experiencing minor erosion and such improvements are more likely to continue to occur in the future with the increased management proposed for these areas. Therefore, future soil conditions at these sites are likely to improve with better managed public use.

Cumulative Effects: One of the cultural site access roads is used for oil and gas development access and there are numerous natural gas wells that use the Dragon Trail road for access, especially on the west side of this road. Impacts from other recreational uses will continue, but are likely to decrease due to the efforts to improve the site. Use of these roads by oil and gas development will contribute to overall road use, but will result in more regular maintenance of these roads improving road function and reducing impacts to soils.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Not improving the public use of these cultural sites may lead to more indirect effects from public use due to undefined trails and vehicle access routes as compared to the Proposed Action. Due to the generally poor soils in this area impacts from dispersed use can quickly lead to localized erosion and continued loss of soil productivity around the sites.

Cumulative Effects: Same as those described for the Proposed Action.

Mitigation: The project design features incorporated into the Proposed Action mitigate the potential effects.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard #1 for Upland Soils: This action is unlikely to reduce the productivity of soils impacted by surface disturbing activities with the mitigation described above.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The prehistoric culture history of the general area has been divided chronologically into the PaleoIndian era (11,400 to 5,500 BC), the Archaic era (5,500 BC to AD 500), the Formative era (AD 500 to 1300), and the Prehistoric/Historic Transition (AD 1300 to 1881). The entire proposed project area has been covered by Class III (100 percent pedestrian) survey (Haymes 2010 and Ramirez 2011), to assure impacts to cultural resources would be taken under consideration. No cultural resources other than the three named sites will be affected by this project.

Site 5RB106, known commonly as the Carrot Men Site, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) on August 22, 1975. The site consists of a combination of petroglyphs and pictographs, notable large red carrot-shaped men the site was named for, mainly attributed to Barrier Canyon style, with a small panel of possible yellow teepees of Ute origin.

Site 5RB2499, or the Fremont Ridge Site, is eligible for NRHP placement under Criteria C and D. This site consists of one large panel of Barrier Canyon style petroglyphs and two smaller panels possibly Ute in origin. The Barrier Canyon style rock art common in the Dragon Trail area and the nearby Canyon Pintado Historic District, dates from the Archaic Era, between 2,000 BC and 400 AD and possibly earlier, and represents the furthest east reaches of this style which is centered in Utah.

Site 5RB3010, the Crook's Brand Site, contains panels of horses that have been labeled as Ute, as well as an undated panel that may be Fremont, a historic cowboy inscription, and modern era pin-up art. A Northern Ute elder indicated during tribal consultation for this project that he thought this site represented Ute use of this area post-removal, so dating sometime after 1881 when the Ute were forcibly removed to reservations in Utah.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Some of these actions will have an adverse impact to the eligible and NRHP listed archaeological sites, however these impacts will be minimized through design features included in the Proposed Action. The sites are already being used by the public, and therefore receiving impacts due to this, and this project will likely increase visitor use. The interpretation of the sites will educate the public on both the history of the sites as well as proper behavior with respect to visiting rock art sites. The improvements will show a BLM presence at these sites, and inform the users on the laws protecting cultural resources. Additionally, these sites will be monitored by archaeological and law enforcement staff to potential visitor use impacts and vandalism.

The Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has concurred that the improvements to the Carrot Men and Fremont Ridge sites will have a no adverse effect to each site. The actions occur within the site boundaries, so there are effects, but in the long run it is intended that the impacts will actually be beneficial to the sites and their protection. SHPO has concurred that the improvements to the Crook's Brand site are expected to have a small and mitigatable adverse effect on the site, offset by the protection afforded the site by the installation of interpretive improvements.

Cumulative Effects: There should be no cumulative effects of the project. More people may visit the sites in the long run, but it is intended that the project will cause less effects to the sites in the long run.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Not doing the proposed project will not give any protections to these archaeological sites. The locations of these sites are available to the general public if one looks for the information online, by book, or word of mouth. The Carrot Men site, and the Crook's Brand site, are both currently marked on the roads to turn off to get to the sites, so they can be found by people driving by who see the signs, then go looking for the sites. The Dragon Trail road receives a fairly high level of use, by oil and gas field workers among others. It is likely that a moderate number of people will continue to visit these sites as is the current practice (e.g. driving all-terrain vehicles into the sites, leaving trash and firepits onsite, and occasionally vandalizing the rock art, including shooting it off of the cliff walls).

Cumulative Effects: The slow but ongoing vandalism and overall disturbances at these sites is likely to result in additional damage to each rock art site over time.

Mitigation: The project design features incorporated into the Proposed Action mitigate the potential effects.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: This project lies within a Visual Resource Management Class IV area. The objective of Class IV areas is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. These management activities may

dominate the view and be the major focus of the viewer's attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements of line, form, color, and texture. There is a moderate presence of industrial activity in the area, primarily oil and gas development, and associated heavy truck and equipment traffic on the adjoining roadways. The landscape is characterized by large rock formations, and pinyon-juniper and sagebrush vegetation.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Proposed Action will alter the visual appearance of the three archeological sites in a minor way, primarily for the better. The proposed enhancements at the each site will result in a slightly more developed appearance over what currently exists. However the landforms, rock formations, and other natural objects at the sites will be used as control mechanisms as much as possible, thus reducing the need for developed infrastructure. The use of buck and rail fencing in lieu of barbed wire or standard posts will provide a more rural and rustic appearance, where needed. Establishing designated footpaths and closing and reclaiming social trails will help bring the sites back to a more natural appearance. No new ground disturbance beyond the pad for a picnic ramada will occur at the sites. The ramada itself will be painted to blend with the surrounding landscape. All infrastructure improvements are expected to protect the rock art, thus preserving its visual quality.

Cumulative Effects: No cumulative effects to visual resources are anticipated as a result of this project.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: A continued lack of active management attention and regulatory presence at these sites is likely to lead to further vandalism of the rock art, thus degrading the visual quality of the sites and the area in general.

Cumulative Effects: Existing and ongoing vandalism at these sites is likely to cumulatively result in additional vandalism to the rock art over time.

Mitigation: None.

RECREATION

Affected Environment The Proposed Action occurs within the White River Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). The BLM custodially manages the ERMA to provide for unstructured recreation activities such as hunting, dispersed camping, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, and off-highway vehicle use. These groups tend to seek out physical and social recreation settings that are typically characterized by a natural appearing environment providing some isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, where there is low interaction between users but evidence of other users may be present and generally providing an environment that offers challenge and risk. The primary recreational activities occurring within the project area, and along the Dragon Trail in general, is upland big game hunting and archaeotourism.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Overall the effects from the Proposed Action will have a beneficial effect on recreation. Improvements to parking and the addition of signage will assist visitors in wayfinding at each of the sites and reduce resource damage. Trail improvements will help to better delineate where visitors should walk when visiting the sites and reduce the likelihood they will wander off-trail and cause undue resource damage. The placement of fencing at Crook's Brand will provide visitors with a sense of place to the area and reduce the likelihood of unauthorized motorized use in the vicinity of the rock art. The placement of a picnic ramada at Crook's Brand would offer visitors a pleasant place to relax under shelter. The placement of interpretation panels at each of the sites will greatly enhance the visitor experience by providing them with an understanding of the meaning of each site and their relation to history.

Cumulative Effects: The formalization and development of these sites may cumulatively contribute to the reputation of the White River Field Office and the area surrounding the Town of Rangely as an archaeological destination.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Each of the sites would continue to be managed as they are now. Unfettered, dispersed recreation would be allowed to continue within close proximity of the sites with no physical management controls in place, potentially resulting in continued resource damage. The lack of trail improvements would result in gradual erosion problems due to poor design and maintenance and the continued creation of social trails. The lack of parking and signage improvements could potentially result in resource damage as visitors would continue to park where they like.

Cumulative Effects: No cumulative effects have been identified.

Mitigation: None.

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: Rio Blanco County Road 23 (Dragon Trail Road) is the primary access route to all three sites within the Proposed Action. The Dragon Trail Road is a natural surfaced roadway. The majority of traffic on this road is associated with oil and gas activities, local ranching, and big game hunting.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Effects associated with the Proposed Action will primarily be beneficial. The delineation of parking areas and installation of signs will assist visitors in knowing where to park, thereby reducing resource damage. The Proposed Action is not anticipated to increase visitation on Dragon Trail Road to a point where it would negatively affect other users.

Cumulative Effects: No cumulative effects have been identified.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: By not implementing the Proposed Action, it is likely that visitors will continue to park their vehicles wherever they please when they visit the sites, increasing the likelihood of associated resource damage.

Cumulative Effects: No cumulative effects have been identified.

Mitigation: None.

REFERENCES CITED:

Armstrong, Harley J. and David G. Wolny

1989 Paleontological Resources of Northwest Colorado: A Regional Analysis. Museum of Western Colorado, Grand Junction, Colorado.

Haymes, Geoffrey L.

2010 Class III Inventory for Public Access Improvements to the Crook's Brand Rock Art Site, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Bureau of Land Management, White River Field Office, Meeker, Colorado.

Ramirez, Joseph

2011 Class III Inventory for the Dragon Trail Corridor Rock Art Site Improvements, Rio Blanco County, CO. Bureau of Land Management, White River Field Office, Meeker, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden

1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED:

Consultation with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer was completed for the Crook's Brand Site improvements on April 16, 2010. Consultation with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer was completed for the Fremont Ridge Site and the Carrot Men Site improvements on August 22, 2011.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Signed
Bob Lange	Hydrologist	Air Quality; Surface and Ground Water Quality; Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights; Soils	8/23/2011
Zoe Miller	Ecologist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; Special Status Plant Species	7/27/2011

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Signed
Kristin Bowen	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources; Native American Religious Concerns	8/29/2011
Tyrell Turner	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species; Vegetation; Rangeland Management	8/15/2011
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds; Special Status Animal Species; Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife; Wetlands and Riparian Zones	8/10/2011
Kristin Bowen	Archaeologist	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	9/6/2011
Chad Schneckenburger	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness; Visual Resources; Access and Transportation; Recreation,	8/31/2011
Jim Michels	Supervisory NRS	Forest Management	8/19/2011
Garner Harris	Zone Fire Management Officer	Fire Management	7/28/2011
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals	8/11/2011
Stacey Burke	Realty Specialist	Realty	8/15/2011
Melissa J. Kindall	Range Technician	Wild Horses	8/29/2011
Kristin Bowen	Archaeologist	Project Lead – Document Preparer	9/6/2011
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Paleontological Resources	8/18/2011
Heather Sauls	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	NEPA Compliance	9/14/2011

ATTACHMENTS:

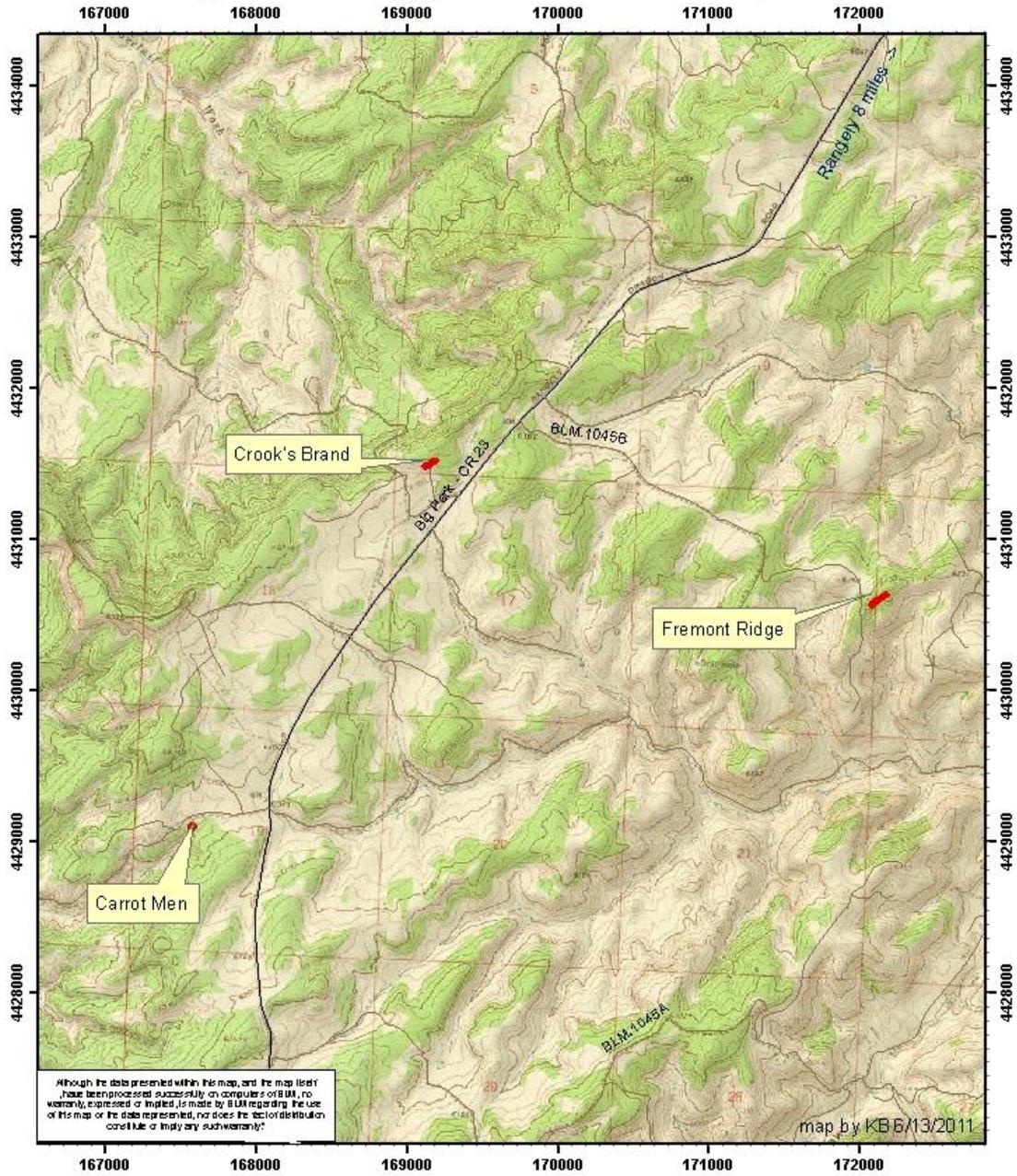
Figure 1: Dragon Trail Sites Map

Figure 2: Carrot Men Site Detail Map

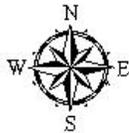
Figure 3: Fremont Ridge Site Detail Map

Figure 4: Crook's Brand Site Detail Map

Figure 1: Dragon Trail Sites Map

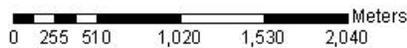


For Official Use Only: Disclosure of Site Locations is Prohibited (43 CFR 7.18)



Scale 1:35,000

T 1 S, R 102 W, Sections 8, 15, 16, and 19
Banta Ridge & Water Canyon, CO 7.5 min quad



Legend

Cultural_Site_Boundaries

Figure 2: Carrot Men Site Detail Map



Figure 3: Fremont Ridge Site Detail Map



Figure 4: Crook's Brand Site Detail Map



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641**

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
DOI-BLM-CO-110-2011-0138-EA**

BACKGROUND

The proposed Dragon Trail Interpretive Sites project involves improving public access at three archaeological sites on the Dragon Trail road. Three rock art sites, 5RB106- Carrot Men Site, 5RB2499- Fremont Ridge Site, and 5RB3010- Crook's Brand Site, are currently used by the public and have user-created trails. These trails will be properly maintained and erosion control measures, like water bars, will be added where needed. Interpretive signs will be installed on podiums for public education. Existing unofficial parking areas will be defined. A picnic and shade area will also be added to the Crook's Brand site.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action 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 meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the White River Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (1996). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

Context

The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public lands that do not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this Proposed Action:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Some of these actions will have an adverse impact to the eligible and NRHP listed archaeological sites, however these impacts will be minimized through the use of design features incorporated into the Proposed Action. The actions occur within archaeological site boundaries, so there are effects, but in the long run it is intended that the impacts will actually be beneficial to the sites and their protection. The sites are currently used by the public, and are receiving impacts due to this, and this project will likely increase visitor use. However, interpretation of the sites will educate the public and show a BLM presence at these sites which will be

periodically monitored by archaeological and law enforcement staff for potential visitor use impacts and vandalism.

The actions will cause short term soil disturbance, however, the designation of trails will keep public off of user-created trails, reducing soil erosion. Due to the generally poor soils in this area impacts from dispersed use can quickly lead to localized erosion and continued loss of soil productivity.

2. The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety.

There will be no impact to public health and safety.

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

There are no unique lands or rivers in the geographic area. The area does have a high concentration of visible cultural resources, namely rock art site, which causes higher than average visitation to the cultural resources, as typically locational information to these types of resources are kept confidential.

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

There will be no controversial effects on the quality of the human environment.

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

No highly uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment were identified during analysis of the Proposed Action.

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 Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

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

The Proposed Action is not related to any other actions which would significantly cause cumulative impacts.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The improvements to the Carrot Men and Fremont Ridge sites will have a no adverse effect to each site. The actions occur within the site boundaries, so there are effects, but in the long run it is intended that the impacts will actually be beneficial to the sites and their protection. The improvements to the Crook's Brand site are expected to have a small and mitigatable adverse

effect on the site, offset by the protection afforded the site by the installation of interpretive improvements.

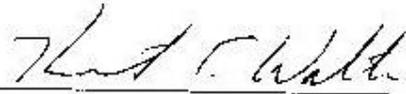
9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973.

The Proposed Action should not adversely impact any endangered or threatened species.

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

Neither the Proposed Action nor impacts associated with it violate any laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

09/19/2011

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641**

DECISION RECORD

PROJECT NAME: Dragon Trail Interpretive Sites

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-2011-0138-EA

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-2011-0138-EA, authorizing the construction and maintenance activities for the public use improvements to the three rock art sites.

Mitigation Measures

Design features that minimize impacts from the project have been incorporated into the Proposed Action.

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS & CONFORMANCE WITH THE LAND USE PLAN

This decision is in compliance with the 1997 White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Proposed Action was analyzed in DOI-BLM-CO-2011-0138-EA and it was found to have no significant impacts, thus an EIS is not required.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 06/15/2011. Additionally, a press release was issued 7/21/2011 for public comments, and no issues were identified during public scoping.

RATIONALE

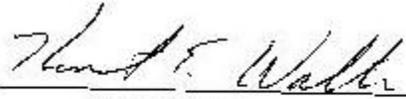
Analysis of the Proposed Action has concluded that there are no significant negative impacts and that it meets Colorado Standards for Public Land Health. As the sites cannot be realistically removed from public use, improvements are necessary to mitigate the impacts of continued visitation.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

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 White River Field Office, 220 East Market St., Meeker, CO 81641 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:



Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

09/19/2011