

# **Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Update Soutwest Resource Advisory Committee Meeting**

## **KM Three Wells**

Three Wells EA for Kinder Morgan is under-way for three wells on private land adjacent to and with rights-of-way across the Monument. Given the majority of development is outside of the Monument we do not anticipate any controversy.

Just this week we initiated discussions with Kinder Morgan contractors on a Master Development Plan for the next decade.

## **Executive Leadership Team**

BLM's Executive Leadership held their quarterly meeting in August at Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (CANM). Hosting this event gave the ELT a good sampling of the Monument and its resources and the challenges of managing a Monument that is over 80% leased for oil & gas development.

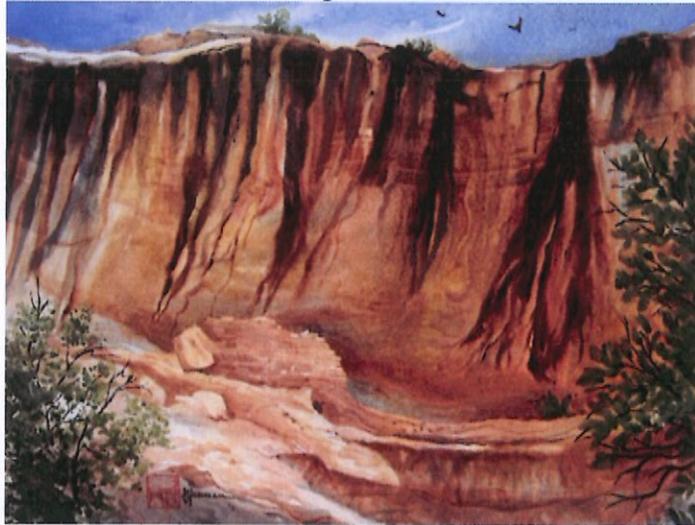
## **Student Interns**

This year CANM and the Anasazi Heritage Center hosted five interns; two in curation, one in recreation, one in natural resources and one in maintenance. This allowed us to complete tasks and expose yourth to career opportunities in the BLM. Our interns range from locals who are now in college to students from Florida wanting to explore the west. Each of our interns has proven to be capable and professional.

## Artist in Residence

Four artists were recently selected (out of 44) through a national competition to participate in the BLM's first NLCS Artist in Residence Program. Each artist spent a week absorbing and experiencing the monument's landscape, creating a work of art in response to the experience and then sharing their vision and techniques with the public during summer 2012.

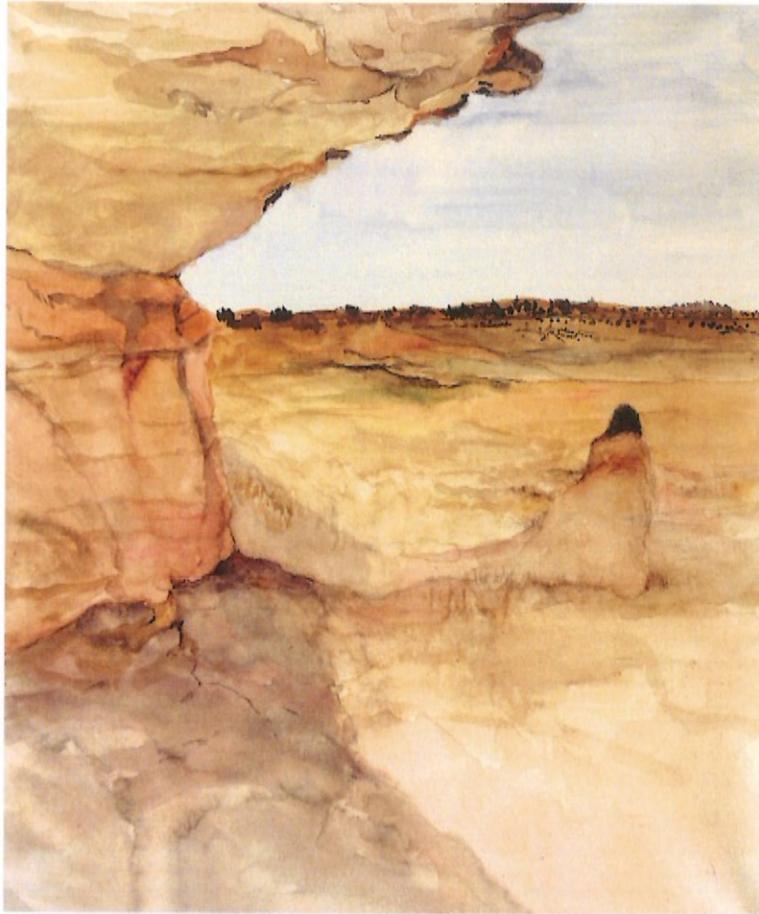
The Artist-in-Residence Program promotes awareness of the exceptional places protected within the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System, which includes some National Monuments, National Wild and Scenic Rivers, designated wilderness and wilderness study areas.



Joyce Hueman, Cortez, CO



Kirk Gittings, Albuquerque, NM



Arthur Shortbull, Estes Park, CO

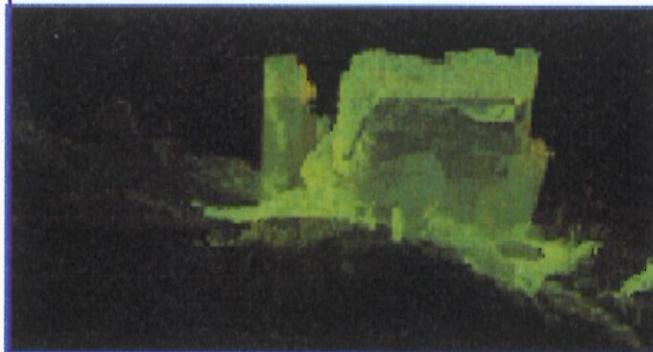


Carol Chamberland, Albuquerque, NM

### Digital Documentation

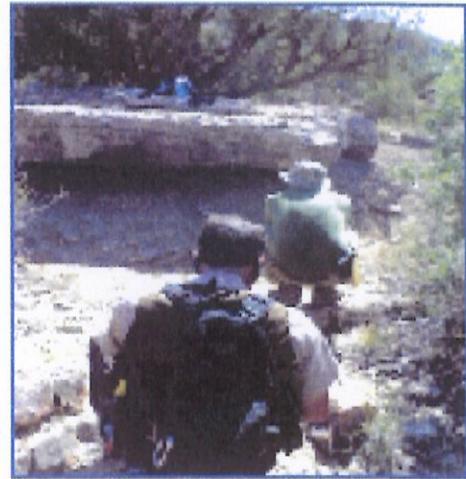
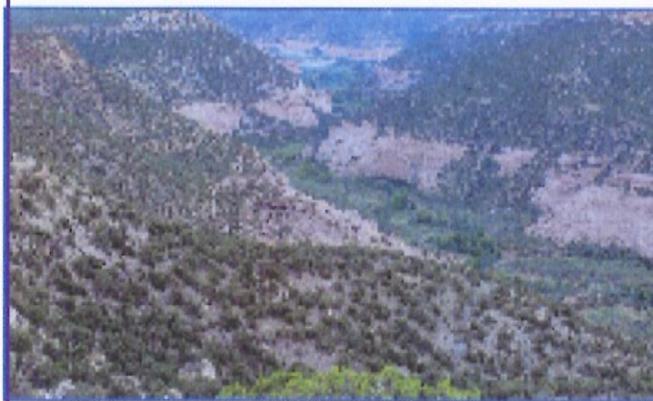
The Cultural Resource Management Program has embarked on a new focus in site documentation: In addition to ongoing surveys, Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) and Photogrammetry to record standing walls. A comparison of these tools and their efficacy will allow the Monument to gather information in a matter of days, which in the past has taken months.

This partnership is a collaboration between the Monument, BLM's National Operations Center and University of Colorado, Denver's Historic Preservation Program.



### Land Acquisition

The acquisition of land from willing sellers is accomplished through the use of Land and Water Conservation Funds.

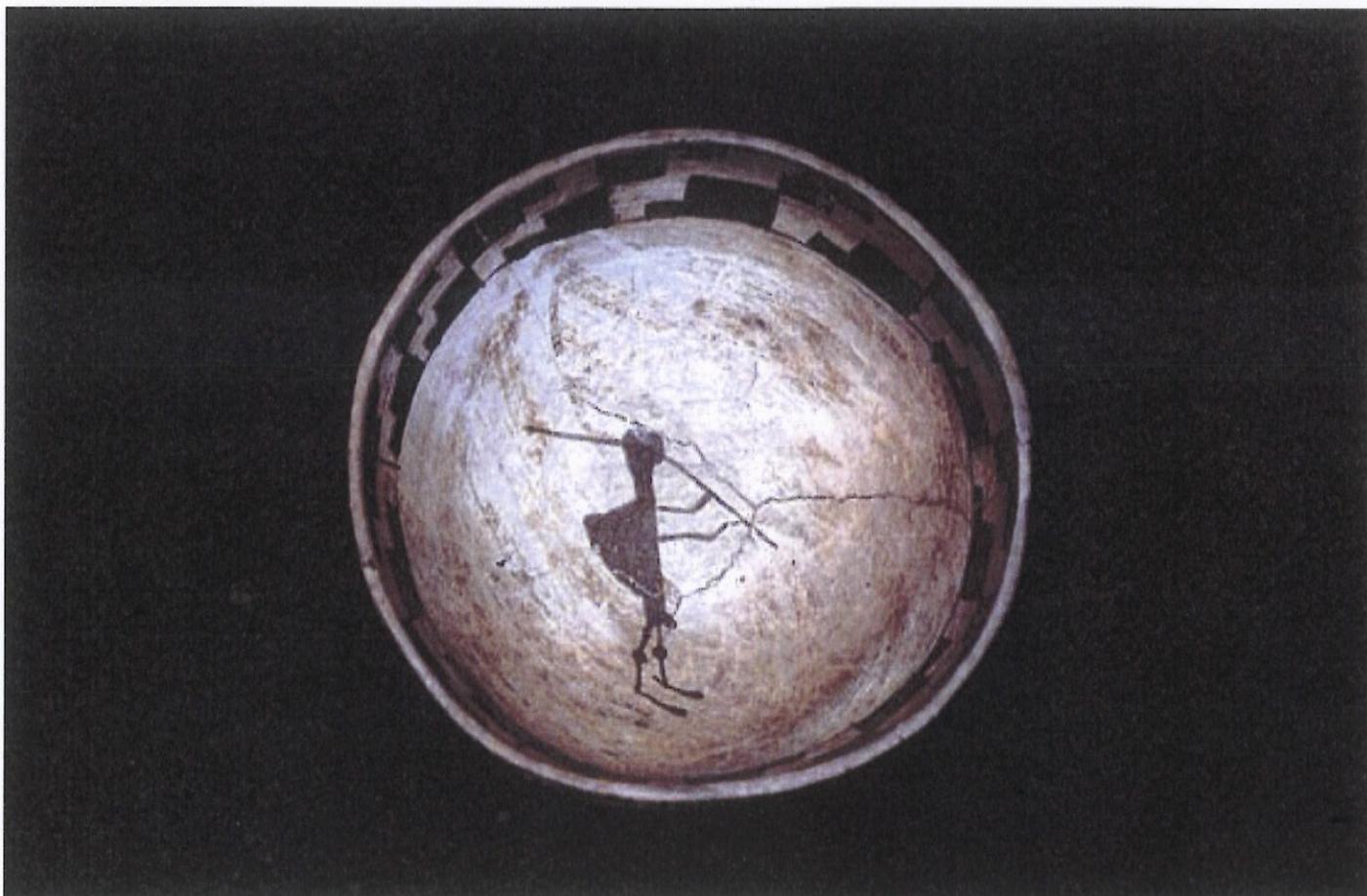


### ARPA Convictions

Just last week two individuals were sentenced in Federal Court to minimal jail time, probation and expulsion from BLM lands for a year. The sentence stemmed from a tour in 2011 to an archaeological site where the two individuals removed the skull from an ancient grave for their clients to view. Exemplary work of an undercover agent on the tour and the subsequent investigators resulted in the successful prosecution of this case under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA)

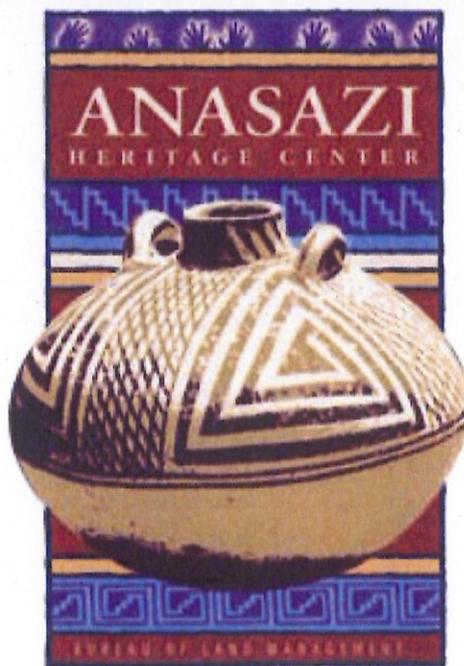
Removal of artifacts and human remains is not only illegal it is disrespectful.





### **New Supervisory Curator**

Bridget Ambler has joined the staff at the Anasazi Heritage Center, headquarters for Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. Bridget comes to us from History Colorado where she has worked as the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) liaison and the Curation of Material Culture. Bridget also served as an interpreter and educator, and led the recent installation of new exhibits for the newly constructed state museum. We are pleased to add her pallet of skills to our staff.



## Uncompahgre Field Office/Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area

### Southwest Resource Advisory Council

October 26, 2012

#### Oil and Gas Program

The public comment period for the preliminary oil and gas environmental assessment for the August, 2012 sale closed Friday, April 20. Changes are being considered. The state director made a decision to defer the lease sale till further analysis can be done.

#### SG Interests

SG Interests initiated a 150 well project for the Bull Mountain Unit on October 29, 2008. The project was scoped 2 different times due to changes in the proposed action. A preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) was released in late March with public comment closing April 24. The preliminary EA, public comment, input from the EPA and BLM staff analysis indicated the need for additional air quality analysis as well as the potential for an Environmental Impact Statement, driven in part by the proximity to Class 1 air sheds in nearby Wilderness. We are currently working on a Notice of Intent (NOI) to initiate the EIS project in the federal register.

#### North Fork Coal Actions

**West Elk Mine** - UFO is working as a cooperating agency with the USDA Forest Service on an EIS for West Elk on modifications to their mine. BLM also wrote an EA for the leasing decision. If the Forest Service EIS is sufficient for the BLM we will be signing a ROD based on the EIS instead of the EA. The Forest Service EIS decision was appealed by WildEarth Guardians in September. We are waiting for the final Forest Service decision.

**Bowie** - UFO made a favorable decision on 2 coal modifications for Bowie. We did not receive any appeals.

**Oxbow** - A favorable decision was made regarding an Oxbow modification involving National Forest Service surface lands. We did not receive any appeals.

A favorable decision to Oxbow for a coal exploration project on Oak Mesa was made. We received an appeal from WildEarth Guardians. They did not yet ask for a stay or give a statement of reasons. BLM gave Oxbow the exploration license and work is proceeding.

#### Lands

We continue to work with Department of Energy on an EIS analyzing environmental issues in regard to potential uranium leases on withdrawn lands in San Miguel and Montrose Counties.

We are beginning to work with the Bureau of Reclamation on scoping for salinity removal in the Paradox Valley.

#### Recreation



**Cottonwood Days** - For the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row, we co-sponsored an educational day for all 6<sup>th</sup> graders in Montrose, and Delta counties including the North Fork. Over 550 kids participated. It took place at our Cottonwood campground on the south river road of the Gunnison River. Partners include Trout Unlimited, Colorado Canyons Association, National Forest Service, etc.

We also sponsored a Take It Outside 2 day river trip with Dine College. We were able to take 20 Native American college students on a stewardship trip. They helped us with resource projects along the river.

### **Travel Management Planning**

The Uncompahgre Field Office continues to work on a comprehensive travel management plan for an area near Ridgway, CO. The area is directly adjacent to Ridgway State Parks and is approximately 1200 acres. A preliminary environmental assessment should be out for public review in the near future.

Norwood Burn Canyon Recreation Trail's project; UFO completed public scoping May 4. Based on public comment, we are now evaluating it as a comprehensive travel management plan. We hope to have a preliminary EA for public review this winter.

### **Dolores River Restoration Project**

Work continues on this project which involves tamarisk eradication, and habitat restoration along the Dolores River in Colorado and Utah. There are four BLM offices involved, working collaboratively with many partners including the Western Colorado Youth Corps, South West Youth Corps, Tamarisk Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, private land owners and others. We completed tamarisk removal along a 4 mile stretch of the Dolores River, and removed elm along 4 miles of the San Miguel River, a major tributary. We planted native shrubs as part of a pilot study to determine the best adapted species and methods for restoration.

### **Relief Ditch, Gunnison River**

This is a project on the Gunnison River in the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area. The purpose is to improve the efficiency for the diversion of irrigation water and address public safety concerns of the existing structure which constitutes a recreational boating hazard. Working with partners, BLM has authorized this project which includes riparian restoration and tamarisk removal, in addition to the construction of a new diversion. Funding for the project has been provided through a variety of sources which include Fishing *is Fun* grant from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado River Water Conservation District, Whiting Farms, BLM and others. Trout Unlimited has been instrumental in facilitating all the partners to make this a reality. The project will start this October and is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2013 prior to the start of irrigation season.

### **Gunnison Sage Grouse**



Listing??

### **Drought**

We continue to work with permittees and are having conversations about drought and the potential impacts not only to range vegetation, but livestock operations. We are also coordinating with the USFS to ensure a smooth transition for those range users moving from high elevation National Forest Lands to BLM managed public lands this fall. Despite the monsoonal rains which have helped significantly, vegetation is still suffering the effects of this drought. Conditions are not uniform and so we are working out grazing use on an allotment by allotment basis. Overall there will probably be less numbers and shorter grazing periods this fall. Many permittees have made alternate plans and do not plan to use their allotments this fall, or will reduce livestock numbers. Our range specialists will be evaluating fall regrowth to determine how that may influence available forage.



# BLM Resource Advisory Councils

Partners Across The West

## Southwest Resource Advisory Council Meeting

Friday, October 26, 2012

Dolores, Colorado

### Gunnison Field Manager Update

#### Staffing Changes in 2012

- New Associate Field Manager position (Stewart Schneider)
- New Law Enforcement Officer (Derek Chodorowski)
- Hired administrative assistant (Amber Swinney)
- Hired recreation park ranger (Andy Welsh)
- Hired outdoor recreation planner (Jim Lovelace)

#### Candidate Conservation Agreement for Gunnison Sage Grouse

- Final document signed/approved by major partners
- Draft Biological Assessment submitted to field manager for review; will be submitted to USFWS in November, 2012
- Primary purpose is to:
  - Engage key stakeholders in the Gunnison Basin community in a collaborative planning and review process
  - Outline the next step in grouse habitat management
    - Make the Rangewide Conservation Plan actionable
    - Account for cumulative impacts of habitat fragmentation
    - Stratify occupied habitat to prioritize conservation measures
  - Ease the transition to living and working with a soon-to-be federally listed species for the public and the agencies
    - Focus the scope of the CCA on every day, small-scale actions in grouse habitat on federal lands
    - Streamline consultation by outlining clear design criteria for any proposed projects in grouse habitat

#### Landscape Scale and Travel Management Implementation

- OHV grant (\$40K) – travel management implementation and education
- Zone 4 Travel Management EA (toolbox for implementation)
- Annual road maintenance strategy
- Road Beaver Creek – watershed multi-resource project
- Sugar Creek road rehab project – heavy equipment, YCC/WCCC crew, GUSG habitat; funded by BLM, RMEF, Mule Deer Foundation
- Signal Peak road rehab project – YCC/WCCC crew, GUSG habitat
- Signed open routes in about 2/3 of FO
- Have \$10,000 for FY13 BPS travel management implementation project

### Forest Health Projects

- Inventory of bark beetle infestations
  - a. Forest Service annual aerial inventories
  - b. BLM inventoried 800 acres on the ground in Los Pinos, Pole Patch Hill
  - c. Pre-treatment monitoring set up this year in Los Pinos, Pole Patch Hill
- Cooperation with USFS (Gunnison Ranger District) on treatment project in Hinsdale
- Other projects
  - a. Contract for clearcut units Pole Patch Hill to decrease beetle habitat
  - b. FECON prescribed burn prep work

### Gunnison Basin Climate Change Working Group

- Local partnership led by The Nature Conservancy, local land managers and private interests to develop a Gunnison Basin climate initiative.
  - Develop practical management strategies to reduce adverse effects on key species and habitats.
  - Build resilience to climate change, increase understanding of threats, and promote coordinated and effective implementation of these strategies.
- Funded \$50k by Southern Rockies Landscape Conservation Cooperative to develop a rapid climate vulnerability assessment for Upper Gunnison Basin to determine what species and habitats are most at risk from climate change
- Completed social resilience and vulnerability assessment through University of Arizona, Flagstaff
  - Interviewed 35 people representing agencies, the ranching community and recreation sector in Gunnison this summer to help us get a handle on issues and potential strategies.
- The Wildlife Conservation Society will fund the Working Group's pilot project (\$50k) to enhance ecosystem resilience of wetland/riparian habitats within the sagebrush shrublands to increase the adaptive capacity of the Sage-grouse and other wildlife species.

### Upper Slate River Watershed Management Partnership

- Continued public stakeholder meetings for watershed management plan on the Slate River north of Crested Butte.
  - Formed a local partnership now led by Coal Creek Watershed Coalition
  - Funded by Colorado Non Point Source grant funding under Clean Water Act and through agency contributions (USFS, BLM, State of Colorado)
- Completed geomorphic assessment of Slate River watershed, instream data collection on fisheries.
  - Coal Creek Watershed Coalition has assumed fiscal administration of grant.
- Grant (\$60k) will fund a watershed coordinator, hydrologic studies, and the development of a watershed plan which will identify sources of pollution and how to address those impacts.
  - synthesize existing data, collect new data and characterize impacts in the Slate River Watershed
  - provide a framework to identify and prioritize problem areas and implement BMPs
- BLM has lost its funding supporting a 5-year maintenance plan for the recreation site.
  - We are actively looking for alternative solutions to honor our commitment.
  - Continued involvement in technical and public stakeholder meetings for watershed management plan on the Slate River north of Crested Butte.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Tres Rios Field Office  
29211 Highway 184  
Dolores, Colorado 81323

**Southwest RAC Meeting**

**October 26, 2012**

**Tres Rios RMP Revision** – The public comment period ended on November 25, 2011 for the supplemental EIS for the gothic oil shale analysis. Overall RMP analysis continues and final RMP is anticipated to be issued by end of calendar year 2012. The Record of Decision is expected to be signed approximately early mid- 2013.

**CO2 3-D Seismic EA:** An environmental analysis for 3D seismic exploration will be issued for public comment sometime in early November. A 30-day comment period will be provided. The proponent submitted a new proposed alternative, which will set implementation back to sometime in Summer/Fall of 2013.

The preliminary EA for a **prospecting permit for potash exploration** will be issued on October 26, 2012 for a 30-day comment period. A decision is expected next spring and exploration is expected to begin summer 2013.

Recreation site improvements will be completed at 3 sites on the Dolores River- **Dolores Overlook, Mountain Sheep Point and Boxelder campgrounds**. The contract has been awarded and work has been initiated with new facilities installed this fall unless snow shuts the project down.

**Weber coal waste pile fire** - BLM continues to monitor the coal fire that was ignited by the June/July Weber Fire near Mancos. Mining refuse from historic operations continue to smolder over a 2 acre area. BLM plans to monitor the fire over the winter. Steep terrain, standing dead trees and inaccessibility combined with safety issues are hamper a tactical solution. It is hoped that the majority of the waste pile is consumed over the cold winter months.

**King II Coal Mine – Lease Modification Status** submitted an application to modify their existing coal lease in January 2011. The existing mine is underground. The portal and facilities are located on State lands. The modification would affect split estate lands where the surface belongs primarily to the Ute Mountain Utes. No new facilities are proposed. All natural drainages on the surface are ephemeral. The mine is dry. The operator imports water to keep the dust down in the mine. BLM expects to issue a notice to the public for scoping in the

BLM meeting with local government and state agencies to initiate a long-term strategy for transfer of lands in the **Durango Urban Interface Area**.

Received (\$24K) funding for the Wild Horse program- A variety of partners are involved in the **Spring Creek Wild Horse Herd Management Area** This funding completed a variety of projects including repairs of stock ponds that benefit horses, cattle and wildlife. The repairs were timely in light of the drought and were completed prior to much needed rainfall that filled many ponds. BLM did haul water to the HMA for a brief period and the warm season grasses look healthy.

Received funding under the "**Take it outside**" program – (\$6K) SW Youth Conservation Dolores River recreation site maintenance-The funds were used to employ up to a dozen local youth to work on general maintenance projects at the Bradfield Bridge and Box Elder campgrounds on the Dolores River

Conveyance of 100 acres of public lands to the **Town of Silverton** will be completed once archaeological clearances are finished The Town has leased these lands for the past 10 years. This is expected to be finalized in the summer 2013

Conveyance of the 32nd St. Property to the **City of Durango** is in process and should be completed this year – awaiting a letter from the City. Environmental analysis is underway.

**Disappointment Valley Range Allotment EA** – BLM range conservationists have worked with the permittees and local CCA liaison. The BLM interdisciplinary team is currently updating and completing analysis based on the alternative development from the above-efforts. An environmental assessment will be issued for a 30-day comment period sometime this spring.

TRFO has been working with EPA, State of Colorado and the San Juan County as well as the ARSG regarding the potential listing of the **Cement Creek Area** (including American Tunnel) as CERCLA. A recent community meeting related that the Agencies are in consensus that this area will NOT be listed within the next year or two in hopes that ongoing data collection will provide insight for future solutions. Data collection has begun and may provide needed information by the end of FY13.

The **Animas River Stakeholders Group** (ARSG) is compiling information on water quality, historical info and analysis of the area to begin a potential CERCLA process. The BLM has hired a technical company to look at methods to treat, and EPA is working on a Basin Wide

Gas exploration is slow right now – with low prices, interest in new production is low. Interest and activity is beginning in the HD Mountains – as covered by the San Juan Basin EIS. Public interest could again hit the forefront. risk analysis.

With the combination of Energy Fuels and Denison Corp, there may be a renewed interest in uranium exploration in Colorado. To date, there has been discussion with BLM but no proposals.



## United States Department of the Interior

### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Tres Rios Field Office  
29211 Highway 184  
Dolores, Colorado 81323



In Reply Refer To:

3500 (CO-SO40)

October 26, 2012

### **OPTIONAL REPLY: November 26, 2012**

The Bureau of Land Management, Tres Rios Field Office (TRFO) has completed the preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) for the RM Potash Exploration Project (DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2009-0076). The BLM is initiating this 30-day comment period to provide the public an opportunity to review the preliminary EA and provide comments.

In 2009, RM Potash applied for 21 potassium prospecting permits. The BLM proposed action analyzes potential effects of approving up to six prospecting permit applications (COC73567, COC73569, COC73572, COC73574, COC73576, and COC74370) and implementing the associated exploration plan(s). The six prospecting permits would cover 9,954 acres. The plans include use San Miguel County roads K8, F4, 4733 and Dolores Co. Road B as well as road construction and improvement on private land. Total length of substantial improvement and/or construction is approximately 4.2 miles (see attached map). Up to six (6) exploratory drilling sites (approximately 250'x 250' or 1.4 acres) could be constructed, and a core hole drilled approximately 6,000 feet deep to recover potassium chloride mineral samples from the Paradox formation. The total disturbance for all six drill sites and associated access road improvements is estimated at 19 acres.

This project is only in the exploration phase to determine whether a valuable deposit of potash exists in the area. If the initial drilling results are promising, additional drill sites may be proposed and evaluated through additional environmental analysis.

BLM is encouraging interested public to review the environmental documents on-line by accessing the document at:

[http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM\\_Information/nepa/TRFO\\_NEPA.html](http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/nepa/TRFO_NEPA.html)

A hard copy of the documents will also be available for review at the BLM - Tres Rios field office public room, located at the above address. Alternately you may request a hard copy be sent to you by calling (970) 882-7296.

Written comments<sup>1</sup> concerning this analysis should be submitted by November 26, 2012 to the Bureau of Land Management by sending to:

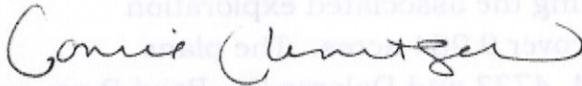
E-mail PotashCommentTresrios@blm.gov

Postal Service BLM Tres Rios Field Office  
ATTN: Potash EA  
29211 Hwy. 184  
Dolores, CO 81323

Fax 970-882-6841

If you have questions regarding this analysis or process, please contact James Blair, Geologist a (970) 882-7296.

Sincerely,



Connie Clementson  
Field Office Manager

<sup>1</sup> By including your address, phone number, email address, or other personally identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personally identifying information – may be made publically available at any time. While you can as us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.