

ACEC Evaluations for Existing and Nominated ACEC – Relevance and Importance

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1. Background - Areas of Environmental Concern, Monticello RMP

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires that in the development of land use plans, priority be given to the designation and protection of areas of critical environmental concerns (ACECs). It defines ACECs as public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards.

FLPMA

In the development and revision of land use plans, the Secretary shall...give priority to the designation and protection of areas of critical environmental concern.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), Title II, Sec 202(c) 3

“The term “areas of critical environmental concern” [referred to as ACECs] means areas within the public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards”.

FLPMA, Title I, Sec. 103 (a)

43 CFR 1610.7-2

In order to be a potential ACEC, both of the following criteria shall be met [See Sections 6.3 and 6.4]:

1. Relevance – There shall be present a significant historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or a natural hazard.
2. Importance – The above described value, resource, system, process or hazard shall have substantial significance and cause. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern.

BLM Manual 1613

The BLM manual 1613 provides direction for identifying, analyzing, designing, monitoring and managing ACECs. Key points are:

- The ACEC designation indicates to the public that the BLM recognizes that an area has significant values and has established special management measures to protect those values.
- Designation of ACECs is only done through the resource management planning process, either in an RMP itself or in a plan amendment.
- To be designated as an ACEC, an area must require special management attention to protect the important and relevant values.
- Potential ACECs are identified as early as possible in the planning process.
- Existing ACECs are subject to reconsideration when plans are revised.
- Members of the public or other agencies may nominate an area for consideration as a potential ACEC. BLM personnel are encouraged to recommend areas for consideration as ACECs.
- There are no formal or special procedures associated with nomination.

- An interdisciplinary team evaluates potential ACECs to determine if they meet the relevance and importance criteria.
- If an area is found not to meet the relevance and importance criteria, the analysis supporting that conclusion must be included in the Resource Management Plan (RMP) and associated EIS.

Notice of Intent (NOI) – BLM Monticello Field Office

The BLM Monticello and Moab Field Offices published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register, Vol. 68, No. 107, Wednesday, June 4, 2003 requesting information and input from the public on the RMP process, including special designations.

San Juan County Perspectives on ACECs

A letter dated April 12, 2004 from the Chairman of the San Juan County Commission expressed the concerns of the Commission as follows:

“The troubling part of this [issue]centers around a few subjective words. Words such as “irreparable”, “substantial”, “significance”, and “distinctiveness” are all words that can have many meanings to many people or groups of people. What someone might view as substantial, significant or distinctive we might view as acceptable or common place. The word “irreparable” raises the bar substantially when used in this context. Under the definition it means destroyed or ruined beyond repair. At this point there is little evidence that this is occurring in many areas being nominated for ACEC status. In fact, the mere designation as an ACEC might actually cause harm to an area because of the attention called to what the agency is trying to protect.”

“Another issue is that many groups want to use ACEC in place of, and in the same context as wilderness. In other words, allow no use of the area. This is totally unacceptable to San Juan County. With the tool box that BLM and other federal land management agencies is afforded, special designations, such as ACECs should be made only when there is eminent danger, or an overwhelming and compelling threat to a resource that the agency has no other means of protecting.”

“In our opinion, some of the proposed ACECs that have been nominated to date are not threatened, in eminent danger of being threatened, nor is there a special hazard or a compelling need justifying special protection. The agency has tools for managing off highway vehicles, oil and gas exploration, or threatened and endangered habitats without creating large expanses of public lands in special protective zones. ... Again, we ask that you consider these special designations only as a last resort, not a first option.”

State of Utah Perspective on ACECs

The State of Utah formalized their position on ACECs in Utah Code Section 63-38d-401(7)(a) enacted by the Utah Legislature, and signed by the Governor of Utah in 2004.

“The state’s support for designation of Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) as defined in 43 USC 1702, within federal land management plans will be withheld until:

- it is clearly demonstrated that the proposed area contains historic, cultural or scenic values, fish or wildlife resources, or natural processes, which are unique or substantially significant on a regional basis, or contain natural hazards which significantly threaten human life or safety;

- the regional values, resources, processes, or hazards have been analyzed by the federal agency for impacts resulting from potential actions which are consistent with the multiple-use, sustained-yield principles, and that this analysis describes the rationale for any special management attention required to protect, or prevent irreparable damage to the values, resources, processes, or hazards;

- the difference between special management attention required for an ACEC and normal multiple-use management has been identified, and justified, and that any determination of irreparable damage has been analyzed and justified for short, and long term horizons;

- it is clearly demonstrated that the proposed designations are not a substitute for a wilderness suitability recommendation; and

- the conclusions of all studies are submitted to the state for review, and the results in support of or in opposition to, are included in all planning documents.”

ACECs and Wilderness Study Areas

“Where ACEC values and wilderness characteristics coincide, the special management associated with an ACEC, if designated, may also protect wilderness characteristics.”

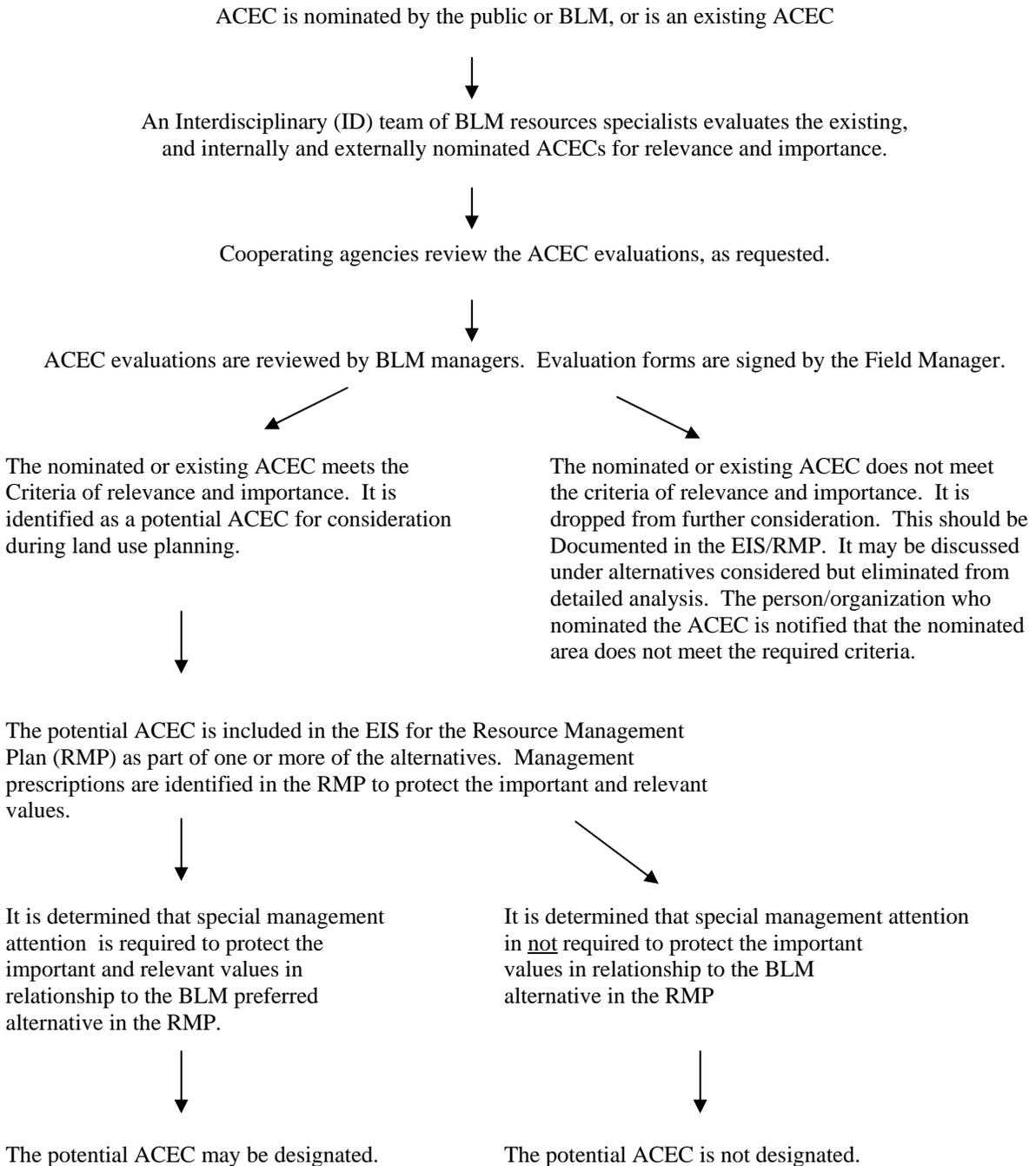
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“D. Relation to Wilderness Study Areas. ACEC’s may be designated within wilderness areas. ACEC designation shall not to be used as a substitute for a wilderness suitability recommendation. If an ACEC is proposed within or adjacent to a Wilderness Study Area (WSA), the RMP or plan amendment shall provide a clear description of the relationship of the ACEC to the recommendation being made for the WSA. The relationship shall be described to the level of detail required to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation by the public”

BLM Manual 1613.33D

Existing ACECs that are located within or encompass existing wilderness study areas (WSAs) include Bridger Jack Mesa, Butler Wash North, Dark Canyon, Cedar Mesa, and Indian Creek. Descriptions of each of the existing ACECs in relationship to the WSAs are included in Section 4 – Existing ACECs under each individual ACEC.

2. The ACEC Process - Table



3. Summary

The purpose of this report is to document the process used by the Monticello Field Office (MFO) Interdisciplinary (ID) Team to evaluate existing and nominated areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) within the field office. Only BLM lands are evaluated, not State or private lands.

The ACEC analysis is an integral part of the planning process for the MFO in establishing a new RMP. Based on this analysis, potential ACECs will be considered in a range of alternatives in the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the RMP. Potential ACECs may be designated in the Record of Decision for the RMP if it is determined that special management is required to protect the relevant and important values from irreparable damage.

Ten currently existing ACECs with a total of 513,452 acres have been reconsidered during this evaluation process.

Table 3.1 Monticello FO ACECs from 1991 RMP

Existing ACECs	Value(s)	1991 RMP Acreage ¹	Existing ACEC Mapped Acreage per ArcView ²
Alkali Ridge ACEC	Cultural	35,890	39,202
Bridger Jack Mesa ACEC	Near-relict vegetation	5,290	6,260
Butler Wash ACEC	Scenic	13,870	17,463
Cedar Mesa ACEC	Cultural, Scenic	323,760	295,335
Dark Canyon ACEC	Scenic	62,040	61,659
Hovenweep ACEC	Cultural, Habitat Management	1,500	1,798
Indian Creek ACEC	Scenic	8,640	8,509
Lavender Mesa ACEC	Relict vegetation	640	649
Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC	Scenic	78,390	79,017
Shay Canyon ACEC	Cultural, & Special Emphasis Area	1,770	3,560
Total		531,790	513,452

¹Acreage listed in 1991 RMP

²Acreage for current existing ACECs determined by ArcView software program

BLM and Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA) nominated areas covering approximately 1.3 million acres; some of these nominations overlap portions of existing ACECs, while approximately 400,000 acres of specific nominations did not duplicate any currently existing ACEC areas.

Table 3.2 Nominated ACECs by BLM Field Offices

Nominated ACEC	Value(s)	Acreage per Arc View
Lockhart Basin	Scenic	56,293
Valley of the Gods	Scenic	34,771
Total		91,064

Table 3.3 Nominated ACECs by SUWA

Nominated ACEC	Value(s)	Acreage
Canyonlands	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	175,365
Cedar Mesa	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	379,336
Dark Canyon	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	163,678
Monument Canyon	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	46,830
Redrock Plateau	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	323,473
San Juan River	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	22,179
White Canyon	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	101,377
Total		1,212,238

Using the evaluation method described in this report (Section 6), the BLM analyzed existing and nominated areas for the presence of relevant and important values that may require special management attention to protect important resources from irreparable damage. Based on relevance and importance criteria, the BLM identified twelve potential ACECs (532,723 acres) within the boundaries of the Monticello Field Office. These twelve ACECs with a total of 532,723 acres will be proposed in a range of alternatives in the DEIS.

Table 3.4 Summary Table of Potential ACECs

	Area Name	Value(s)	Acreage
1	Alkali Ridge	Cultural	39,196
2	Bridger Jack Mesa	Near-relict vegetation	6,225
3	Butler Wash North	Scenic	17,365
4	Cedar Mesa	Cultural and Scenic, with Special Emphasis Areas – Grand Gulch (37,433 acres) for Cultural, Valley of the Gods (34,771 acres) for Scenic, and Arch Canyon (2,910 acres) for Cultural, Wildlife and Natural System	306,572
5	Dark Canyon	Scenic, and Wildlife	61,660
6	Hovenweep	Cultural with Special Wildlife Habitat	2,439
7	Lockhart Basin	Scenic	47,783
8	Indian Creek	Scenic	8,510
9	Lavender Mesa	Relict-vegetation	649
10	Shay Canyon	Cultural	119
11	San Juan River	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife and Natural System	7,590
12	Valley of the Gods	Scenic	34,615
	Total		532,723

The Interdisciplinary (ID) Team - The evaluation of existing and nominated ACEC areas is an interdisciplinary process. The ID team evaluates each pertinent resource (Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife,

and Natural Systems and Processes) or hazard to determine if they meet the relevance and importance criteria. The ID Team met seven times to consider and evaluate the existing and nominated ACECs for relevance and importance criteria.

Table 3.5 Monticello Field Office Interdisciplinary Team

Name	Resource / Specialty
Todd Berkenfield	Lead - ACECs, Planning, Wild and Scenic Rivers,
Tammy Wallace	Air Quality, Wildlife, Woodlands
Nancy Shearin	Cultural, Paleontology
Brenda Dale	Fire / Fuels
Andy Boone	G.I.S
Maxine Deeter	Lands and Realty, VRM
Ted McDougall	Minerals, Geology
Gary Torres	NEPA, RMP Planning Project Manager
Nick Sandberg	Range, Assistant Field Office Manager
Paul Curtis	Range, Riparian/Wetlands, Water
Summer Schulz	Range, Vegetation, Weeds
Scott Berkenfield	Recreation, Wilderness
David Himmerich	Recreation, Wilderness
Linda Richmond	Recreation, San Juan River Ranger
Mark Meloy	Recreation, San Juan River Ranger
Nick Boretti	Recreation, San Juan River Ranger
Scott Edwards	Recreation, Kane Gulch Ranger
Laura Lantz	Recreation, Kane Gulch Ranger

This report presents:

- Summary of Findings – Summary of process and findings
- Existing ACECs Relevance and Importance Descriptions – Written descriptions of existing ACECs
- Nominations by BLM – Written descriptions of ACECs nominated by the BLM
- Nominations by the Public – Written verbatim descriptions as submitted by Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA) for ACEC nominations
- ACEC Evaluation Process and Criteria – Description of the Process and Criteria utilized by the ID team to evaluate relevance and importance for ACECs
- Appendix A – Relevance and Importance Criteria Evaluations for Existing and Nominated ACECs, including special management prescriptions for each potential ACEC
- Maps - Existing ACECs
 - BLM Nominated ACECs
 - SUWA Nominated ACECs
 - Potential ACECs

In September 2004, a draft report was distributed to cooperating agencies, San Juan County, the State of Utah, Department of Natural Resources, and BLM Moab Field Office, for review and comments. Following consideration of comments received, this report was finalized. Areas determined as potential ACECs will be further considered in a range of alternatives within the DEIS [1613.21D].

4. Existing ACECs

There are ten currently existing ACECs within the Monticello Field Office, established through the 1991 RMP (See Summary - Table 3.1, and descriptions below). By policy, existing ACECs are subject to reconsideration when land use plans are revised. *1613.21A.1*. The ID Team evaluations for both the existing and nominated ACECs are found in Appendix A.

- **Alkali Ridge ACEC**, 39,202 acres. Resource Value Protected – Cultural

Alkali Ridge ACEC lies between Alkali Canyon and Montezuma Canyon and includes Alkali Ridge National Historic Landmark (2,030 acres). The majority of land is owned by the BLM except for scattered state sections and some private land holdings.

Relevance/Cultural: This area is one of the best known and influential examples of scientific archeological investigation in the Southwestern United States. This area contains numerous large cultural structural sites that have revealed evidence of the full range of prehistoric pueblo occupation from Basketmaker III to Pueblo III (500-1300AD), and represent the defining morphological site type for the prehistoric Pueblo II cultural period (900-1150 AD).

Importance/Cultural: The cultural resources located in this area are regionally and nationally significant, and include Basketmaker and Pueblo village sites often reaching densities of 200 sites per square mile. Special management attention is required to protect the fragile nature and extensiveness of the cultural resources to prevent irreparable damage, resulting primarily from potential oil and gas development. Vegetative manipulation associated with grazing and agricultural activities has also contributed to damaged cultural resources in the past. The cultural resources found here are irreplaceable and extremely vulnerable to oil and gas exploration and development, intense pot hunting, increased site visitation, and road maintenance in the area.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See Table 4.1.

Rationale for Designation: The Alkali Ridge ACEC provides protective management for a large number of high density cultural sites of the Basketmaker and Pueblo cultures including a National Historic Landmark.

- **Bridger Jack Mesa ACEC**, 5,260 acres. Resource Value Protected - Near-relict vegetation.

Bridger Jack Mesa ACEC covers a large mesa top consisting of pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush-grass parks. The mesa is public land except for approximately 420 acres of state land. The cliffs surrounding the mesa top form a natural boundary providing a relatively isolated area that has not been grazed since 1957. The area supports wintering mule deer, and year-round populations of smaller animals, and in the past few years some wintering of elk. The Butler Wash North ACEC lies within the Butler Wash WSA.

Relevance/Near Relict vegetation: The mesa top meets the relevant criteria because of its isolated, near-relict plant community that remains unaltered by human intervention. Bridger Jack Mesa is a natural enclosure for study of a vegetative community released from grazing by domestic livestock.

The adjacent public lands are open to multiple uses. These uses do not threaten the special value of the area because the cliffs surrounding the mesa top do not allow encroachment of adjacent activities.

Importance/Near Relict vegetation: Bridger Jack Mesa provides a control area to study cycles in the recovery of pinyon-juniper woodland and sagebrush-grass communities from livestock grazing. The vegetative community is important for study and comparison purposes to design management for pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush-grass communities in other parts of the Colorado Plateau, and is, therefore, more than locally significant.

Grazing management has historically been affected by oil and gas development, the presence of cultural resources, wildlife habitat conflicts, and recreational activities. Bridger Jack Mesa ACEC provides an area, naturally protected, with the opportunity for comparative studies without conflicting uses.

Utah State University, Department of Range Science, in a letter written March 25, 1985, recommended that the [then current] RMP consider ACECs and special ecological areas. Van Pelt recognized the value of the mesa for scientific study and comparison; data on soils and vegetation of the area are available in his (1978) thesis. In the 1980s the Nature Conservancy supported the establishment of Bridger Jack [and Lavender Mesa] ACEC for the protection of near-relict plant communities.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See Table 4.1.

Rationale for Designation: The Bridger Jack ACEC provides protected near-relict vegetation for comparative studies for rangeland health and management.

Relationship to Bridger Jack Mesa WSA: Bridger Jack Mesa WSA (5,290 acres) covers 100% of the Bridger Jack ACEC (5,260 acres).

- **Butler Wash North ACEC**, 13,870 acres. Resource Value Protected – Scenic

Butler Wash North ACEC is located south of and adjacent to Canyonlands National Park, and includes Butler Wash, and several forks of Salt Creek. The ACEC falls within the Canyon Basins Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). Almost all of the ACEC lies within the P (primitive) or SPNM (semi-primitive, non motorized) ROS class, and also lies within the Butler Wash WSA.

Relevance/Scenic: The Butler Wash North ACEC is noted for its rugged terrain composed of high buttes, domes, and sandstone spires. The scenic values of this area are a continuation of the remarkable rock formations – spires, domes and buttes - seen in the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park. Gray, cream, coral and red sandstones band the walls of the canyons of Salt Creek. The southern part of the ACEC flat areas drop abruptly into the heads of the various forks of Salt Creek.

Importance/Scenic: The scenic values are important to regional, national, and international visitors who travel to Canyonlands NP and backpack into the remote, natural areas adjacent to the park. Salt Creek is one such area. The scenic values of the park and those of the Butler Wash ACEC are not separated at the boundary but are interrelated.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See Table 4.1

Rationale for Designation: The ID Team recommended that Butler Wash North ACEC be included in a range of alternatives to protect scenic values. An alternative to the current ACEC management is that the scenic values of Butler Wash North could be protected under the VRM inventory class management program.

Relationship to Butler Wash WSA: Butler Wash North ACEC (13,870 acres) area covers approximately 62% of the combined Butler Wash (22,190 acres) and South Needles (160 acres) WSAs.

- **Cedar Mesa ACEC, 323,760 acres.** Resources Protected – Cultural and Scenic

Cedar Mesa ACEC covers the area between Grand Gulch and Comb Wash and contains the Grand Gulch Archeological District, the Grand Gulch Primitive Area, and two special emphasis areas, Grand Gulch, and Valley of the Gods. The entire area is within the Grand Gulch Plateau SRMA and includes both P and SPNM ROS classes. The Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC overlaps approximately 21,380 acres of the Cedar Mesa ACEC; the special conditions developed for Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC take precedence. Eight WSAs are located within the Cedar Mesa area. The area is all public land owned by the BLM.

Identified for its cultural and scenic resource values, Cedar Mesa ACEC is currently managed to protect its cultural resources, scenic values, and natural values associated with primitive recreation [as determined in the 1991 RMP]. Cultural resources are managed for information potential, public values, and conservation.

Relevance/Cultural: Cultural resources in this area are of regional, national, and worldwide significance because of the wealth of intact Basketmaker and Pueblo cliff dwellings. Preservation of the sites is excellent; many are nearly or totally intact. The area is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Grand Gulch/Cedar Mesa area was extensively occupied by the Puebloan culture from before C.E. 500 to 1270. In surveyed areas, site densities of 20-200 sites per square mile have been recorded. The sites are of many types and include lithic scatters, petroglyph and pictograph panels, Basketmaker pit houses and pit structures, Puebloan kivas, multi-room surface dwellings, granaries, and cliff dwellings. The area probably contains the greatest concentration of Basketmaker II and III sites in the Southwest. Grand Gulch is also known particularly for its well preserved cliff dwellings and variety of rock art.

Importance/Cultural: Five major sets of data [artifacts, environment, stratigraphy, architecture, and rock art] are available for scientific study and visitor viewing. Recent research has demonstrated that Grand Gulch/Cedar Mesa has been occupied for over 7,000 years. Most of the occupation has taken place in the large dry alcoves, but some sites are also located on the benches at the bottom of the gulch. Visitation to the area increased to such an extent that a permit system was initiated in 1997 to help protect the cultural resources.

Protection of the fragile cultural resources found here is important because they are irreplaceable and extremely vulnerable to activities that create adverse change in the sites. Intense recreational use threatens the cultural resources through surface collection, site trampling, pot hunting, and the consequent increase in erosion. Even though numerous artifacts have been removed from the area, both legally and illegally since the 1890s, an enormous amount of material remains for scientific study by archeologists.

Grand Gulch/Cedar Mesa is the location where Richard Wetherill was finally able to demonstrate that a cultural group he identified as the Basketmakers predated the prehistoric Pueblo people. This concept has become a basic underpinning of Southwestern Archeology, and is one of the significant discoveries in North American Archeology.

Relevance/Scenic: The scenery of Valley of the Gods includes renowned massive rock formations including buttes, spires, fins with high canyon walls on the north and east sides, framing the valley.

Importance/Scenic: The Valley of the Gods area draws regional, national and international visitation to view its unique and accessible scenic vistas.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See Table 4.1.

Rationale for Designation: Documented public interest includes concern by professional archeologists, recreationists, individuals, and the Utah SHPO over preserving the cultural resources found here for public and scientific uses. Valley of the Gods is a renowned scenic area providing visitors an accessible and unique view of the diverse rock formations and colors of the desert environment.

Relationship to WSAs: Within Cedar Mesa, Grand Gulch WSA acreage (105,520 acres) includes those of Bullet, Pine, Shiecks Flat, and Slickhorn Canyon WSAs. On the eastern side of Grand Gulch, still located in the Cedar Mesa area, are Mule Canyon WSA (5,990 acres), Fish Creek WSA (46,440 acres), and Road Canyon WSA (52,420 acres). The total WSA acreage (210,370 acres) on Cedar Mesa covers approximately 65% of the Cedar Mesa ACEC (323,760 acres) area.

- **Dark Canyon ACEC**, 62,040 acres. Resources Values Protected –Scenic and natural values associated with primitive recreation.

The Dark Canyon ACEC coincides with the Dark Canyon Primitive Area, and has significant primitive recreation values. The area adjoins the Dark Canyon Wilderness Area in the Manti-LaSal National Forest to the east, the proposed Needles Wilderness in Canyonlands NP to the north, and the proposed Dark Canyon Wilderness in Glen Canyon National Recreation to the west. The Dark Canyon ACEC also falls within the Dark Canyon Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), and within the Dark Canyon WSA.

The boundary of the ACEC is generally defined by topography with canyon rims forming a natural boundary around most of the area, thereby providing a manageable area unit. The canyon systems connect with the Colorado River canyons within Glen Canyon NRA, and include Dark, Gypsum, Fable Valley, and several smaller canyons. The area is all BLM administered public land.

Relevance / Scenic and Natural Area: The Dark Canyon area is relevant because of the scenic values associated with the comparatively rare primitive recreation area, and the pristine, outstanding quality of those values. The area offers a diverse ecosystem in a naturally scenic area.

Importance / Scenic, and Natural Area: Dark Canyon ACEC is regionally and nationally important based on the amount of visitation received due to the extremely high quality of the scenic values present [Quality “A” scenery from the 1980 Visual Resource Inventory, p. 11], which contribute to its popularity, and its adjacent federally administered areas: Canyonlands National Park, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and the Manti-LaSal National Forest.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See Table 4.1.

Rationale for Designation: The Dark Canyon ACEC offers protection for this pristine and dramatically scenic area, and the natural values associated with primitive recreation.

Modification: In the 1991 RMP, the Dark Canyon ACEC was described as protecting values for Recreation/Visual because the two programs -- Recreation and Visual Resource Management (VRM) -- were combined and both managed under the Recreation program. Since that time, the two programs have been separated out and are each now managed under their own resource program. Scenic is a relevant value under the ACEC evaluation processes. Recreation is not a relevant value considered under current ACEC guidance, rather Recreation is a series of activities and, therefore, not evaluated under the current ACEC guidelines. (See Appendix, pp 22-27)

Relationship to Dark Canyon WSA: Dark Canyon ACEC (61,659 acres) covers approximately 91% of the Dark Canyon WSA (68,030 acres).

- **Hovenweep ACEC, 1,500 acres. Resources Values Protected - Cultural and Habitat Management**

Hovenweep ACEC surrounds the Square Tower Unit of the National Park Service (NPS) Hovenweep National Monument (NM) and was designated to protect cultural and wildlife values with two special emphasis areas within the ACEC, Cajon Pond (10 acres) for wildlife habitat, and a visual protection zone (880 acres) for the unobstructed viewing of cultural sites.

The two special emphasis areas, Cajon Pond, and the visual protection zone are currently managed within the Hovenweep ACEC. Cajon Pond provides important waterfowl and wildlife habitat. The visual emphasis zone contains an area that was designated as no surface occupancy (NSO) for oil and gas leasing prior to the adoption of the 1991 RMP.

The adjacent land area in Colorado was designated as Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (COANM) on June 9, 2000 by Presidential proclamation to protect cultural and natural resources on a landscape scale.

Hovenweep National Monument, Utah/Colorado, is an NPS cultural / interpretive site with tower and building ruins occurring over a wide range of the local area. Hovenweep NM is adjacent to the BLM Hovenweep ACEC and to a Utah state section.

Relevance/Cultural: The area of BLM Hovenweep ACEC is relevant because it is adjacent to the NPS Hovenweep NM, contains cultural resources in the same vicinity and of the same types, and adds cohesiveness to the management of the National Monument.

Importance/Cultural: Hovenweep ACEC provides an additional area of protection to the NPS Hovenweep NM located on the Utah / Colorado border. In April 1987 a document titled, *Cooperative Management Strategies* was signed by the BLM Colorado State Director, the BLM Utah State Director, and the NPS Regional Director of the Rocky Mountain Region. The strategies were:

“Resource Protection Zone associated with the Square Tower, Holly, Hackberry, and Cutthroat Castle units of Hovenweep National Monument. ... These strategies are intended to provide for the protection, research, and interpretation of cultural resources within the resource protection zone while maintaining the concept of multiple-use on BLM lands.”

This cooperative agreement specified values to be supported including cultural resources, research, curatorial and visual management for the sites, and wildlife management.

Relevance/Habitat Management: Cajon Pond, a constructed reservoir, provides important habitat for migrating waterfowl and other wildlife in a desert, semi-arid climate with very little surface water.

Importance/Habitat Management: A riparian area with cattails and sedges, Cajon Pond provides cover and a food source for migrating waterfowl; some waterfowl inhabit the area year-round. Included in the items listed under the cooperative management agreement were the protection and maintenance of wildlife habitat that enhance viewing associated with interpretive efforts, and the protection of riparian zones and springs associated with cultural resources.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See Table 4.1.

Rationale for Designation: The Hovenweep ACEC provides a visual buffer for Hovenweep National Monument (NPS), protection of like cultural sites, and wildlife habitat / riparian zone associated with interagency cultural resources.

Proposal for Modification - Potential Increase in Hovenweep ACEC boundary and acreage:
Since the designation of this ACEC in the 1991 RMP, BLM has acquired an additional parcel of land that borders the BLM Hovenweep ACEC on the east, and the western boundary of the Canyon Of the Ancients NM (COANM) in Colorado. It is proposed that this parcel of approximately 620 acres be added to the current BLM Hovenweep ACEC. The additional acreage will fill in a previously privately owned parcel between the two national monuments, Hovenweep NM under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, and COANM, under the jurisdiction of the Colorado BLM, both areas established to protect cultural values. The added acres would be contiguous with the current BLM [Utah] Hovenweep ACEC on the west and with COANM on the east. (See Appendix, pp 26-30)

- **Indian Creek ACEC, 8,640 acres. Resource Value Protected –Scenic.**

Indian Creek ACEC is located in the northern area of the MFO resource area, east of and adjacent to Canyonlands NP / Needles District. The Indian Creek ACEC protects the scenic view from Needles Overlook across BLM land into Canyonlands NP. The area includes the lower end of Indian Creek and Rustler Canyon. The ACEC corresponds roughly with the Indian Creek WSA, but is slightly larger.

Relevance/Scenic: The Indian Creek ACEC is noted for its incised, meandering canyons which wind through dark red mudstones, forming many rounded spires and “hoo-doo”, boulders atop eroded rock that look like mushrooms. These various formations continue uninterrupted into the adjacent national park.

Importance/Scenic: The scenic values are based on the rock formations in the area similar to those found in Canyonlands NP, which contains some of the most unique land forms in the world [Shiozwa and Larson, 1980]. Although the area is scenic quality A when viewed from the overlook, viewed from the basin the area appears less natural due to resource activities that have taken place within the basin. The area provides extensive scenic viewsheds seen from the eastern rims high above the area into Canyonlands NP.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See Table 4.1.

Rationale for Designation: The ID Team determined that protection of the scenic value could be managed based on VRM I under the ROS-P class and suggested a range of alternatives that could include No Action; release of this ACEC with protection as noted for VRM-I; or inclusion of the

nominated potential Lockhart Basin ACEC within a combined potential Lockhart Basin-Indian Creek ACEC area.

Relationship to Indian Creek WSA: Indian Creek WSA (6,870 acres) covers approximately 80% of the Indian Creek ACEC (8,640 acres).

- **Lavender Mesa ACEC**, 640 acres. Resource Value Protected - Relict vegetation.

Lavender Mesa is isolated and inaccessible to man and herbivores by ground routes. Even small mammals such as rabbits and mice appear to be absent. Most of the mesa is pinyon-juniper woodlands with a small 20 acre sagebrush-grass park. The entire mesa is BLM administered public land, and its boundary is high cliffs protecting the mesa top from access.

Relevance/Relic vegetation: The vegetative community present on the top of Lavender Mesa is unique because it has developed without the influence of grazing animals and most other mammals. The area is ecologically relevant because it presents an isolated, relict plant community that remains unaltered by human or animal intervention.

Importance/Relict vegetation: The vegetative community is important for study and comparison purposes to design management for pinyon-juniper woodland and sagebrush-grass communities in other parts of the Colorado Plateau. The area offers an unimpacted area naturally protected from other resource activities. In a range of comparison of relict plant communities, Lavender Mesa provides a baseline area free from even small animals, while Bridger Jack Mesa provides an area protected from human activities but with the presence of large and small mammals.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See Table 4.1.

Rationale for Designation: The Lavender Mesa ACEC provides protected relict vegetation for comparative studies for rangeland management.

- **Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC**, 78,390 acres. Resource Value Protected – Scenic

The currently existing Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC covers a specified visual zone along Highways U-95, U-261, and U-276, and part of the White Canyon viewshed. Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC is currently managed to maintain scenic quality as viewed from these highways. In the White Canyon viewshed [U-95 west from U-276], the south boundary of the corridor is the toe of the slope of Fry Point and Windgate Mesa. The north boundary is generally the toe of the slopes of the mesas north of White Canyon. With the exception of the area looking from Highway 95 north across White Canyon, the Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC is approximately 1 mile wide [1/2 mile on each side of the road].

Relevance/Scenic: The ID Team considered [both in 1987 and 2004] the scenic qualities of the area along the corridor and determined that scenic quality was not present as defined by the criteria. The viewsheds are typical of those found throughout the Colorado Plateau.

Importance/Scenic: In the 1991 RMP the Field Office agreed to recognize the visual elements of the highway corridor and their importance to tourism to the state due to the cooperative study efforts in the late 1970's with the state, county and other federal agencies, "*U-95*", *An Interagency Highway Corridor Study of Utah State Highways U-95, U-261, U-263, U-276, Notom Road.*". [*Proposed*

RMP FEIS, Vol. 1. Page 1-197, pg 1.] Route U-95 was subsequently designated [after 1987] a Scenic By-way by the State of Utah.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See Table 4.1

Rationale for Designation: The ID Team considered the relevance and importance of the existing Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC and determined that it did not have relevant values.

- **Shay Canyon ACEC, 1,770 acres.** Resource Values Protected - Cultural, and Aquatic Habitat

Shay Canyon ACEC currently includes cultural sites and sections of the upper Indian Creek drainage with a special emphasis area for the protection of aquatic and riparian habitat, delineated as a 275-foot corridor along upper Indian Creek.

Relevance/Cultural: Rock art sites covering the walls of Shay Canyon are the significant cultural resources along Indian Creek. Native Americans who have visited these sites, recognize images that relate to their migration history. Dinosaur tracks in the bedrock of the Shay Canyon streambed are a unique visual reminder of the area's distant geologic and natural past.

The Special Emphasis Area (200 acres) located in the upper portion of Indian Creek is currently managed to support riparian/aquatic habitat.

Importance/Cultural: Cultural resources in this area represent the interface between two prehistoric cultural groups: Anasazi and Fremont. This interface is represented in the unique motifs in the rock art and within site features and artifacts such as ceramics and baskets. The area provides an opportunity for cultural scientific research, and paleontology study.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See Table 4.1.

Rationale for Designation: Significant cultural resources in the form of rock art panels are located in the Shay Canyon ACEC near the canyon's intersection with Indian Creek.

Proposal for Modification: The ID Team recommends that Shay Canyon ACEC boundary be modified to include only the area surrounding the mouth of Shay Canyon with its paleontological and cultural values. Newspaper Rock is protected through designation as a National Historic Landmark. The stream corridor is protected through management conditions for floodplains/riparian areas. It is proposed by the ID Team that the riparian/aquatic Special Emphasis Area be dropped as it is adequately protected by three exclosures as well as the special conditions for floodplain/riparian areas. (See Appendix, pp 43-46)

Table 4.1 Special Management Consideration for BLM ACECs designated in the 1991 RMP

Table 5.1 Existing ACEC's Special Management Considerations															
ACEC	Minerals			Land Ownership		Livestock Use	Conditional Fire Suppress.	Open /Closed	OHV Use Designations		Woodland Products	Improvements			
	Leasing (category)	Disposal	Entry	Public	Segregated from entry				Limited Existing vs. designated roads and trails	VRM class		Surface Disturbance (revegetation)	Habitat	Watershed	Vegetation treatments
Alkali Ridge	2; geo.	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y		Existing roads/trails	III	Y	5-yr.	Y	NA	Y
Bridger Jack Mesa	3; geo.	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	C	NA	**	N	N	N	N	N
Butler Wash	3; geo.	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	C	NA	I	N	1-yr.	NA	NA	NA
Cedar Mesa (Valley of the Gods; Grand Gulch) (ROS-P)	2; geo.	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y		Designated roads/trails	I	Y	5-yr.	Y	NA	Y
	3;	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y								
	4	N	*	Y	Y	Y/N	Y	C	Designated roads/trails	I	N	1-yr.	NA	NA	Non-motorized.
Dark Canyon	3														
	4	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	C	NA	I	N	1-yr.			
Hovenweep (visual zone; Cajon Pond)	2; geo. 3 2	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y		Designated roads/trails	**	N	5-yr.	Y	Y	Y
						N (1-ac.)								N	N
Indian Creek	3; geo.	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	C	NA	I	N	1-yr.	NA	NA	NA
Lavender Mesa	3; geo.	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	C	NA	**	N	5-yr.	N	N	Non-motorized.
Scenic Highway Corridor (Grand Gulch)	3; geo.	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y		Designated roads/trails	I	Y	5-yr.	NA	NA	NA
									GG: exist trails/route						
Shay Canyon (and Upper Indian Creek)	2; geo.	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y		Designated roads/trails	I	N	5-yr.			
													Y	Y	

* RMP: Secretarial Withdrawal requested
 ** Managed as the VRM inventoried class for the area
 Blank columns indicate no mention was made in the RMP

5. Nominated ACECs

Described below are the two BLM nominated ACEC areas with acreages, resource value(s) proposed for protection, relevance and importance of potential area, rationale for designation / non designation, and proposed management prescriptions to protect the values determined relevant and important. The ID Team evaluations for nominated ACECs are found in Appendix A.

Table 5.1 Nominated by BLM Field Offices

Nominated ACEC	Value(s)	Acreage
Lockhart Basin by Moab FO	Scenic	56,293
Valley of the Gods by MFO	Scenic	34,771
Total		91,064

- **Lockhart Basin ACEC Nomination**, (56,293 acres). Resource value for potential protection - Scenic

This ACEC nomination is for protection of scenic values as presented by the VRM specialist in the Moab Field Office. The area includes Lower Indian Creek, Rustler, Horsethief, and Lockhart Canyons. A potential ACEC for Lockhart Basin was also presented in the 1989-1991 RMP process to protect scenic values as viewed from the Needles / Canyonlands overlook on Hatch Point. This overlook and Anticline Overlook are within the Grand Resource Area (Moab Field Office). The BLM Moab Field Office is proposing a Canyon Rim potential ACEC with VRM management class II adjacent to the MFO Lockhart Basin Potential ACEC in the current RMP process. The resource area viewed to the west from those overlooks lies within the MFO resource area.

Within the potential ACEC, 56,293 acres are public lands. The area is bounded on the north by the Colorado River, on the east by the cliffs of Hatch Point [the Moab and Monticello FOs boundary], and on the west by Canyonlands National Park. The southern boundary is defined by a series of connecting “D” roads that run west to east to the first, largest northern canyon off of Hart’s Draw.

The Lockhart Basin potential ACEC overlays the Indian Creek ACEC [see existing Indian Creek ACEC page 15 above for the Indian Creek description]. The Lockhart Basin area was inventoried under the VRM system (Shiozawa and Larson, 1980) and found to be scenic quality A and unique or very rare within its physiographic province.

Relevance/Scenic: The special value identified is one of outstanding scenic qualities in terms of diversity of landforms and colors. The landform within the area is typified by outstanding rock formations, including rounded spires, high truncated ledges, and cliffs. Colors range from light pink and white sandstone along the lower Indian Creek areas to white, pink, red, and dark reddish-purple in the ledges and various formations. The color contrasts change with the time of day and the differing light cast on the formations. Some of the most unique and spectacular combinations of rock formations in the area are within the viewshed with miles of vistas looking deep into Canyonlands NP.

Importance/Scenic: The area is viewed by local, regional, national and international visitors, who include comments in the visitor registers such as, “More scenic than the Grand Canyon”, “Leave it as it is”, and “Don’t change it”. The unique characteristics of landforms, the adjacency of Canyonlands National Park, the relative pristine nature of the land, the sensitivity of visitors to scenic resources,

and the ability of the visitor to view the area from many vantage points makes this an extraordinary and important visual resource.

Special management could be necessary to preserve the scenic quality. The basin area has been in the past and continues to be used for grazing, exploration for oil and gas and hardrock minerals, and recreation, and popular for OHV use.

Provision for Special Management Attention: See special management prescriptions listed under Indian Creek Existing ACEC

Rationale for Designation: The vast scenic vistas are unique, offering visitors a panoramic view over an expansive section of varied desert terrain.

The ID Team recommended that Lockhart Basin potential ACEC be included for consideration in the RMP planning process in a range of alternatives incorporating the existing Indian Creek ACEC.

- **Valley of the Gods ACEC Nomination**, 34,771 acres. Resource for potential protection - Scenic

Valley of the Gods lies north of US Highway 163 and extends north to the south cliff line of Cedar Mesa. The Valley of the Gods is currently a Special Emphasis Area within the Cedar Mesa existing ACEC. A portion of Road Canyon WSA lies in the northwestern section of the Valley of the Gods area.

Valley of the Gods is nominated as a potential stand-alone ACEC by the BLM Monticello Field Office ID Team based on scenic values of quality and diversity of landforms.

Relevance/Scenic: Panoramic views can be seen from the highways bordering the area and from the Valley of the Gods Loop [17-mile gravel and clay] Road. The wind-sculpted spires and buttes, and long rock fins resemble animals or “gods”. Seven Sailors, Rooster Butte, Setting Hen Butte, Pyramid Peak, Castle Butte, and Bell Butte are found here. The West Fork of Lime Creek, Lime Creek, and the northwest portion of Lime Ridge are included in this area.

Importance/Scenic: Valley of the Gods provides varying vistas to those who travel the roads surrounding the potential ACEC area or from the Loop Road running through the area. The Valley of the Gods is important to regional, national and international visitors who view and photograph the scenery. The majority of those who travel the state highway system do not take advantage of backcountry (off the road) scenery in a natural setting, instead, the view from the highways are often their scenic experience in the area. The BLM, San Juan County, and the State of Utah have promoted the Loop Road, with easy access off of the highway system, as part of the Trail of the Ancients.

Without protective management prescriptions, the unique scenic values could be damaged by other resource uses and activities, such as potential oil and gas development or mineral-material sales, or other surface disturbing uses and activities. Special management attention would limit surface disturbance to protect scenery from potential adverse impacts, thus preserving it for future visitors to view and enjoy

Rationale for Designation: Valley of the Gods offers remarkable scenic views of many, varied rock formations and towering rims with visual access from the highway system as well as the dirt and gravel Loop Road through the area.

The ID Team suggested that Valley of the Gods be considered for potential ACEC status within a range of alternatives that include leaving it as a Special Emphasis Area within the Cedar Mesa ACEC, or as a stand-alone ACEC for scenic values.

Relationship to Road Canyon WSA: Road Canyon WSA (52,420 acres) overlaps a small portion of the Valley of the Gods (approximately 20%) in the northwest part of the Valley of the Gods area.



southern
utah
wilderness
alliance

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Via Priority Mail

June 16, 2004

Scott Berkenfield, Acting Field Office Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 7
435 North Main Street
Monticello, Utah 84535

Re: ACEC Nominations: Supplemental Information to SUWA's Scoping
Comments on the Monticello FO RMP Revisions

Dear Scott:

The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance appreciates the opportunity to provide the BLM with nominations for areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs), as referenced in our scoping comments submitted for the Monticello Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision, and incorporated herein by reference. As you know, the BLM must give priority to the designation and protection of areas of critical environmental concern in the development and revision of the resource management plan (RMP). See FLPMA sect. 202(c). This applies to the seven attached ACEC nominations, namely: Canyonlands, Cedar Mesa, Dark Canyon, Monument Canyon, Redrock Plateau, San Juan River, and White Canyon.

The Attached ACEC Nominations Meet the Objectives and Criteria for ACEC Designation.

We submit the attached ACECs as interested members of the public under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1972, 43 U.S.C. sect. 1701 *et seq.*, the Administrative Procedures Act, 5 U.S.C. sect. 551 *et seq.*, and pursuant to BLM Manual 1613.21.A.2.a and 1613.41. SUWA's ACEC nominations meet the criteria of relevance and importance as defined in 43 CFR 1610.7-2. For each nomination, SUWA has included a map and text describing the significant historic, cultural, scenic, wildlife, and/or geologic values contained within the area that are more than locally significant, rare, unique, and subject to adverse change. Although the attached ACEC nominations may identify and emphasize particular relevant and important resources, most (if not all) of such nominations actually contain all other resource values listed under the regulations as objectives for ACEC designation.

Moab Office
P.O. Box 968
76 South Main, #9
Moab, Utah 84532
Phone: 435-259-5441

The BLM Must Incorporate Management Prescriptions Designed to Protect ACEC Resource Values.

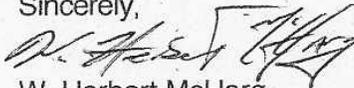
Under either scenario, it is imperative that the BLM attach meaningful management prescriptions to the ACECs that are designed to protect these special landscapes from the two largest threats that plague the Monticello BLM FO: (1) motorized travel and recreation; and (2) oil and gas exploration and development. For each nominated ACEC, SUWA has provided specific management prescriptions that are necessary for protection of the relevant and important resource values recognized within the ACEC boundaries. Simply designating the ACEC, without also adopting these specific management prescriptions would represent a failure to protect such resource values, and thus a failure to comply with the laws and regulations that require the agency to give priority to the protection of ACECs.

The Integrity of the Nominated ACEC Boundaries Must Be Maintained.

Further, shrinking the nominated ACEC boundaries will result in a failure to protect the full extent of the subject relevant and important resources. ACEC designation indicates to the public that the agency recognizes that a particular area has significant values; such values exist, at a minimum, within the boundaries proposed herein. Indeed, the regulations recognize the need to protect such values within the ACEC, but also that subsequent management actions located *outside* of the ACEC boundaries must be sensitive to their potential impact on the ACEC. Therefore, consideration of boundaries should be an inclusive, rather than an exclusive process. (See attached maps depicting the ACEC boundaries for each unit outlined in black).

Thank you for your consideration of SUWA's nominated ACECs during the resource management plan revision process. Please feel free to contact us at any time should you have questions regarding these nominations.

Sincerely,



W. Herbert McHarg
Field Attorney
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

The following verbatim nominations for consideration as ACECs were received June 17, 2004 from Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA). Some of the nominations overlay currently existing BLM ACECs. The BLM Monticello Field Office ID Team evaluations for nominated ACECs are found in Appendix A.

Table 5.2 Nominated by SUWA

Nominated ACEC	Value(s)	Acreage
Canyonlands	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	175,365
Cedar Mesa	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	379,336
Dark Canyon	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	163,678
Monument Canyon	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	46,830
Redrock Plateau	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	323,473
San Juan River	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	22,179
White Canyon	Scenic, Cultural, Wildlife, Natural Systems & processes	101,377
Total		1,212,238

1. CANYONLANDS ACEC NOMINATION

The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance nominates an area east of Canyonlands National Park as the Canyonlands ACEC. The proposed ACEC holds the landscape of infinitely twisted canyons, high domes, cliffs, mesas and anticlines that borders Canyonlands National Park. Creeks flow down from the nearby Abajo Mountains, creating important riparian corridors and carving interesting formations. The road to the Needles Overlook and Highway 211 to Squaw Flat run through and along the edge of the area. Newspaper Rock, a unique and important archaeological site, adjoins the southern edge. Bridger Jack Mesa, Harts Point and Horsehead Rock provide long views of the canyon country. One of these views is of Lockhart Basin, which is below the popular Needles Overlook; the Basin is immediately threatened by oil and gas development.

Several portions of the proposed Canyonlands ACEC are currently designated ACECs: Bridger Jack Mesa ACEC, Lavender Mesa ACEC, Shay Canyon ACEC, and Indian Creek ACEC. The proposed ACEC also holds existing Wilderness Study Areas as well as regions that have been recognized by BLM as possessing wilderness characteristics.

As shown below, the proposed Canyonlands ACEC meets the criteria of relevance and importance, as established and defined in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance

Significant reasons justifying the proposed Canyonlands ACEC designation include:

Scenic Value: Harts Point, one of the major features in the proposed ACEC, is a 5-mile-wide plateau that reaches north from the base of the Abajo Mountains 12 miles into the Canyonlands Basin. Thousand foot high cliffs surround the point on three sides. The Indian Creek area may be the BLM equivalent to the colorful and convoluted rock formations of Canyonlands National Park's Maze district, to which it is adjacent. Lockhart Basin, coveted by internationally recognized photographers, is considered by some to be more scenic than the Grand Canyon. Lavender Mesa's sheer walls of Wingate sandstone, the high cliffs and braided water paths of Harts Draw, and the expansive views of the La Sal Mountains and Canyonland's Needles District, are all also part of this area's remarkable scenic quality.

Cultural value: Twelve thousand acres in the southwest part of the reinventory unit, adjacent to Newspaper Rock, have been identified by BLM as part of a potential area of critical environmental concern for cultural resources. Further, countless archaeological sites are scattered throughout the remaining lands within the proposed ACEC.

Wildlife resources: The proposed ACEC provides habitat for the federally endangered Southwestern willow flycatcher. The area provides critical habitat for other sensitive species, such as the pronghorn, western red bat, ringtail cat, dwarf shrew, Virgin River montane vole, Great Plains rat snake, and the sage grouse. The area also provides habitat for other sensitive species, such as the bald eagle, ferruginous hawk, peregrine falcon, burrowing owl, Swainson's hawk, Lewis' woodpecker, big free-tailed bat, black-footed ferret, fringed myotis, spotted bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, spotted ground squirrel, Utah milk snake, many-lined skink and the desert bighorn sheep.

Natural systems and processes: Sensitive species in the area include spineless hedgehog cactus, Jane's globemallow, Moab woodyaster, Eastwood monkeyflower, echinocereus triglochidiatus var. inermis, sphaeralcea leptophylla var. janeae, Tuhy aromatic scurf-pea, and Chatterley's onion. The top of Lavender Mesa, which is inaccessible to cattle, supports relic plant communities with potentially high research value. Streams and springs support all-important riparian corridors.

Furthermore, the Canyonlands area has some of the most pristine and unique examples of the process of erosion in the world. Textbook examples of almost every kind of geological formation are displayed within or seen from the area, each one beautiful enough to paint. These processes should be allowed to continue, unimpeded by damaging recreation or resource extraction, for the education and enjoyment of future generations.

Importance

The values, resources and systems above have substantial significance justifying the proposed ACEC designation:

More than locally significant: Dead Horse Point and the Needles Overlook, two of the most famous vistas in the Southwest, view the proposed ACEC. The roads to the Overlook, Newspaper Rock, Elephant Hill, Squaw Flat and Druid Arch all go through the area, and are popular with tourists from all over the world.

Unique, fragile and irreplaceable: The proposed ACEC holds a wealth of unique and delicate wonders. Petroglyphs are notoriously fragile and irreplaceable, valuable both as art and as archaeology. These cultural resources are in need of the highest levels of protection. Also, the fragile nature of desert ecosystems and erosional patterns is such that any damage may take many years to heal, if it ever does. ORV use, resource extraction, and any other interference with the area's natural processes are liable to harm unique and significant cultural, scenic, and biological resources. This point is especially important for the Indian Creek area that is currently being destroyed by ORVs, and for Lockhart Basin, which is under immediate threat of oil and gas development. Any drilling activity in Lockhart Basin will be highly visible to those who come to see the Canyonlands area from the Needles Overlook. BLM must not allow some of the world's scenic and cultural wonders to be destroyed for temporary gain.

Special Management Attention

In order to protect the regionally and nationally significant characteristics of the proposed ACEC from degradation, the following management prescriptions are necessary:

Public lands in the ACEC should be retained in public ownership. Non-federal lands in the ACEC should be acquired through purchase, exchange, or donation to further the accomplishment of resource objectives and to increase manageability of the area. Any lands acquired by BLM within the ACEC should be managed in accordance with ACEC prescriptions.

Except for sites located along frequently visited trails, ways or roads, all historical and archaeological sites within the proposed ACEC should be managed for conservation. Sites located along frequently visited travel corridors shall be managed for public values and interpreted for educational use. Surveillance and law enforcement measures should be increased within the ACEC to deter vandalism and other destructive activities. Such programs may involve the employment of other site steward programs, in which volunteers will be trained to monitor the sites and report resource degradation. Cooperative agreements with interested Indian tribes, government agencies, and qualified organizations should be used for protecting and otherwise managing archaeological resources.

The ACEC should be assigned a VRM Class I or II (depending on the area).

The ACEC should be closed to fuelwood sales and gathering.

The ACEC should be designated a right-of-way avoidance area.

The ACEC should be closed to oil and gas lease sales, or managed, at a minimum, as a no-surface occupancy area.

BLM should strive to exchange or purchase existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC.

For existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC, BLM must prepare an EIS at the APD stage, and must add lease restrictions to protect the flora and fauna and scenic vistas of the ACEC.

The ACEC should be closed to disposal of mineral materials.

BLM should recommend that the area be withdrawn from mineral entry. Pending Secretarial approval of the withdrawal, mining plans of operation should be required for all mining exploration and development activities.

Lands within the ACEC should be classified as primitive, or semi-primitive non-motorized for areas with designated routes. Motorized travel will be limited to designated roads and trails to protect the resources in the ACEC. Fencing, barricading and signing will be employed as necessary (consistent with other management objectives) to eliminate unauthorized vehicle access and impacts to protect the resources.

Standards for Rangeland Health, including monitoring and assessment programs, must be employed to determine if management objectives for this proposed ACEC area are being met. If monitoring reveals

that the objectives and standards are not being met, adjustments in permitted land uses will be made to the extent such are determined to be contributing factors. Changes will include reduction in numbers and changing season of use to minimize direct competition with wildlife.

No new wildlife or “range” improvements should be allowed in the ACEC, except to preserve natural habitat for native species of plants and animals.

Non-native species must not be introduced into the ACEC.

No mechanical vegetation treatments should be allowed within the ACEC, except those designed to restore native conditions, such as native seeding to restore native plant species.

All natural springs in the ACEC should be maintained in their natural condition. Temporary enclosures (consistent with other management prescriptions, i.e. VRM or IMP) should be considered in order to protect the springs from impacts from domestic livestock grazing.

BLM should preclude any diversions or developments along all washes, creeks and streams in order to protect the integrity of this natural system.

2. CEDAR MESA ACEC NOMINATION

The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance nominates an area northeast of Bluff, Utah as the Cedar Mesa ACEC. The area includes an unbroken expanse of breathtakingly beautiful red rock wilderness, dominated by sandstone buttes and spires sculpted into strange and wonderful forms. The western portion of the proposed ACEC, the Grand Gulch region, abuts Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and holds hundreds upon hundreds of archaeological sites, as do all lands within the ACEC. In the south, the high buttes and balanced rocks of Valley of the Gods can be seen from Highway 163. Comb Ridge, one of the most striking geologic formations in southern Utah, forms the eastern boundary. Owl Creek, Fish Creek, Arch, Mule and Road Canyons -- all tributaries to Comb Wash -- are archeological and scenic wonders that are important to area wildlife. Arch Canyon alone is home to three sensitive fish species, including the flannelmouth sucker and the bluehead sucker, both of which are likely to be listed under the Endangered Species Act. The area’s canyons begin in the high country among Ponderosa pines and winter snows, slowly carving down to Gambel’s oak, wild rose and manzanita, and then sage and rabbitbrush. Cottonwoods, willows and wildflowers crowd the edges of the riparian areas, some of which are under constant attack by illegal ORV use. Such use also threatens the large number of Native American ruins and petroglyphs scattered thickly throughout the region.

There is no question that the lands contained within the proposed ACEC are remarkable. Much of the proposed ACEC currently falls within existing Wilderness Study Areas, and much of the remaining lands have been recognized by BLM as possessing wilderness characteristics. Furthermore, the proposed, yet larger ACEC overlaps the currently existing Cedar Mesa ACEC and the Grand Gulch Plateau Special Recreation Management Area.

As shown below, the proposed Cedar Mesa ACEC meets the criteria of relevance and importance, as established and defined in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance

Significant reasons justifying the proposed Cedar Mesa ACEC designation include:

Scenic Value: The proposed ACEC holds outstanding and significant scenic value. Beginning deep in sandy washes and cool-floored slot canyons, the spectacular and ever-changing views rise through mesas and plateaus covered in sage and pinyon-juniper forest, to high country pines overlooking red rock formations and the impressive Comb Wash. A sunrise on Rooster Butte in the Valley of the Gods is eye-opening. And the arching spine of Comb Ridge is a remarkable sight to the tourist emerging from Monument Valley on scenic Highway 163, or breaching its back on highway 95.

Cultural value: The Cedar Mesa region is rich in cultural resources; the important archaeological sites in the Road Canyon area alone are believed to number in the hundreds. Cedar Mesa formation sandstone forms perfect alcoves for cliff dwellings, many of which can be seen in Arch and Mule Canyons. Petroglyphs and ruins are most likely to be found near waterways, which are also the areas most traveled by recreational users; these cultural resources are thus in need of special protection.

Wildlife resources: The area provides critical habitat for the federally endangered black-footed ferret, and for other sensitive species such as the ferruginous hawk, mule deer, desert shrew, western red bat, fringed myotis, ringtail cat, dwarf shrew, Virgin River montane vole and the Utah night lizard. The area also holds habitat for many other sensitive species, such as the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, Swainson's hawk, bobolink, burrowing owl, osprey, sage grouse, Lewis' woodpecker, big free-tailed bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, spotted ground squirrel, Pacific chorus frog, many-lined skink and the desert bighorn sheep.

Natural systems and processes: The extremes in elevation as well as the presence of perennial streams and other water sources mean that the area holds almost the full spectrum of southern Utah's flora and fauna. Threatened plant species in the area include Navajo sedge; other sensitive species include whiteflower penstemon, monument milkvetch, Kachina daisy, Comb Wash wild buckwheat, sheathed deathcamus, Franklin's ceanothus, dalea flavescens var epica, penstemon lentus var albiflorus, astragalus monumentalis, alcove bog-orchid, Bluff buckwheat, Cronquist milkvetch, and Hole-in-the-Rock prairie clover.

Importance

The values, resources and systems above have substantial significance justifying the proposed ACEC designation:

More than locally significant: The proposed ACEC abuts Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, which receives millions of visitors a year. It also adjoins the road to Monument Valley, another internationally renowned scenic location. The deep red sand and sparse vegetation of Valley of the Gods draw visitors from around the globe, as does the chance to spot cliff dwellings in a high alcove of Cedar Mesa sandstone.

Unique, fragile and irreplaceable: ORV use, resource extraction, and any other interference with the area's natural processes are liable to harm unique and significant cultural, scenic, and biological resources. Although BLM has recognized the importance of the area's resources in the previous RMP by designating much of the proposed area as the existing Cedar Mesa ACEC, the current special management prescriptions are insufficient to protect such resources. For example, ORV use in Arch Canyon damages its delicate riparian zone, while vehicle travel scattered over the mesa tops (including within existing WSAs) has crushed important cryptobiotic soils and fragmented wildlife habitat. The larger proposed ACEC's special management prescriptions will ensure protection of the magnificent values and resources of the Cedar Mesa area.

Special Management Attention

In order to protect the regionally and nationally significant characteristics of the proposed ACEC from degradation, the following management prescriptions are necessary:

Public lands in the ACEC should be retained in public ownership. Non-federal lands in the ACEC should be acquired through purchase, exchange, or donation to further the accomplishment of resource objectives and to increase manageability of the area. Any lands acquired by BLM within the ACEC should be managed in accordance with ACEC prescriptions.

Except for sites located along frequently visited trails, ways or roads, all historical and archaeological sites within the proposed ACEC should be managed for conservation. Sites located along frequently visited travel corridors shall be managed for public values and interpreted for educational use. Surveillance and law enforcement measures should be increased within the ACEC to deter vandalism and other destructive activities. Such programs may involve the employment of other site steward programs, in which volunteers will be trained to monitor the sites and report resource degradation. Cooperative agreements with interested Indian tribes, government agencies, and qualified organizations should be used for protecting and otherwise managing archaeological resources.

The ACEC should be assigned a VRM Class I or II (depending on the area).

The ACEC should be closed to fuelwood sales and gathering

The ACEC should be designated a right-of-way avoidance area.

The ACEC should be closed to oil and gas lease sales, or managed, at a minimum, as a no-surface occupancy area.

BLM should strive to exchange or purchase existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC.

For existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC, BLM must prepare an EIS at the APD stage, and must add lease restrictions to protect the flora and fauna and scenic vistas of the ACEC.

The ACEC should be closed to disposal of mineral materials.

BLM should recommend that the area be withdrawn from mineral entry. Pending Secretarial approval of the withdrawal, mining plans of operation should be required for all mining exploration and development activities.

Lands within the ACEC should be classified as primitive, or semi-primitive non-motorized for areas with designated routes. Motorized travel will be limited to designated roads and trails to protect the resources in the ACEC. Fencing, barricading and signing will be employed as necessary (consistent with other management objectives) to eliminate unauthorized vehicle access and impacts to protect the resources.

Standards for Rangeland Health, including monitoring and assessment programs, must be employed to determine if management objectives for this proposed ACEC area are being met. If monitoring reveals that the objectives and standards are not being met, adjustments in permitted land uses will be made to the extent such are determined to be contributing factors. Changes will include reduction in numbers and changing season of use to minimize direct competition with wildlife.

No new wildlife or "range" improvements should be allowed in the ACEC, except to preserve natural habitat for native species of plants and animals.

Non-native species must not be introduced into the ACEC.

No mechanical vegetation treatments should be allowed within the ACEC, except those designed to restore native conditions, such as native seeding to restore native plant species.

All natural springs in the ACEC should be maintained in their natural condition. Temporary enclosures (consistent with other management prescriptions, i.e. VRM or IMP) should be considered in order to protect the springs from impacts from domestic livestock grazing.

BLM should preclude any diversions or developments along all washes, creeks and streams in order to protect the integrity of this natural system.

3. DARK CANYON ACEC NOMINATION

The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance nominates an area, adjacent to the Dark Canyon Forest Service Wilderness Area, and that overlaps and joins the Dark Canyon and Butler Wash Wilderness Study Areas, as the Dark Canyon ACEC. The proposed ACEC includes lower Dark Canyon, Sheep Canyon and Butler Wash. The area also borders long stretches of Glen Canyon National Recreation

Area and Canyonlands National Park. It begins high in the Abajo Mountains amid ponderosa pines and Douglas fir forests, descending to lower stands of Gambel's oak, pinyon and juniper, and then drops a spectacular 2,000 feet into cottonwoods and willows that grow in the canyon bottoms. The massive rapids of Cataract Canyon boil below the cliffs, from which one can also see the Henry Mountains and the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park. Fable Valley, which is popular with backpackers and horseback riders, has a high concentration of archaeological sites. The Sundance trail and road lie in the far western portion of the area, near Sheep Canyon. Altogether, the proposed ACEC is part of one of the largest wild roadless regions in the continental United States.

A large portion of the proposed Dark Canyon ACEC has already been designated the Dark Canyon and Butler Wash ACECs, or classified as part of the Canyon Basins Special Recreation Management Area, under the previous RMP. Most of the proposed ACEC has also received Wilderness Study Area designation, and the rest has been recognized by BLM as possessing wilderness characteristics. The proposed ACEC would ensure protection for these and surrounding lands by providing effecting special management prescriptions.

As shown below, the proposed Dark Canyon ACEC meets the criteria of relevance and importance, as established and defined in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance

Significant reasons justifying the proposed Dark Canyon ACEC designation include:

Scenic Value: The proposed ACEC holds every type of beautiful desert view imaginable, from snow-capped mountaintops cloaked in dark forests, across expansive mesas, down redrock cliffs, to green creekside grasses sprouting from red sand. Twisted junipers cling to cliffs that rise 2,000 feet above canyon floors. The red spires of the Needles District and Beef Basin point at the sky, and the rapids of Cataract Canyon splash and rumble below the sandstone walls of the Colorado's deep canyon. These are sights that should not be destroyed by the presence of drilling projects, swaths of off-road vehicle tracks, chainings, or other development projects.

Cultural value: The proposed ACEC is one of the wildest in southern Utah, and its size and remoteness have helped preserve its rich archeological heritage. Cultural resources, including petroglyphs and cliff dwellings, are thick through the entire region.

Wildlife resources: The proposed ACEC provides critical habitat for sensitive species, including the ferruginous hawk, sage grouse, Western red bat, ringtail cat, dwarf shrew and the Great Plains rat snake. The area also holds habitat for many other sensitive species, such as the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, black bear, elk, mule deer, bobolink, burrowing owl, osprey, Swainson's hawk, Lewis' woodpecker, big free-tailed bat, fringed myotis, Townsend's big-eared bat, Virgin River montane vole, spotted ground squirrel, many-lined skink and the desert bighorn sheep.

Natural systems and processes: The proposed ACEC is home to sensitive plant species such as whiteflower penstemon, Kachina daisy, yellowish phlox, Ruin Park winter-fat, Gunnison stick-leaf, Franklin's ceanothus, Canyonlands sedge, penstemon lentus var. albiflorus and alcove rock-daisy. The area's ecosystem, particularly the riparian areas, provides essential habitat for many plant and animal species. Since the area is one of the least accessible regions in southern Utah, it is also one of the most well-preserved, and thus has substantial value for study. Since it has such a wide range of elevations, the area can act as a refuge for sensitive species and biological communities. The deep canyons cut through many rock layers, displaying geological processes for the student and photographer.

Importance

The values, resources and systems above are more than locally significant and are vulnerable to adverse change:

More than locally significant: People from around the world come to see the landscape of Canyonlands National Park and to raft Cataract Canyon. Butler Wash, Dark Canyon and Sheep Canyon attract backpackers, climbers, horseback riders and professionally led expeditions to their challenging and beautiful routes. The proposed ACEC is the logical extension of Canyonlands, GCNRA, and Manti-La Sal National Forest's Dark Canyon Wilderness Area; it connects and completes these incredible places.

Unique, fragile and irreplaceable: The deep canyons and high plateaus of the proposed Dark Canyon ACEC link the worlds of mountain and river. It is unusual to have such a unique and attractive area in good condition, especially given the long time it takes for desert environments to recover from damage. However, the area is under constant threat from ORV intrusions and resource extraction schemes. The proposed ACEC, along with its special management prescriptions, will help ensure protection of this unique landscape.

Special Management Attention

In order to protect the regionally and nationally significant characteristics of the proposed ACEC from degradation, the following management prescriptions are necessary:

Public lands in the ACEC should be retained in public ownership. Non-federal lands in the ACEC should be acquired through purchase, exchange, or donation to further the accomplishment of resource objectives and to increase manageability of the area. Any lands acquired by BLM within the ACEC should be managed in accordance with ACEC prescriptions.

Except for sites located along frequently visited trails, ways or roads, all historical and archaeological sites within the proposed ACEC should be managed for conservation. Sites located along frequently visited travel corridors shall be managed for public values and interpreted for educational use. Surveillance and law enforcement measures should be increased within the ACEC to deter vandalism and other destructive activities. Such programs may involve the employment of other site steward programs, in which volunteers will be trained to monitor the sites and report resource degradation. Cooperative agreements with interested Indian tribes, government agencies, and qualified organizations should be used for protecting and otherwise managing archaeological resources.

The ACEC should be assigned a VRM Class I or II (depending on the area).

The ACEC should be closed to fuelwood sales and gathering.

The ACEC should be designated a right-of-way avoidance area.

The ACEC should be closed to oil and gas lease sales, or managed, at a minimum, as a no-surface occupancy area.

BLM should strive to exchange or purchase existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC.

For existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC, BLM must prepare an EIS at the APD stage, and must add lease restrictions to protect the flora and fauna and scenic vistas of the ACEC.

The ACEC should be closed to disposal of mineral materials.

BLM should recommend that the area be withdrawn from mineral entry. Pending Secretarial approval of the withdrawal, mining plans of operation should be required for all mining exploration and development activities.

Lands within the ACEC should be classified as primitive, or semi-primitive non-motorized for areas with designated routes. Motorized travel will be limited to designated roads and trails to protect the resources in the ACEC. Fencing, barricading and signing will be employed as necessary (consistent with other management objectives) to eliminate unauthorized vehicle access and impacts to protect the resources.

Standards for Rangeland Health, including monitoring and assessment programs, must be employed to determine if management objectives for this proposed ACEC area are being met. If monitoring reveals

- that the objectives and standards are not being met, adjustments in permitted land uses will be made to the extent such are determined to be contributing factors. Changes will include reduction in numbers and changing season of use to minimize direct competition with wildlife.
- No new wildlife or “range” improvements should be allowed in the ACEC, except to preserve natural habitat for native species of plants and animals.
- Non-native species must not be introduced into the ACEC.
- No mechanical vegetation treatments should be allowed within the ACEC, except those designed to restore native conditions, such as native seeding to restore native plant species.
- All natural springs in the ACEC should be maintained in their natural condition. Temporary enclosures (consistent with other management prescriptions, i.e. VRM or IMP) should be considered in order to protect the springs from impacts from domestic livestock grazing.
- BLM should preclude any diversions or developments along all washes, creeks and streams in order to protect the integrity of this natural system.

4. MONUMENT CANYON ACEC NOMINATION

The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance nominates an area east of Blanding, Utah as the Monument Canyon ACEC. The proposed ACEC is just north of the Navajo Reservation and next to the Colorado border. It includes Tin Cup Mesa, Cross Canyon, Monument Canyon, and the upper part of Montezuma Canyon. The area is rich in cultural resources and is currently recovering well from a few chainings. The waters of Cross and Squaw Canyons attract a wide variety of wildlife, making these areas important ecological islands in a surrounding sea of agriculture and dry uplands.

Portions of the proposed Monument Canyon ACEC are currently designated Wilderness Study Areas, and other parts have been recognized by BLM as possessing wilderness characteristics.

As shown below, the proposed Monument Canyon ACEC meets the criteria of relevance and importance, as established and defined in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance

Scenic Value: It is a remarkable thing to come upon Cross Canyon’s beautiful riparian area after hours or days of seeing only straight-lined crops or waterless desert. Looking down from Tin Cup Mesa’s high cliffs, one can see the confluence of Squaw and Cross Creeks as a mirage of shimmering green cottonwoods against the rust color of canyon walls. The opposite view, of redrock alcoves cradling cliff dwellings and petroglyphs above an artesian spring, is possible from the floor of Montezuma Canyon.

Cultural Value: Hovenweep National Monument is just south of the proposed ACEC. Petroglyphs and ruins occur throughout the canyons and mesas, particularly near the creeks. Though the area is relatively isolated, its cultural resources are still under threat from recreational users.

Wildlife Resources: The proposed ACEC holds critical habitat for the federally endangered black-footed ferret, and for other sensitive species, such as the ferruginous hawk, mule deer, sage grouse, desert shrew, Western red bat, ringtail cat, dwarf shrew and the Utah night lizard. The area also holds habitat for other sensitive species, such as the burrowing owl, bald eagle, Swainson’s Hawk, Lewis’ woodpecker, big free-tailed bat, fringed myotis, Townsend’s big-eared bat, spotted ground squirrel, Utah milk snake and the many-lined skink.

Natural Systems and Processes: As the only healthy and still natural riparian ecosystem in the region, the proposed ACEC is very important in maintaining local plant and animal populations. The area is surrounded by developed farmland and dry upland desert; the presence of perennial streams

draws animals from a large swath of territory. Without these refuges, local populations of sensitive species will be difficult to maintain. If unrestricted ORV use and resource extraction are allowed, the health of the region's ecosystem will be severely affected. Portions of the proposed ACEC are still in the process of recovering from chainings that were performed in the 1960s. This land does not spring back easily from damage.

Importance

Unique, Fragile, Irreplaceable and More Than Locally Important: Southeast Utah's scenery is internationally legendary. Hundreds of thousands of people come to the canyon country every year to witness its silence, space, and natural splendor. The beauty of this scenery, however, is dependent upon an increasingly fragile ecosystem. The proposed ACEC is ecologically isolated, and therefore is important to the health of local plants and animals. It is also rich in notoriously fragile archaeological sites. As development, resource extraction, and recreational use increase in the region, protecting these last pockets of natural health and cultural wealth will only become more imperative.

Special Management Attention

In order to protect the regionally and nationally significant characteristics of the proposed ACEC from degradation, the following management prescriptions are necessary:

Public lands in the ACEC should be retained in public ownership. Non-federal lands in the ACEC should be acquired through purchase, exchange, or donation to further the accomplishment of resource objectives and to increase manageability of the area. Any lands acquired by BLM within the ACEC should be managed in accordance with ACEC prescriptions.

Except for sites located along frequently visited trails, ways or roads, all historical and archaeological sites within the proposed ACEC should be managed for conservation. Sites located along frequently visited travel corridors shall be managed for public values and interpreted for educational use. Surveillance and law enforcement measures should be increased within the ACEC to deter vandalism and other destructive activities. Such programs may involve the employment of other site steward programs, in which volunteers will be trained to monitor the sites and report resource degradation. Cooperative agreements with interested Indian tribes, government agencies, and qualified organizations should be used for protecting and otherwise managing archaeological resources.

The ACEC should be assigned a VRM Class I or II (depending on the area).

The ACEC should be closed to fuelwood sales and gathering.

The ACEC should be designated a right-of-way avoidance area.

The ACEC should be closed to oil and gas lease sales, or managed, at a minimum, as a no-surface occupancy area.

BLM should strive to exchange or purchase existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC.

For existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC, BLM must prepare an EIS at the APD stage, and must add lease restrictions to protect the flora and fauna and scenic vistas of the ACEC.

The ACEC should be closed to disposal of mineral materials.

BLM should recommend that the area be withdrawn from mineral entry. Pending Secretarial approval of the withdrawal, mining plans of operation should be required for all mining exploration and development activities.

Lands within the ACEC should be classified as primitive, or semi-primitive non-motorized for areas with designated routes. Motorized travel will be limited to designated roads and trails to protect the resources in the ACEC. Fencing, barricading and signing will be employed as necessary (consistent with other management objectives) to eliminate unauthorized vehicle access and impacts to protect the resources.

Standards for Rangeland Health, including monitoring and assessment programs, must be employed to determine if management objectives for this proposed ACEC area are being met. If monitoring reveals that the objectives and standards are not being met, adjustments in permitted land uses will be made to the extent such are determined to be contributing factors. Changes will include reduction in numbers and changing season of use to minimize direct competition with wildlife.

No new wildlife or “range” improvements should be allowed in the ACEC, except to preserve natural habitat for native species of plants and animals.

Non-native species must not be introduced into the ACEC.

No mechanical vegetation treatments should be allowed within the ACEC, except those designed to restore native conditions, such as native seeding to restore native plant species.

All natural springs in the ACEC should be maintained in their natural condition. Temporary enclosures (consistent with other management prescriptions, i.e. VRM or IMP) should be considered in order to protect the springs from impacts from domestic livestock grazing.

BLM should preclude any diversions or developments along all washes, creeks and streams in order to protect the integrity of this natural system.

5. REDROCK PLATEAU ACEC NOMINATION

The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance nominates an area northeast of the confluence of the San Juan and Colorado Rivers as the Redrock Plateau ACEC. The proposed ACEC is southwest of Highway 95 and is transected by Highway 276, which leads to Hall’s Crossing on Reservoir Powell. The area is contiguous with Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, a destination for millions of visitors from around the world. Many miles of sheer-sided canyons cut the area, notably the spectacular twenty-mile Moqui and Steer Pasture Canyons. In the east, the colorful eroded badlands of the Red House Cliffs dominate the view. Mancos Mesa, which bulks over the Colorado’s deep canyon to the north, ends in a sheer precipice eight hundred feet high. The view from the cliff shows hundreds of miles of sinuous canyons, high mesas and twisted badlands. This varied landscape also holds numerous springs, two of which are near an ancient cliff dwelling close to Highway 276.

The land along Highways 95 and 276 has been managed as the Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC under the previous RMP. A part of the proposed Redrock Plateau ACEC is an existing Wilderness Study Area, and an even larger portion has been recognized by BLM as possessing wilderness characteristics.

As shown below, the proposed Redrock Plateau ACEC meets the criteria of relevance and importance, as established and defined in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance

Significant reasons justifying the proposed Redrock Plateau ACEC designation include:

Scenic Value: The area nominated by SUWA epitomizes the vast and intricate scenic beauty of Utah’s canyonlands. As noted above, the view from the eastern cliff of Mancos Mesa is especially stunning, showing a diverse landscape of canyons, domes and cliffs. From higher elevations in the southern portions one can see the pinnacles of Monument Valley in the distance. The stone rim surrounding Needle Point rises 1500 feet or more above dry, sandy washes deep in the canyons. And Moqui Canyon’s soaring Wingate walls hold hanging gardens and flash waterfalls.

Cultural value: The proposed ACEC is rich in significant cultural resources. Cliff dwellings and other Native American ruins are located throughout the area, and petroglyphs are thickly scattered through the canyons. Only by limiting destructive activities can these sites be preserved for future generations.

Wildlife resources: The proposed ACEC provides critical habitat for sensitive species, such as the ringtail cat, dwarf shrew and the Virgin River montane vole. The area also holds habitat for many other sensitive species, such as the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, ferruginous hawk, big free-tailed bat, fringed myotis, Townsend’s big-eared bat, spotted ground squirrel and the desert bighorn sheep.

Natural systems and processes: The proposed ACEC holds almost the full spectrum of southern Utah's flora and fauna. Pinyon-juniper forests grow on the uplands of mesa tops and canyon rims. Lower sandhills and badlands hold sage, blackbrush and rabbitbrush communities. Riparian corridors, fed by springs and flash floods, let thirstier species such as cottonwoods and willows thrive. The area is also home to sensitive plant species such as Entrada skeletonplant, Hole-in-the-Rock prairie clover, *dalea flavescens* var. *epica*, Whiting indigo bush, and Copper Canyon milkvetch. Cattle are unable to access many of the sheer-sided mesas and domes, and healthy relic plant communities still live in these places.

In addition to rare species and healthy ecosystems, in this place one can witness the natural process by which the land heals itself. Many abandoned mines hide in the cliffs of steep-sided Red Canyon and its tributaries. Once cut by primitive roads bulldozed to serve mining activity, the land is now nearly free of human imprint. After a generation of disuse, the mining roads and refuse piles are slowly restoring themselves to meadows, brushlands, stocktrails and washes. The continuation of this process depends entirely on the continued absence of disruptive activities.

Importance

The values, resources and systems above have substantial significance justifying the proposed ACEC designation:

More than locally significant: Visitors from around the globe travel through this area on their way to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. Although lands immediately adjacent to these nationally significant routes are currently within the Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC, the remaining viewsheds have been left unprotected. This internationally renowned landscape requires the high level of protection afforded by the proposed ACEC.

Unique, fragile and irreplaceable: The canyon country surrounding the Glen Canyon region is one of the most uniquely beautiful places in the world. Moqui and Steer Pasture Canyons, Mancos Mesa and the Red House Cliffs are only the most spectacular features of a breathtaking landscape. Smaller wonders, such as desert bighorn sheep and ancient Native American ruins, also hide in the canyons. The fragile nature of desert ecosystems is such that any damage may take many years to heal. ORV use, resource extraction, and any other interference with the area's natural processes are liable to harm unique and significant cultural, scenic, and biological resources. Indeed, ORV travel within, for example, Moqui Canyon, is currently threatening the area's ecological balance.

Special Management Attention

In order to protect the regionally and nationally significant characteristics of the proposed ACEC from degradation, the following management prescriptions are necessary:

Public lands in the ACEC should be retained in public ownership. Non-federal lands in the ACEC should be acquired through purchase, exchange, or donation to further the accomplishment of resource objectives and to increase manageability of the area. Any lands acquired by BLM within the ACEC should be managed in accordance with ACEC prescriptions.

Except for sites located along frequently visited trails, ways or roads, all historical and archaeological sites within the proposed ACEC should be managed for conservation. Sites located along frequently visited travel corridors shall be managed for public values and interpreted for educational use. Surveillance and law enforcement measures should be increased within the ACEC to deter vandalism and other destructive activities. Such programs may involve the employment of other site steward programs, in which volunteers will be trained to monitor the sites and report resource degradation. Cooperative agreements with interested Indian tribes, government agencies, and qualified organizations should be used for protecting and otherwise managing archaeological resources.

The ACEC should be assigned a VRM Class I or II (depending on the area).

The ACEC should be closed to fuelwood sales and gathering.

The ACEC should be designated a right-of-way avoidance area.

The ACEC should be closed to oil and gas lease sales, or managed, at a minimum, as a no-surface occupancy area.

BLM should strive to exchange or purchase existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC.

For existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC, BLM must prepare an EIS at the APD stage, and must add lease restrictions to protect the flora and fauna and scenic vistas of the ACEC.

The ACEC should be closed to disposal of mineral materials.

BLM should recommend that the area be withdrawn from mineral entry. Pending Secretarial approval of the withdrawal, mining plans of operation should be required for all mining exploration and development activities.

Lands within the ACEC should be classified as primitive, or semi-primitive non-motorized for areas with designated routes. Motorized travel will be limited to designated roads and trails to protect the resources in the ACEC. Fencing, barricading and signing will be employed as necessary (consistent with other management objectives) to eliminate unauthorized vehicle access and impacts to protect the resources.

Standards for Rangeland Health, including monitoring and assessment programs, must be employed to determine if management objectives for this proposed ACEC area are being met. If monitoring reveals that the objectives and standards are not being met, adjustments in permitted land uses will be made to the extent such are determined to be contributing factors. Changes will include reduction in numbers and changing season of use to minimize direct competition with wildlife.

No new wildlife or "range" improvements should be allowed in the ACEC, except to preserve natural habitat for native species of plants and animals.

Non-native species must not be introduced into the ACEC.

No mechanical vegetation treatments should be allowed within the ACEC, except those designed to restore native conditions, such as native seeding to restore native plant species.

All natural springs in the ACEC should be maintained in their natural condition. Temporary enclosures (consistent with other management prescriptions, i.e. VRM or IMP) should be considered in order to protect the springs from impacts from domestic livestock grazing.

BLM should preclude any diversions or developments along all washes, creeks and streams in order to protect the integrity of this natural system.

6. SAN JUAN RIVER ACEC NOMINATION

The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance nominates an area east of Bluff, Utah as the San Juan River ACEC. The proposed ACEC is bounded on the north by Highway 163 and on the south by the San Juan River and the Navajo Indian Reservation. The western portion of the area includes the Tabernacle region, which is bounded on the south and east by the Goosenecks of the San Juan River, and abuts the southwest corner of Valley of the Gods. Breathtaking views of Monument Valley and the San Juan River are available from numerous landforms within the ACEC. Sugarloaf Butte and the striking eroded forms of the Rapplee anticline offer excellent climbing and viewing opportunities.

BLM has recognized the eastern portion of the proposed ACEC as possessing wilderness characteristics. Furthermore, under the previous RMP this portion of the area has been designated the San Juan River Special Recreation Management Area.

As shown below, the proposed San Juan River ACEC meets the criteria of relevance and importance, as established and defined in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance

Significant reasons justifying the proposed San Juan River ACEC designation include:

Scenic Value: Upon emerging from Monument Valley, one is struck by the Rapplee anticline's huge and intricately patterned ridge looming along the horizon. The alternating layers of red mudstone and gray limestone trace the edges of erosional carvings. The smooth curves of the San Juan River slink around ragged cliffs at the Goosenecks in the Tabernacle area.

Cultural value: The San Juan River region holds hundreds of important cultural resource sites, many of them remote enough to be perfectly preserved. History has shown us, however, that such preservation is entirely dependent upon the sites' continued remove from disruptive activities like motorized recreation and resource extraction.

Wildlife resources: The area provides critical habitat for the federally endangered Colorado squawfish (or pikeminnow), and for other sensitive species such as the desert shrew and the Utah night lizard. The area also holds habitat for other sensitive species, such as the ferruginous hawk, burrowing owl, big free-tailed bat, fringed myotis, and Townsend's big-eared bat.

Natural systems and processes: Although sporadic, waters traveling through Comb Wash, Butler Wash, Lime Creek and other smaller tributaries continue to sculpt the landscape as they make their way to the San Juan River that forms the southern boundary of the proposed ACEC. Maintaining the health of the riparian systems along the River and its tributaries is necessary to protect the native species of plants, animals and fish that depend on this area, including the endangered pikeminnow. Plant species in the area include the federally threatened Navajo sedge; other sensitive species include Comb Wash wild buckwheat and alcove rock-daisy.

Importance

The values, resources and systems above have substantial significance justifying the proposed ACEC designation:

More than locally significant: The proposed ACEC is part of the scenic corridor for both Highway 163 through Monument Valley and the San Juan River. Visitors come from around the globe to see the red spires of Monument Valley and raft the San Juan. The Goosenecks of the San Juan is one of the most-photographed vistas in the Southwest. Furthermore, as the declining health of the Colorado River system gets more and more international attention, the health of its watershed will come into the global spotlight.

Unique, fragile and irreplaceable: Since it occupies the narrow area between Highway 163 and the San Juan River, the proposed ACEC is highly vulnerable to damage. It also has a strong effect on the health of the San Juan River. ORV use, resource extraction, and any other interference with the area's natural processes are likely to harm unique and significant cultural, scenic, and biological resources.

Special Management Attention

In order to protect the regionally and nationally significant characteristics of the proposed ACEC from degradation, the following management prescriptions are necessary:

Public lands in the ACEC should be retained in public ownership. Non-federal lands in the ACEC should be acquired through purchase, exchange, or donation to further the accomplishment of resource objectives and to increase manageability of the area. Any lands acquired by BLM within the ACEC should be managed in accordance with ACEC prescriptions.

Except for sites located along frequently visited trails, ways or roads, all historical and archaeological sites within the proposed ACEC should be managed for conservation. Sites located along frequently visited travel corridors shall be managed for public values and interpreted for educational use. Surveillance and law enforcement measures should be increased within the ACEC to deter vandalism and other destructive activities. Such programs may involve the employment of other site steward programs, in

- which volunteers will be trained to monitor the sites and report resource degradation. Cooperative agreements with interested Indian tribes, government agencies, and qualified organizations should be used for protecting and otherwise managing archaeological resources.
- The ACEC should be assigned a VRM Class I or II (depending on the area).
- The ACEC should be closed to fuelwood sales and gathering.
- The ACEC should be designated a right-of-way avoidance area.
- The ACEC should be closed to oil and gas lease sales, or managed, at a minimum, as a no-surface occupancy area.
- BLM should strive to exchange or purchase existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC.
- For existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC, BLM must prepare an EIS at the APD stage, and must add lease restrictions to protect the flora and fauna and scenic vistas of the ACEC.
- The ACEC should be closed to disposal of mineral materials.
- BLM should recommend that the area be withdrawn from mineral entry. Pending Secretarial approval of the withdrawal, mining plans of operation should be required for all mining exploration and development activities.
- Lands within the ACEC should be classified as primitive, or semi-primitive non-motorized for areas with designated routes. Motorized travel will be limited to designated roads and trails to protect the resources in the ACEC. Fencing, barricading and signing will be employed as necessary (consistent with other management objectives) to eliminate unauthorized vehicle access and impacts to protect the resources.
- Standards for Rangeland Health, including monitoring and assessment programs, must be employed to determine if management objectives for this proposed ACEC area are being met. If monitoring reveals that the objectives and standards are not being met, adjustments in permitted land uses will be made to the extent such are determined to be contributing factors. Changes will include reduction in numbers and changing season of use to minimize direct competition with wildlife.
- No new wildlife or "range" improvements should be allowed in the ACEC, except to preserve natural habitat for native species of plants and animals.
- Non-native species must not be introduced into the ACEC.
- No mechanical vegetation treatments should be allowed within the ACEC, except those designed to restore native conditions, such as native seeding to restore native plant species.
- All natural springs in the ACEC should be maintained in their natural condition. Temporary enclosures (consistent with other management prescriptions, i.e. VRM or IMP) should be considered in order to protect the springs from impacts from domestic livestock grazing.
- BLM should preclude any diversions or developments along all washes, creeks and streams in order to protect the integrity of this natural system.

7. WHITE CANYON ACEC NOMINATION

The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance nominates an area southwest of the Dark Canyon Wilderness Area as the White Canyon ACEC. The proposed ACEC includes the area surrounding Natural Bridges National Monument as well as the numerous side canyons that drain into White Canyon. The road through White Canyon, Highway 95, forms the southern boundary of the area. The northern portion abuts Glen Canyon National Recreation Area near Hite Crossing. The intricate system of deep and narrow canyons that flow into White Canyon and Natural Bridges are exceptionally beautiful. The area also possesses an unusual diversity of cultural sites, ranging from legendary outlaws' hideouts to peaceful cliff ruins. The foot trails through Gravel and Long Canyons, and over the mesas in between, are known as some of the best hiking routes on the Colorado Plateau. Fort Knocker Canyon, further to the north, is famous for its deep slots and treacherous canyoneering routes. Armstrong and Tuwa Canyons, both near Natural Bridges, also form deep slots in their upper reaches.

The proposed White Canyon ACEC overlaps the existing Cheesebox Canyon Wilderness Study Area, and most of the remaining area has been recognized by BLM as possessing wilderness characteristics.

The land along Highway 95 has been managed as part of the Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC under the previous RMP.

As shown below, the proposed White Canyon ACEC meets the criteria of relevance and importance, as established and defined in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance

Significant reasons justifying the proposed White Canyon ACEC designation include:

Scenic Value: The proposed ACEC boasts exceptional scenic value, holding systems of twisting canyons, deep slots scoured by flash floods, and distant views of the Henry Mountains, the Little Rockies, and the high plateau above adjacent Dark Canyon. Portions of the seven canyons branching off the northern side of White Canyon have all been included in the previous RMP's Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC because of their outstanding scenic value. There are also several interesting angles from which to view Jacob's chair, a high rock spire that stands out from the surrounding area.

Cultural value: The secretive, isolated nature of the proposed ACEC's canyons is the ideal environment in which to preserve cultural sites. Though no comprehensive survey of the area has been conducted, the National Park Service estimates that there are hundreds of archaeological sites in the Tuwa and Armstrong Canyons region alone. The area's southern portion contains sites associated with Utah's early Anglo history, particularly Hideout Canyon, which has rumored connections with outlaws.

Wildlife resources: The proposed ACEC provides critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl and habitat for the federally endangered Southwestern willow flycatcher. It also provides critical habitat for other sensitive species, such as the mule deer, Western red bat, ringtail cat and the dwarf shrew. The area also provides habitat for other sensitive species, such as the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, osprey, Swainson's hawk, Lewis' woodpecker, three-toed woodpecker, big free-tailed bat, Albert's squirrel, fringed myotis, Townsend's big-eared bat, spotted ground squirrel, and the many-lined skink.

Natural systems and processes: Sensitive plant species in the area include rock violet, monument milkvetch, Kachina daisy, sheathed deathcamus, *dalea flavescens* var. *epica*, *penstemon lentus* var. *arbiflorus*, *astragalus monumentalis*. Several perennial streams and springs support riparian vegetation. Biologists consider the presence of the endangered Southwestern willow flycatcher a good indicator of a healthy riparian ecosystem. The area's canyons are growing increasingly popular for recreation, particularly because of their proximity to Highway 95, and are thus in need of greater protection.

Importance

The values, resources and systems above have substantial significance justifying the proposed ACEC designation:

More than locally significant: The proposed ACEC has been hit with increasing levels of recreational use in recent years, and the numbers are only predicted to rise due to commercial interest. For example, the area is currently proposed for commercial ORV events and tours. Further, the canyoneering routes near Highway 95 are featured in articles and websites, which draw visitors from around the globe to the area. Natural Bridges National Monument and Hite Crossing, both adjacent to the proposed ACEC, are also major destinations for sightseers.

Unique, fragile and irreplaceable: The proposed ACEC contains unique and beautiful geological formations, ecosystems and cultural resource sites. Many of these places have not yet been explored—but that situation is not likely to last much longer. As ORV riders and other recreational users flood the scene, the proposed ACEC will be in need of constant supervision and high levels of protection. If BLM does not implement protective measures, scenic and cultural values and natural systems will be damaged or lost. The proposed ACEC and its special management prescriptions will help ensure protection of the area's unique resources.

Special Management Attention

In order to protect the regionally and nationally significant characteristics of the proposed ACEC from degradation, the following management prescriptions are necessary:

Public lands in the ACEC should be retained in public ownership. Non-federal lands in

the ACEC should be acquired through purchase, exchange, or donation to further the accomplishment of resource objectives and to increase manageability of the area. Any lands acquired by BLM within the ACEC should be managed in accordance with ACEC prescriptions.

Except for sites located along frequently visited trails, ways or roads, all historical and archaeological sites within the proposed ACEC should be managed for conservation. Sites located along frequently visited travel corridors shall be managed for public values and interpreted for educational use. Surveillance and law enforcement measures should be increased within the ACEC to deter vandalism and other destructive activities. Such programs may involve the employment of other site steward programs, in which volunteers will be trained to monitor the sites and report resource degradation. Cooperative agreements with interested Indian tribes, government agencies, and qualified organizations should be used for protecting and otherwise managing archaeological resources.

The ACEC should be assigned a VRM Class I or II (depending on the area).

The ACEC should be closed to fuelwood sales and gathering.

The ACEC should be designated a right-of-way avoidance area.

The ACEC should be closed to oil and gas lease sales, or managed, at a minimum, as a no-surface occupancy area.

BLM should strive to exchange or purchase existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC.

For existing oil and gas leases in the ACEC, BLM must prepare an EIS at the APD stage, and must add lease restrictions to protect the flora and fauna and scenic vistas of the ACEC.

The ACEC should be closed to disposal of mineral materials.

BLM should recommend that the area be withdrawn from mineral entry. Pending

Secretarial approval of the withdrawal, mining plans of operation should be required for all mining exploration and development activities.

Lands within the ACEC should be classified as primitive, or semi-primitive non-motorized for areas with designated routes. Motorized travel will be limited to designated roads and trails to protect the resources in the ACEC. Fencing, barricading and signing will be employed as necessary (consistent with other management objectives) to eliminate unauthorized vehicle access and impacts to protect the resources.

Standards for Rangeland Health, including monitoring and assessment programs, must be employed to determine if management objectives for this proposed ACEC area are being met. If monitoring reveals that the objectives and standards are not being met, adjustments in permitted land uses will be made to the extent such are determined to be contributing factors. Changes will include reduction in numbers and changing season of use to minimize direct competition with wildlife.

No new wildlife or "range" improvements should be allowed in the ACEC, except to preserve natural habitat for native species of plants and animals.

Non-native species must not be introduced into the ACEC.

No mechanical vegetation treatments should be allowed within the ACEC, except those designed to restore native conditions, such as native seeding to restore native plant species.

All natural springs in the ACEC should be maintained in their natural condition.

Temporary exclosures (consistent with other management prescriptions, i.e. VRM or IMP) should be considered in order to protect the springs from impacts from domestic livestock grazing.

BLM should preclude any diversions or developments along all washes, creeks and streams in order to protect the integrity of this natural system.

6. Evaluation Process and Relevance and Importance Criteria

The Scope of the Evaluation Process - Evaluation of ACEC nominations was conducted by the Monticello FO ID team made up of specialists representing cultural, recreation, wildlife, vegetation, grazing and range, visual resources management (VRM), minerals, GIS, planning, and lands and realty programs. The ID team's task was to:

1. Evaluate existing ACECs to determine if they should be retained, dropped, or modified in the resource management plan revision.
2. Identify the potentially-relevant values in the areas nominated for potential ACECs.
3. Evaluate the relevant values presented in the nominations based on criteria described below.
4. Evaluate the relevant values to determine if they meet the importance criteria described below.
5. Identify suggested special management needed to protect relevant and important values.
6. Map the area(s) found of relevance and importance. These maps describe the bounds of the potential ACECs that will be considered in the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS).

6.1 Evaluation of existing and nominated ACECs

The process described in this section was followed in evaluating existing and nominated ACECs. Seven ID team meetings were held (April 21, 2004, June 28 and 29, 2004, August 18, 2004, August 31, 2004, and September 7, 2004, and November 18, 2004). Meeting minutes reference the discussions and evaluations completed for ACECs, and are found in the Administrative Record.

Ten existing ACECs and nine nominated ACECs were evaluated as described in Appendix A.

6.2 Identifying potentially-relevant values

The evaluation of existing and nominated ACEC areas is an interdisciplinary process where the ID team evaluates each resource or hazard to determine if it meets the relevance and importance criteria. The ID Team considered 19 existing and nominated ACECs according to the following guidance.

6.3 Determining Relevance

Potentially-relevant values were evaluated based on guidance in 43 CFR 1610.7-2, "Designation of areas of critical environmental concerns", and BLM Manual 1613, "Areas of Critical Environmental Concern."

An area meets the "relevance" criterion if it contains one or more of the following:

1. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).
2. A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).
3. A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic[t] plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geologic features).

4. Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.

Following are the criteria established by the Monticello FO ID team:

Historic, Cultural, or Scenic Values

- An historic or cultural value was determined relevant if it was determined significant, that is rare or sensitive cultural resource or of religious importance to Native Americans, by the staff archeologist
- Inventoried as VRM II class scenery by BLM
- Or, otherwise judged relevant by a staff VRM specialist

Fish and wildlife values

- Judged relevant if habitat and endangered, sensitive, or threatened species was present based on staff specialist knowledge
- Or, if habitat essential for maintaining species diversity was present, based on Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) data/maps, or US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) data, and/or a recovery plan was present

Natural Processes or systems

- Presence of endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species
- Presence of rare, endemic, or relict plants / communities
- Presence of rare geologic features
- Based on information and knowledge of staff specialists

Natural Hazards

- Dangerous flooding, or landslides could occur in the area due to unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs
- Based on information from historical flood data (USGS), and staff specialist knowledge

6.4 Determining Importance

The values found relevant must have substantial significance in order to satisfy the “importance” criteria. This generally means that the value, resource, process, system, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:

More than locally significant qualities - Qualities that give the relevant value special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, as compared to similar resource(s).

Historic or cultural

- Listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Eligible for listing on National Register of Historic Places.
- Due to the large number of identified (25,000+) cultural sites in the Monticello Field Office, the criteria for consideration of a cultural value of importance includes evaluation of the nature of the cultural resource, that is, types of sites, the density of sites, and the existing impacts to the resource.
- Otherwise judged more than locally significant due to Federal laws, regulations and national BLM policies that mandate consideration and protection of cultural resources

Scenic

- A National, state or local scenic designation such as state scenic highways, or Federal scenic highways
- Otherwise judged more than locally significant by the staff VRM specialist and ID team

Fish, wildlife, and plant resources

- Special status species, including Federally-listed threatened, endangered species, and Utah species of concern
- Riparian areas are judged more than locally significant by National BLM policy
- Vegetative communities judged more than locally significant by staff specialists

Natural hazard

- Judged more than locally significant as determined by staff

Special qualities or threats of adverse change – Qualities or circumstances that make the relevant value fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.

- Determinations of special qualities of resource, values, processes, systems, or hazards were made by staff specialists, on a case-by-case basis, based on professional knowledge as shown in documentation on evaluation tables.

National Priority – Recognized as warranting protection in order to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.

Historic and Cultural

- Protection of cultural resources is a national priority based on laws, regulations, and guidelines

Scenic

- An area that is designated as federal or state scenic highway gives recognition to the value
- Areas that bound designated national parks and national forests can potentially be considered of national importance

Fish, wildlife and plants

- A relevant Federally-listed threatened or endangered species
- Riparian areas are considered more than locally significant by BLM policy

Safety and public welfare – Qualities which warrant highlighting in order to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.

Threat to life and property: Any resource, value, process, or system that poses a significant threat to human life and safety, or property.

6.5 Special Management Needed

Suggested special management prescriptions were developed to address, mitigate, or prevent identified threats to the relevant and important resource value(s). Analysis of the nature or type of threats of irreparable damage to the relevant and important values as compared to activities within the field office occurs within the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

6.6 Mapping of Potential ACECs

Values identified as both relevant and important provided the basis for delineating the potential ACEC areas. In some cases, the potential ACEC boundary was the same as the existing ACEC area. In other cases, the boundary of the potential area was reduced or increased from the existing or nominated area by the ID team. Maps of the existing, nominated and potential ACECs are included with this report.

7. References

BLM Manual, 1613

BLM, Draft ACEC Evaluations [for] Monticello Resource Management Plan, September, 2004

BLM, Moab Field Office, Lockhart Basin ACEC Nomination, 2004

BLM, Richfield RMP, Draft ACEC Evaluations, June 2004

BLM, RMP and Record of Decision and Rangeland Program Summary for the San Juan Resource Area, Moab District, Utah, March 1991

BLM, San Juan RMP, Draft RMP / EIS, May 1986

BLM, San Juan RMP, Management Situation Analysis, September 1985

BLM, San Juan RMP, Proposed RMP Final EIS, Volume 1, September 1987

BLM, Washington Office, 45 Fed Reg 57318, Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns; Policy and Procedures Guidelines, August 27, 1980

San Juan County Commission, Letter to BLM Monticello Field Office, April 12, 2004

Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), ACEC Nominations, June 16, 2004

State of Utah, Utah Code Section 63-38d-401(7)(a)