

Record of Decision
and
Finding of No significant Impact
for the
Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area
(EEA)

EA WY-062-114

Decision: It is my decision to adopt the general and specific actions described below under Management Direction. It has been modified from the Proposed Action in for the Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area (EEA). This decision shall apply to 1260 acres in the EEA and acquired land that may or will be added to the EEA. This decision incorporates all mitigation specified in the subject environmental assessment (EA).

This decision conforms with the 1985 Platte River Resource Area Management Plan and does not conflict with other statutes, regulation or local land use plans. I have further determined that adoption of the proposed action conforms with the 1977 Recreation Area Management Plan for Muddy Mountain and that no change in that plan, except those contained in the Proposed Action for the 1260 acre EEA, is required.

Finding of No Significant Impact: Based on the analysis of impacts contained in environmental assessment 114, I have determined that impacts are not significant and an environmental impact statement is not required.

Public Participation

A press release was issued on August 5, 1998 soliciting comments on the initial Environmental Assessment. The comment period was open until August 20, 1998. The comment period was extended to September 10, 1998 through a press release due to public concerns raised. BLM then held a public information meeting on September 24, 1998 to address issues and extended the deadline for public comment until October 5, 1998. 132 people registered at the public meeting. BLM received 51 comment letters and one petition during the comment period. On November 12, 1998 through a press release, BLM announced that it would reevaluate the proposal and form a focus group of users and interested parties. The focus group was initiated in January, 1999. BLM then met

with the adjacent landowners on February 3 and with the focus group on February 17. BLM also solicited input and comments from these two groups on management options for the EA. BLM completed its reevaluation and took into account the feedback received from the focus group, adjacent landowners and the public comments and rewrote the Environmental Assessment in August, 1999. All major issues and concerns were incorporated into the revised EA.

Rationale

The decision is based upon the analysis in the EA and the extensive public input that was received. Even though the Management Direction has been modified slightly from the Proposed Action in the EA it is still supported by the analysis in the EA.

Management Direction

Private Property Concerns

Private landowners in the Muddy Mountain area are very concerned about trespass from the Environmental Education Area (EEA). To address their concerns the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will appropriately sign the boundaries where all roads and trails leave the EEA. Where necessary, portions of trails will be closed or rerouted to resolve private property conflicts.

Hunting And Shooting

Shooting restrictions were a major issue. Comments ranged from no restriction to closing the entire Muddy Mountain area to shooting. The restriction on discharge of firearms and other projectiles was reduced to the developed campsites and day use areas. This area is controlled by BLM regulations at 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 8365.2-5 (a) that state: "On developed recreation sites and areas, unless otherwise authorized, no person shall: discharge or use firearms, other weapons or fireworks." 43 CFR 8360.0-5 (c) defines a developed area as "sites and areas that contain structures or capital improvements primarily used for recreation purposes."

Hunting during seasons established by the state will be allowed on the remainder of the EEA.

Open and Close Dates

Opening and closing dates for the access road to Muddy Mountain will be based on snow conditions (per the 1977 plan) as opposed to specific dates. BLM will determine when

snow conditions require closure of the gate on the main access road to Muddy Mountain. These dates are generally around June 1 and Nov. 1.

Trails

The Beaver Pond trail has become rutted and environmental damage has occurred in the wetlands area. That trail will be closed and rehabed. A new trail for multipurpose recreation use will be constructed and will join existing roads/trails.

All signing and interpretive work on the trails will be completed. Dead fall and snags adjacent to trails that present a safety hazard will be cleared.

Fencing

Approximately ½ mile of fence will be constructed north of the Rim campground so that the area inside the loop road that includes the campgrounds and accessible trails will be secure from livestock grazing. The EEA will be fenced in its entirety as funds are available.

Livestock Grazing

The EEA will be closed to livestock grazing per the 1977 plan based on the termination date of one existing lease. The present grazing lease will be allowed to run to term in 2004. Lands inside the EEA will not be included in a new grazing lease. Thereafter, fencing will be completed to exclude livestock grazing in the EEA.

Bear Baiting (Not addressed in '77 Plan)

Baiting of trophy game animals is permitted and controlled by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The requirement that limits baiting to no closer than ½ mile from developments is adequate to provide for visitor safety.

Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Use

Interpretive trails are closed to horses and mechanized vehicles except those used to assist handicapped individuals. In all other parts of the EEA requirements contained in the 1977 plan will be followed. This limits OHV and horse use to designated roads and marked trails. These designations will be shown on a new map in the kiosk at the entrance to the EEA.

Campgrounds

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared which includes the Rim Campground and repairs will be completed next year as part of scheduled maintenance. BLM will complete previously initiated projects at Lodgepole campground and scheduled maintenance.

Fees

A two-year test pilot fee program for the Muddy Mountain EEA was initiated in 1999. The charge will be \$5 to camp overnight at designated campgrounds, ie, Rim and Lodgepole. There will be a \$3 charge per vehicle if a campsite in Rim or Lodgepole campgrounds is occupied during the daytime hours, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.. Additionally, voluntary donations will be accepted from users that park in designated areas and use the EEA during the day. Fees will apply to all users and customary reduction for Golden Eagle, Age, and Access passports will be honored. Collected fees will be used for upgrades and maintenance of existing facilities on Muddy Mountain. The pilot fee program will be evaluated at the end of the 2nd year, year 2000.

/s/ James Murkin
February 4, 2000

Casper Field
Manager

Date