



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

McInnis Canyons

National Conservation Area



Colorado

Annual Manager's Report—Fiscal Year 2018

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

McInnis Canyons

National Conservation Area

Designating Authority

Designating Authority: Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area and Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-535), October 24, 2000, renamed through Public Law 108-400, October 30, 2004

Date of Designation: October 24, 2000

Additional Designations

Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness
Old Spanish National Historic Trail

Site Description

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (MCNCA; the NCA) forms a part of the Uncompahgre Plateau, which rises like a giant rolling wave above the Grand Valley of Colorado. It encompasses 123,460 acres. Rugged canyons descend to the Colorado River and contain some of the most spectacular landforms found anywhere in the country. Rattlesnake Canyon, Dinosaur Hill, Devils Canyon, and Mee Canyon are just a few of the areas that contribute to the mystery, splendor and diversity of this landscape. It is home to coyotes, bald eagles, mountain lions, a variety of small mammals and songbirds.

NCA Offerings

The MCNCA has many recreational opportunities. Visitors to the NCA can participate in a wide variety of recreational activities, including world-class mountain biking, river rafting, hiking, camping, hunting, horseback riding, OHV travel and wildlife viewing. Visitors can also enjoy a broad range of recreational settings, including remote wilderness, riparian wetlands, and culturally or historically significant sites. The 142-mile Kokopelli Trail runs through the NCA to Moab, Utah, and the Colorado River winds its way for 19 miles through the spectacular canyon country of the NCA.

Communications sites in the NCA host 17 towers/facilities. The first right-of-way (ROW) grants were issued in the mid-1950s to utility companies such as Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company, Public Service Company, and Grand Valley Transmission Company. The first ROW for a commercial broadcast station was granted to Jan-Di Broadcasting for KEKB in 1984. Since then, the BLM has issued additional ROWs for television and radio broadcasting facilities. Other facilities provide public safety communications, such as the Grand Junction Regional Communications Center, responsible for answering 911 and non-emergency calls, and the Western Colorado Amateur Radio Club serving local volunteer organizations such as Mesa County Search

and Rescue, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's SKYWARN volunteers.

Year Accomplishments

- Nature Knowledge Days in McInnis Canyons
- Teacher Training with TEN Program in McInnis Canyons
- Dino Days with Museums of Western Colorado
- Kokopelli 140 Race
- Skinner Cabin Accessibility Trail
- Connecting with Communities
- New Interpretive Signs
- Paleontology Education Kits
- New Mountain Biking Map

Future Priorities and Opportunities

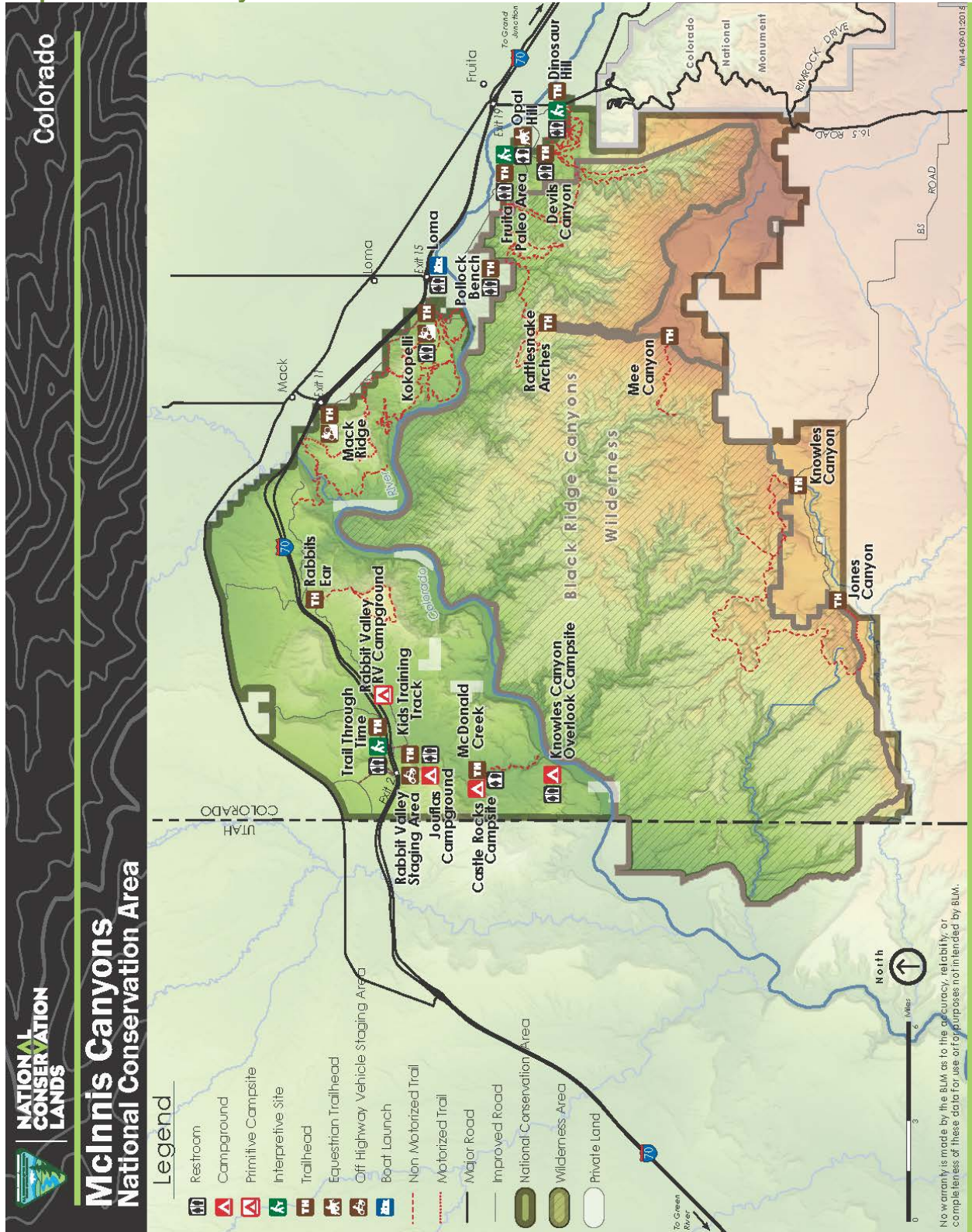
- Improved camping facilities in Rabbit Valley
- Construction of approved bike trails in Kokopelli/Mack Ridge management zone
- Improved opportunities for April and October river trips by extending the fee calendar which will improve management and discourage no-shows
- Restoration of Devil's Canyon Cabin
- New mixed-use single track trails in Rabbit Valley as directed by the RMP
- New equestrian trailhead in Rabbit Valley
- Construction of the Skinner Cabin accessibility trail

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area

2815 H Road
Grand Junction CO 81507
Phone: 970-244-3000

Unit Manager: Collin Ewing

Map of McInnis Canyons NCA



1 McInnis Canyons NCA Overview

Acreage

Total Acres in Unit	123,460 Acres
BLM Acres	123,460 Acres
Other Federal Acres	25 Acres
State Acres*	0
Private Acres*	814 Acres

*State and Private Acres are not part of the total unit acres

Budget

Budget Title	Code	Funding
Monuments & Conservation Areas	1711	\$546,000
Rangeland Management	1020	\$26,000
Riparian Management	1040	\$6,000
Wilderness Management	1210	\$65,000
Recreation & Visitor Services	1220	\$98,000
Other BLM Programs	various	\$59,000
Ruby-Horsethief camping fees	1232	\$113,000
Total Budget		\$913,000

MCNCA

also receives substantial benefit from partnerships such as our Friends Group Colorado Canyons Association (CCA). CCA holds fundraisers, applies for grants, receives donations, and receives membership dues, which they use to further the community stewardship, education, and restoration programs in the NCA.



Current Areas of Focus

The BLM will continue its focus on being a good neighbor and serving the local

communities in southwest Colorado. We recognize the high level of public interest in the MCNCA and we will remain committed to working with local governments, private citizens and our partners to pursue shared conservation stewardship of the NCA.

Colorado River Corridor

The major areas of focus for MCNCA in FY 2018 were improving and managing the river camping permit system and operating the NCA's highly successful volunteer and partnership programs. Volunteer and partnership efforts focused on removing invasive plants and trash from along the riverfront and restoring native cottonwood trees. Working with the Upper Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Unit and Colorado Canyons Association (CCA), 20 acres of Tamarisk were mechanically removed, piled and burned and 56 acres of Russian knapweed were treated. These ongoing, long-term programs will continue well beyond the next fiscal year. Mechanical removal of eight acres of Tamarisk at Horsethief bottom were funded by a Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) grant awarded to CCA in partnership with BLM.



Rabbit Valley Camping

Another focus in FY2018 was developing a plan to better manage the camping issues in the Rabbit Valley area. Proposed improvements to the area are to expand the developed camping opportunities to include approximately 72 sites among four campgrounds that would accommodate a mix of tent, trailer, and recreational vehicles (RV). Long-term, all camping in Rabbit Valley would only be permitted in developed campgrounds. More campsites and campgrounds, establish a permit system and possibly a fee system for the area. This work will continue in to the next fiscal year.



Planning and NEPA

Special Recreation Permits

Several new permits and permits up for renewal were reviewed this year. Off Highway Vehicle training, mountain bike tours, rock art tours and several schools offering outdoor education were among the permits issued in 2018. BLM also determined there was capacity for three additional river touring outfitters and completed the reviews to issue

new Special Recreation Permits for new Outfitters in Ruby-Horsethief Canyon.

Status of the Resource Management Plan

The Colorado (McInnis) Canyons National Conservation Area Approved Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision was completed in October 2004.

Status of Activity Plans

The 2004 RMP was very detailed. It included many of the components of an activity level plan. The RMP included travel management route designations, identified new routes to be constructed, identified gate placements, day use areas, parking areas, direction for posting visitor use information, outcomes, setting prescriptions, management and marketing actions, administrative and monitoring actions for each management zone.

A majority of actions have been completed and additional needs have been identified in areas of high recreation use such as Ruby-Horsethief Canyons, Rabbit Valley and the Fruita Front Country. As a result, these two activity level planning efforts were completed in 2011-2012 for Ruby-Horsethief Canyons and the Fruita Front Country, and are now being implemented. BLM has recently begun work on an activity level plan for Rabbit Valley.

Status of the RMP Implementation Strategy

In 2018, the BLM Colorado State Office came to Grand Junction to conduct an evaluation of the 2004 Resource Management Plan. They gathered an evaluation team, reviewed the RMP documents, provided an RMP evaluation questionnaire to the field staff and managers, conducted interviews of field staff and managers, and developed a draft evaluation report, making recommendations on needed maintenance, implementation planning, and amendments, to keep the RMP fresh. The final report is expected in 2019 and BLM will develop a strategy for implementing the recommendations.

Staffing

The permanent staff of the MCNCA consists of an NCA manager (shared with Dominguez-Escalante NCA), a science ecologist (shared with Dominguez-Escalante NCA), a law enforcement officer (shared with Dominguez-Escalante NCA), a National Conservation Lands Specialist (shared with shared with Dominguez-Escalante NCA) a Supervisory Park Ranger and a River Ranger. In FY 2018, seasonal staff included a Wilderness Ranger, two Ecology interns shared with Dominguez-



Escalante NCA, two Direct Hire interns shared with Dominguez-Escalante NCA, three Off Highway Vehicle Trail Crew members shared with Dominguez-Escalante NCA, and two recreation maintenance interns shared with Dominguez-Escalante NCA and Grand Junction Field Office.

The NCA receives special recreation permit administration, facilities maintenance and other program support from the Grand Junction Field Office. This support is primarily in the areas of visitor services and contact, geology and paleontology, archaeology, realty, range management, wildlife biology, ecology, weed management, geographic information systems (GIS), and soil, water, and air quality. The BLM partners with CCA to hire a NCA Stewardship Coordinator and a NCA Education Coordinator as well as an AmeriCorps VISTA employee to plan volunteer stewardship and youth education programs for McInnis Canyons and Dominguez-Escalante NCAs.



2 Programs and Accomplishments

General Accomplishments

This year marked the 18th anniversary of McInnis Canyon National Conservation Area. There were a number of projects in the NCA made possible with the hard work of the NCA staff and our many partners. Included in this report are the details of the projects, NEPA work, and outreach and education events that have happened over the 2018 fiscal year. Below you will find a list of the biggest accomplishments for 2018.

- Nature Knowledge Days in McInnis Canyons
- Devils Canyon Cabin Restoration Planning
- Old Spanish Trail Recreation and Development Strategy
- Rabbit Valley Camping
- Connecting with Communities
- New Mountain Biking Map

General Accomplishments Table

	Number of Visitors	Education Participants	Interpretative Participants	Visitor Center/Contact Station Visits	Hours of Volunteers	SRP Events	Grazing AUMs
TOTALS	264,390	900	25	1,849	150	1,075	7,570



Education, Outreach, and Interpretation

Nature Knowledge Days in McInnis Canyons

Working in partnership with CCA, over 900 third graders paid a visit to Devils Canyon within the NCA. Students rotated between eight different stations where they explored topics ranging from geology and biological soil crust to archaeology and historic ranching. Students learned from dozens of expert volunteers and received the coveted stamps in their passport booklets.

Teacher Training with TEN Program in McInnis Canyons

This year the BLM and CCA participated in the Teaching Environments Naturally (TEN) teacher education program hosted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. MCNCA staff took teachers from Mesa County into MCNCA to educate them about the historic, cultural, geological, and paleontological resources of the area, and the various ways in which they (with support from CCA and BLM) can use these resources to help reach their students throughout the school year. This program has been highly successful in the past and the NCA is excited to continue to be a partner in this opportunity to get teachers and their students out into the National Conservation Lands.

Dino Days with Museums of Western Colorado



BLM participated in Dinosaur Journey Museum's Dino Days. This local event invites members of the community to enjoy a free day at the museum to participate in a variety of activities related to paleontology. The BLM staff hosted a booth where children could come learn about dinosaur tracks and paint their very own dinosaur fossil.

Mesa County High School River Trip

The BLM and CCA hosted a river trip for Central High School AP Environmental Studies class. During this trip, 18 high school students learned about cultural and natural resources along the river, using examples in the field to learn the basics of environmental science. In the evening they camped on the banks of the Colorado River. In camp, students learned, many for the first time, the essentials of camping, including how to dress for changing weather, how to set up a tent, and how to leave no trace.



Skinner Cabin Project

The BLM continued work on the Skinner Cabin project, building on last year's restoration with a newly installed protective fence, as well as work on interpretive panels for the site. The fencing was installed with the help of BLM wildland firefighters using juniper posts and cross beams for an appropriate time-period look, while still deterring visitors from entering the cabin and causing deterioration to the newly restored walls and roof.

National Conservation Lands and Colorado Mesa University

In fulfillment of a National Conservation Lands grant awarded to Colorado Mesa University, the BLM assisted with tribal site visits to continue the MCNCA Cultural Landscapes Study. The BLM assisted CMU with development of the inventory form that will be used in future CMU field schools, which incorporate visual resource, vegetative, and other observations important to understanding landscapes.

Devils Canyon Cabin

The BLM also finished planning another historic cabin protection project within the NCA. Materials were purchased for the 'Devils Canyon Cabin,' a locally well-known cowboy line shack in the Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness. Work will include roof repair (replacing wood boards and adding new shingles), new tarpaper for the outer walls, fixing up an adjoining sheep pen, and trash and graffiti clean-up.



Research Inventory in Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness

The BLM completed a 100-acre research inventory on the south side of the Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness. This survey utilized experienced volunteers and BLM seasonal workers to complete the inventory of an area on the border of sage land and pinyon-juniper communities, further informing our expectations for site densities in these types of areas.

Old Spanish Trail Recreation and Development Strategy

Beginning in the spring of 2018, MCNCA, in partnership with BLM's Historic Trails Program Lead and the National Park Service's Intermountain Region National Trails Program, developed a Recreation and Development Strategy for the Old Spanish



National Historic Trail. The purpose of this strategy is to explore different possibilities for our local communities to increase recognition, general knowledge, and usage of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. Congress designated the trail in 2002 under the authority of the National Trails System Act, which recognizes the 2,700 mile-long trade route between Santa Fe, New Mexico and Los Angeles, California. The strategy identifies potential projects that could enable the public to find, follow, and experience the

trail throughout Mesa and Delta Counties. The Old Spanish National Historic Trail has a diverse, unique and rich history, with plentiful recreational activities.

Grazing

BLM manages ten grazing permits on 21 allotments for a total of 7,570 Animal Unit Months within the NCA.

BLM is continuing work with permittees in two allotments to renew their grazing permit motorized use agreement for management of livestock within the Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness Area.

Paleontology

Permits

There are three active excavation permits in MCNCA. They are Mygatt Moore, Tom's Place and the Callison Quarry.

Fossil Poaching Incident

One alleged poaching incident occurred in 2018. Legal charges and trial are pending. The poach site, where fossils were illegally removed, required approximately 80 total man-hours to assess, split between



multiple specialties and 6-8 volunteers and interns. It required over 200 acres of survey to locate and understand the extent of the bone-bearing strata (a probable 'lag deposit' of sandstone at least 500 meters long, and up to 300 meters wide), plus a number of independent localities near the poached horizon.

Partnerships

In keeping with the administration's priority of shared conservation stewardship, MCNCA works closely with a wide variety of partners to promote multiple-use of the NCAs public lands.

Colorado Canyons Association

CCA is the friends group to the local National Conservation Areas. In FY 2018, they have helped BLM staff host river cleanups, trail monitoring classes, and educational trips for area youth. CCA provided crucial assistance in providing visitor services for the NCA at the BLM office, organizing volunteer projects, and creating awareness in the community surrounding the stewardship and management of the NCA.



AmeriCorps VISTA

In 2018, the BLM and CCA were proud to host two AmeriCorps VISTA interns with duties in MCNCA, Killian Rush and new VISTA Alexandra Martin. During their AmeriCorps terms, they assisted with setting up Science, Technology, Engineering and Math programming and engaged multiple communities about how they can better enjoy public lands. Other projects included hosting and assisting with many community outreach events, and implementing the initial phases of re-vamping CCA's Trail Stewardship Program. They completed these projects, among many others, to help build the capacity of CCA and the BLM.



Colorado Mesa University

MCNCA staff partnered with Colorado Mesa University (CMU) for many different projects. MCNCA hosted several student interns from CMU's Environmental Science Program. Interns completed Assessment, Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) studies, continued work on a plant inventory, completed rare plant monitoring, provided visitor information services, conducted wilderness monitoring, and assisted with archaeological inventory and data recovery. In 2018 MCNCA also completed an economic impact study for mountain biking in the Grand Valley working with students from the Natural Resource Center at CMU.



Grand Valley Trails Alliance (GVTA)

BLM Recreation staff participates in monthly GVTA Roundtable meetings that address trail development and maintenance projects/issues throughout the GJFO, including MCNCA.



City of Fruita Coordination Meetings

BLM managers met regularly with City of Fruita Employees to develop projects involving BLM and City of Fruita lands. The BLM-Fruita partnership projects include Mack Ridge Trail planning and construction and planning for and completing the paved bike path from Fruita to the Loma boat ramp and Kokopelli Trailhead, as well as trash removal at the Devils Canyon Trailhead.



FRUITA
COLORADO

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)

The GOCO Inspire initiative aims to connect youth and their families to the outdoors. A coalition of partners from the City of Grand Junction, Mesa Land Trust, CCA, CPW, School District 51, the Duel Immersion Academy, and the Riverside Education Center received a planning grant to develop programs, pathways, and places that bring youth closer to the outdoors.



Other Partnerships

MCNCA staff also closely collaborated with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado State University, Rivers Edge West, Western Colorado Conservation Corps, Grand Valley Trails Alliance, Grand Mesa Backcountry Horsemen, Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Association, Motorcycle Trail Riders Association, Museums of Western Colorado, Hilltop Trail Crew, and School District 51.

Recreation and Visitor Services

Steve's Reroute

Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Association (COPMOBA) received a \$10,000 grant from REI to reroute a popular bike trail in the Mack Ridge area. The reroute will result in a more rideable and more sustainable route for mountain bikers to enjoy.



Fruita Front Country

Improvements to the Fruita Front Country and Ruby Horsethief Canyons areas continued in FY 2018. The new signs in this popular trail system will inform the public on the best practices and resources in the system, as well as improving their recognition of the NCA as part of the National Landscape Conservation System. BLM also reprinted the brochure for the Fruita Front Country to complement the signage in the ground, with minor updates to the map. This brochure is still very popular and is available at the BLM office and several locations throughout Grand Junction and Fruita.

Kokopelli 140 Race

The Kokopelli 140 is a one and two-day mountain bike and ultra-marathon ride, run and relay on the Kokopelli Trail. Reviews were completed for an event of up to 450 participants. BLM coordinated with the City of Fruita and private land owners for the review.

Skinner Cabin Accessibility Trail

The Skinner Cabin Accessibility Trail is a trail to a historic cabin within MCNCA. The trail is not currently ADA accessible but the BLM plans to make the trail ADA compliant by widening and making a durable surface using compacted rock.

Colorado Canyons Association Guided Tours

CCA applied for a Special Recreation Permit to offer fee-for-service tours. CCA is now able to offer interpretive hikes and river trips within MCNCA.

Connecting with Communities

Mesa, Delta, and Montrose Counties partnered to host a booth at the 2018 Winter Outdoor Retailer show in Denver. Their booth was called "Heart of Western Colorado". A large delegation of approximately 30 individuals representing local businesses, non-profits, and government officials attended with the goal of spreading the word about the outdoor recreation opportunities and quality of life in the heart of the Western Slope. Because public lands and National Conservation Areas were a huge part of that message, BLM MCNCA Manager Collin Ewing attended, educating people about our NCAs on the Western Slope of Colorado.



New Interpretive Signs

Dinosaur Journey, a dinosaur museum in Fruita Colorado, designed and installed several new interpretive signs at Dinosaur Hill, just south of Fruita. Dinosaur Journey is also working on several other interpretive signs for Fruita Paleo Area within MCNCA. They will continue to redesign and install the signs in the next fiscal year.

1% for Fruita Trails



Several local businesses in the City of Fruita came together to give 1% of their profits to COPMOBA to survey, plan and construct trails in MCNCA.

National Conservation Lands and Colorado Mesa University

In fulfillment of a National Conservation Lands science grant awarded to Colorado Mesa University, BLM assisted with tribal site visits to continue the MCNCA Cultural Landscapes Study. The BLM assisted CMU with development of the inventory form that will be used in future CMU field schools, which incorporate visual resource, vegetative, and other observations important to understanding landscapes.

Paleontology Education Kits

The BLM Museums of Western Colorado paleontology kits developed through a DOI grant continued to circulate throughout District 51 schools this year. The kits use real and replica BLM collections to educate middle school-aged children regarding the paleontological resources on public lands. The two kits reached five middle schools and approximately 887 children this year, allowing students access to collections they may not otherwise encounter.

OHV Crew Grant

Through a Colorado Parks and Wildlife Trails Program grant, a three person OHV crew was hired to be shared between MCNCA and D-E NCA. The crew worked for six months this summer and accomplished many projects including, parking lot and trail maintenance, and sign installation. The crew also installed five new kiosks and repaired two miles of post and cable in Rabbit Valley and participated in National Public Lands Day along with Western Slope ATV Club and Stay the Trail.



McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

The BLM continuously updates its inventory of lands possessing wilderness characteristics as directed by section 201 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). A comprehensive inventory of lands with wilderness characteristics has never been completed for McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area, and this process was initiated in the fall of 2017. During the fall and winter of 2017/2018, BLM staff assessed the merits of lands in MCNCA outside of Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness, identifying the area's naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation, and supplemental values such as cultural and geological resources present. Several wilderness characteristics inventory units have been identified. A complete inventory report for the National Conservation Area is anticipated for the winter of

2018/2019.

Tree Work

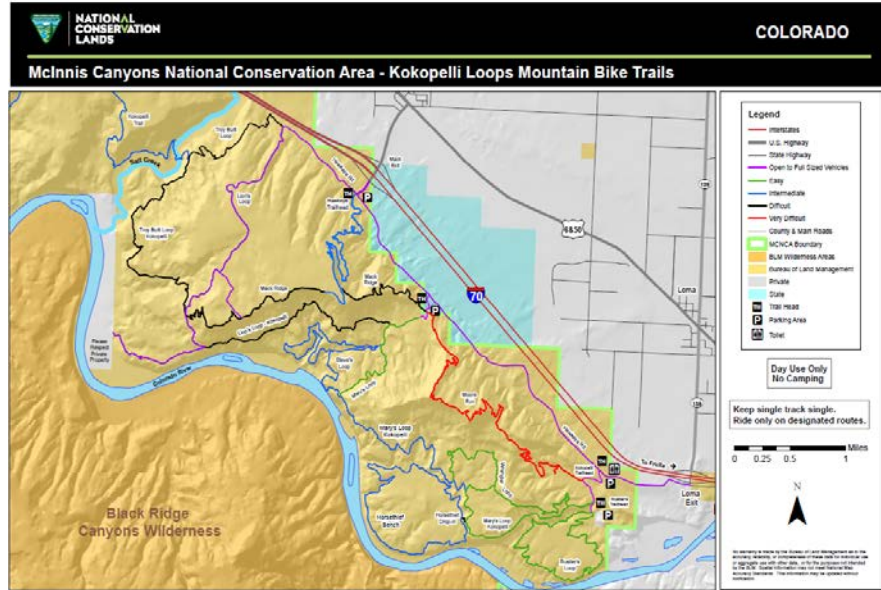
Several branches damaged by high wind last year were removed from the Split Rock campsite along the Colorado River. With the help of Tree Climbers, a local tree company, the campsite is now safer for all visitors.



Ruby-Horsethief River Corridor

The Ruby-Horsethief river corridor continued to see growth in users in FY 2018. Managers are working with private boaters

and outfitters to ensure that issued permits are being utilized by permit holders. Public comment was taken on whether or not to expand the fee calendar on this very popular section of river. The reservation system also got a makeover with the transition from Asperia One to Booze-Allen Hamilton as contractor operating the platform for recreation.gov.



Trash Removal from Colorado River

It was a low water year for the Colorado River. Because of the low water BLM was able to remove large items not possible to remove in the past. A steel grate that washed down river in a high water year was removed using a “Z-line” to get it across and out of the river. Low water also aided in the removal of a private plane that crashed in the Colorado River this summer. While the pilot was thankfully able to walk out with the assistance of local boaters, the plane was left in the river. BLM ranger, Troy Schnurr, with the assistance of a local towing company, were able to successfully winch the plane across the river and remove it. A 55 gallon drum was also removed from the river, with the help of the Grand Junction Fire Department.

New Mountain Biking Map



BLM developed a new, updated map of the Kokopelli/Mack Ridge mountain bike trails. This is a georeferenced PDF map, available for free download from the Avenza Map store and the BLM website.

Volunteers

McInnis Canyons River Cleanup

BLM partnered with CCA to host the 7th annual McInnis Canyons River cleanup. Eleven volunteers spent two days on the Colorado River in Ruby-Horsethief Canyons and donated 165 hours of picking up trash on a 25 mile section of the river.

Ruby-Horsethief Stewardship

Fifteen volunteers organized by CCA monitored three sensitive sites along the Ruby-Horsethief river corridor. Volunteers recorded information on dominant plant species to help the BLM track the progress of weed treatments.

Trail Monitoring Program

In 2018, the trail monitoring program hosted by CCA continued to be successful. The program was revitalized by streamlining data collection and training new volunteers to collect data while hiking in MCNCA.

Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association (COPMOBA) Trail Building

COPMOBA worked with the BLM in the Mack Ridge trail system on the Wrangler Connector and Hawkeye Trails.

COPMOBA raised money and secured contractors to construct the new world

class Hawkeye Trail. During their Monday Night Maintenance series, COPMOBA visited the Mack Ridge trails multiple times to fill in ruts and manage erosion. COPMOBA was a key member of a partnership with the BLM, City of Fruita, and Fruita area businesses, providing volunteer time and funds for the survey work necessary to build new trails in the area. They also volunteered their time to put flag lines on the ground as part of the trail layout process.



Front Country Trails Sign Cleanup

The Mesa Monument Striders, a local running group, and BLM had a volunteer work day on the Front Country trail system. Thirty-eight old and dilapidated carsonite signs were removed along with barbed wire and several t-posts.



Back Country Horsemen Trail work

The Back Country Horsemen maintained two different areas of trails and parking lots in MCNCA this year. They also spent a weekend repairing a corral in a popular horseback riding area in Rabbit Valley.

Great Old Broads for Wilderness

The Great Old Broads for Wilderness spent the summer closing and rehabbing many social trails in the Devils Canyon area. The area was becoming over run with social trails; because of this work the area is much less confusing for visitors.

3

Science

Science

Journal Articles



The BLM McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area and the Grand Junction Field Office staff recently published research studying post-fire seeding and plant communities in burned areas to better understand if seeding these areas promoted native vegetation regrowth.

The research found that restoration after a fire is very complex, and seeding, especially in low precipitation zones, does not always guarantee a particular result. Precipitation right after fire makes

a huge difference, and if precipitation does not occur at the right time for seeding and for native species recovery, the seeding may not be successful and more intensive treatments may be needed.

The research article is titled “Post-fire Native Seed Use in Western Colorado: A Look at Burned and Unburned Vegetation Communities” and can be found in the Natural Areas Journal.

Salt Desert Restoration Project

One experimental plot was installed in MCNCA to help determine best management practices for salt desert restoration. Additionally, an experimental plot was installed in MCNCA as part of the USGS Restoration Assessment and Monitoring Program (RAMPS) for the Southwest Program. These will help improve restoration efforts in drylands.

Amphibian Surveys

Amphibian surveys were conducted to determine presence of bullfrogs with the use of eDNA. BLM partnered with USGS and Colorado Mesa University (CMU) to complete the surveys.

Arthropod and Gastro-Intestinal parasites of White-tailed Prairie Dogs

The BLM continued to research this observation, found in 2017, as well as continued species identification of trap catches. As funding permits, CMU would like to continue collections at different times and continue to sort and research collected arthropods.

Survey of Species Composition and Distribution of Tardigrades in the High Desert

CMU researchers have been working to survey tardigrades found in mosses in the area and have collected specimens from MCNCA and D-E NCA research is ongoing throughout both NCAs.



Salt Desert Seed Banks

In partnership with Colorado State University (CSU), field work was completed in MCNCA and D-E NCA to determine seed banks which can determine site potential in degraded areas and compare these areas with more intact vegetation communities.

AIM Baseline Data/Transition Plan

Base line data was collected according to the Northwest district design. MCNCA, in cooperation with GJFO, are working on incorporating AIM into NEPA documents and field office level decisions.

Seed Collection

Native seeds were collected in both MCNCA and D-E NCA to be used in salt desert restoration trails and incorporated into the Seeds of Success program.



4 Resources, Objects, Values and Stressors

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are among the purposes of MCNCA that are listed in its enabling legislation, and the NCA enjoys an extraordinary abundance of these resources, including an array of prehistoric and historic sites and artifacts.

The BLM is committed to conserving, protecting and restoring the unique values of the NCA and furthering the goals of the BLM's National Conservation Lands, of which the NCA is a part. The NCA's cultural resource management staff focuses on clearly communicating the importance of conserving and protecting NCA values and expanding the BLM's understanding of NCA resources through assessment, inventory, and monitoring.

Cultural resources (includes archeological and historical) Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Cultural resources Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY 2018
123,000	22,675	2,322	76

Stressors Affecting Cultural Resources

Stressors on cultural resources and values include wildland fire, recreational use, livestock grazing, right-of-way proximity, air pollution, theft, surface disturbance, vandalism and increased access.

Natural Resources, including Biological and Environmental Values

Natural resources are among the purposes of MCNCA and are listed in its enabling legislation, and the NCA enjoys an extraordinary abundance of these resources, including an array of rare and common plant and animal species.

Natural Resources Status and Trend Table

Resource, Object, or Value	Status	Trend
Natural	Good	Stable

Biological	Good	Stable
Environmental	Good	Stable

Natural Resources Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Resource, Object or Value	Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY 2018
Natural	123,000	123,000	123,000	28,304
Biological	123,000	123,000	123,000	28,054
Environmental	123,000	123,000	123,000	250

Stressors Affecting Natural Resources

Stressors on natural and cultural resources and values include (human-caused) wildland fire, invasive plants, recreational use, livestock grazing, domestic livestock diseases, loss of habitat, right-of-way proximity, air pollution, non-native animals, water pollution, theft, surface disturbance, vandalism, and increased access.

Water, Soil, Air Resources, including Natural and Environmental Values



Nineteen miles of the Colorado River flow through the MCNCA, and all the side canyons have seasonal flows resulting from snowmelt and summer rainstorms. These aquatic resources are important to fish and wildlife and the river is popular for visitors to boat and camp. BLM staff members work to expand understanding of these resources through assessment, inventory, and monitoring.

Water, Soil, and Air resources Status and Trend Table

Resources, Object or Value	Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Water Resources	Good overall	Stable and Improving
Soil Resources	Good overall	Stable
Air Resources	Good	Stable

Water, Soil, and Air Resources Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Resources, Object, or Value	Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY 18
Water Resources	123,000	123,000	1,000	1
Soil Resources	123,000	123,000	123,000	25
Air Resources	123,000	123,000	123,000	0

Stressors Affecting Water, Soil and Air Resources

Invasive aquatic plants, recreational use, improper livestock grazing, and air and water resources can threaten water resources.

Recreational Resources, including Wilderness and Scenic Values



Recreation is listed as one of the purposes of the NCA in its enabling legislation, and visitors to the NCA can participate in an exceptionally wide variety of recreational activities, including world-class mountain biking, river rafting, hiking, camping, hunting, horseback riding, OHV travel and wildlife viewing. Visitors can also enjoy a broad range of recreational settings, including remote wilderness, riparian wetlands, and culturally or historically significant sites. The 142-mile Kokopelli Trail runs through the NCA to Moab, Utah, and the Colorado River winds its way for 19 miles through the spectacular canyon country of the NCA.

The BLM's recreation staff assists in planning for and managing recreational resources and facilities in a manner that conserves NCA values. Thus, roads and other facilities are built only when

necessary for public health and safety, for exercise of existing rights, to minimize impacts to resources, or to otherwise further the purposes for which the NCA was designated. Recreation staff members actively engage stakeholders through the land-use planning process to help identify existing and potential uses that are compatible with the legislated purposes of the NCA, and the BLM practices a community-based approach to providing recreational services that is consistent with the purposes of the NCA and the socioeconomic goals of adjacent or nearby communities.

Congress designated the 75,479-acre Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness in 2000 as part of the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area and Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness Act of 2000. The entirety of the Wilderness is located within the MCNCA. The BLM is committed to protect the Wilderness in such a manner as to preserve its wilderness character, as well as effectively manage recreational, scenic, scientific, education, conservation and historic uses permitted under Section 4(c) and 4(d) of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness has long been recognized as one of Colorado's premier wildlands, with sandstone arches, alcoves, monoliths, hoodoos and spires scattered throughout. The Wilderness, natural in character with negligible human

imprints, is characterized by a high east-west ridgeline draining north to the Colorado River through the canyon network. Human Imprints on the upland mesas include fence lines, stock reservoirs, and trails that minimally impact the naturalness of the area due to unobtrusive locations and natural screening.

The Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for solitude due to the area's size, configuration, topographic variety and vegetative screening, and are greatly accentuated by the area's ability to disperse visitors horizontally and vertically through the landscape.

The Wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation based on outstanding scenery, landscape variety, geologic features, and cultural and paleontological resources. The area's topographic diversity, unusual geologic features and intermittent streams appeal to hikers, while regionally unique phenomena, such the arches in Rattlesnake Canyon and the alcove in Mee Canyon enhance the wilderness experience.

Other popular activities in Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness include horseback riding, climbing, hunting, nature study, photography, wildlife viewing and backpacking.

The Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness possesses a number of outstanding geological, paleontological, archaeological and ecological values and is also considered to have very high values for education and scientific research.

The Colorado Canyons Resource Management Plan established four management goals for Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness:

- To provide for the long-term protection and preservation of the area's wilderness character under a principle of non-degradation. The area's natural condition, outstanding opportunities for solitude, outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation, and any ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value present will be managed so that they will remain unimpaired;
- To manage the wilderness area for the use and enjoyment of visitors in a manner that will leave the area unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness;
- To manage the area using the minimum tool, equipment or structure necessary to successfully, safely, and economically accomplish the objective; and,
- To manage non-conforming but accepted use permitted by the Wilderness Act and subsequent laws in a manner that will prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the area's wilderness character.

The practice of Visual Resource Management, in BLM land-use planning, inventories the character of a landscape according to the four basic visual elements of form, line, color and texture. The open spaces, the natural aesthetics, and the scenic vistas within MCNCA are considered a social, economic, and environmental benefit. All actions proposed in the NCA will be planned and implemented to meet the objectives for the Visual Resource Management class of the area.

Recreation Status and Trend Table

Resource, Object, and Value	Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Recreation	Good	Stable
Wilderness	Good	Stable
Scenic	Good	Stable

Recreation Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Resource, Object, and Value	Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY 2018
Recreation	123,000	123,000	123,000	50,000
Wilderness	123,000	123,000	75,550	75,550
Scenic	123,000	123,000	123,000	50,000

Stressors Affecting Recreational resources

Recreational resources and values may be adversely affected by any of the stressors that affect natural and cultural resources, because recreational visitors to the NCA often go there expecting (for example) to see pristine habitat, healthy wildlife or undamaged rock art. Recreational use itself can damage recreational resources, especially with increased use due to local and regional population growth. With increased use of public lands, user interactions can also influence recreation experiences. Some interactions can be positive which would enhance an experience, while some can be negative, degrading an experience. Right-of-way proximity and air pollution may also threaten the integrity of the recreational experience

Wilderness resources and scenic values may be adversely affected by any of the stressors that affect other resources within the NCA, with visitor use causing the greatest negative effects on wilderness character. Visitor use itself can damage the resource, especially with increased use due to local and regional population growth. Other stressors that affect wilderness character include livestock grazing and invasive weeds.

Scientific, Geological and Paleontological Resources

The scientific resources of MCNCA are cited in its enabling legislation as one of the purposes for its designation, as are the geological, cultural, paleontological, biological and wildlife resources, all of which are suitable for scientific study and abundant in the NCA. Scientific study of these resources benefits the scientific community as a whole and effectively informs the BLM's management of the NCA. The NCA staff works to identify research needs, encourage science partnerships and citizen science, and incorporate scientific results into management, decision-making, and outreach.

BLM staff members promote the NCA to universities and research institutions as an outdoor research and educational laboratory and potential demonstration center for emerging technology and innovative management practices. In turn, academic institutions, aware of the unique and valuable resources in the NCA, seek out partnerships with the BLM to conduct scientific research and education in the NCA.



Scientific, Geological, and Paleontological Status and Trend Table

Resource, Object, or Value	Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Scientific	Good	Stable
Geological (Precambrian to Quaternary Rocks)	Good	Stable
Paleontological (Scientifically important vertebrate fossils)	Good Overall	Some vandalism, but stable overall.

Scientific, Geological, and Paleontological Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Resource, Object, or Value	Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY 2018

Scientific	123,000	123,000	123,000	28,349
Geological	123,000	123,000	123,000	5
Paleontological	123,000	100	123,000	50

Stressors Affecting Scientific, Geological and Paleontological Resources

Scientific resources are affected by anything that affects geological, cultural, paleontological, biological, or wildlife resources. Geological and paleontological resources are primarily affected by theft and vandalism.

Wildlife Education

Wildlife education is one of the purposes of the NCA listed in its enabling legislation, and the BLM strives to provide young people with opportunities to engage in recreation and practice stewardship on NCA lands and to learn about NCA resources and land management. BLM staff members seek out partnerships with local schools and educators to help them interpret National Conservation Lands and NCA values, and the BLM provides interpretive and educational materials to NCA users through the Grand Junction Field Office and the NCA.

Wildlife Education Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Wildlife Education Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY 18
123,000	123,000	123,000	100

Stressors Affecting Wild Life Education

Risk factors for wildlife (and thus wildlife education) include loss of habitat, right-of-way proximity, non-native animals, and increased access.



5 Summary of Performance Measure

Resources, Objects, and Values Status Summary Table		
Resource, Object, or Value	Status	Trend
Cultural (includes archaeological and historical)	Good	Stable
Natural	Good	Stable
Biological	Good	Stable
Environmental	Good	Stable
Water Resources	Good overall	Stable
Soil Resources	Good overall	Stable
Air Resources	Good	Stable
Recreational	Good	Stable
Wilderness	Good	Stable
Scenic	Good	Stable
Scientific	Good	Stable
Geological (Precambrian to Quaternary rocks)	Good overall	Stable
Wildlife Education	Good	Stable

6 Manager's Letter



I have been fortunate to hold the position of NCA manager for more than five years now, and I continue to be impressed by the foresight of the people of western Colorado. In 1999, there was some dialog surrounding expanding the National Park Service's (NPS) Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Colorado National Monuments. The communities, seeking a way to balance conservation of these landscapes with traditional uses, came together to ask Congress to designate these landscapes as National Conservation Areas, to be managed by the BLM. Because of their foresight, McInnis Canyons and Gunnison Gorge NCAs

were born. Presumably very happy with the outcome of those designations, the local communities went back to Congress a decade later and successfully asked for NCA protection for a third area, Dominguez-Escalante, which was not under consideration for NPS expansion. The people of western Colorado showed great faith in the BLM by entrusting us to manage these nationally significant landscapes as NCAs. They also placed great expectations on us that we manage them to protect sensitive resources while also continuing to allow traditional uses.

Local ranchers, including Dave Hawks, were involved in the designation of McInnis Canyons NCA. Dave tells me that then Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt visited and promised that traditional uses could continue in an NCA. With this promise, the ranchers got on board. Local ranchers have had the fortune of living and working in these amazing landscapes for generations. Dave put it something like this: *If you take a precious gem, and put it on display, where people can hold it and view it up close, people will really appreciate the gem. If you put that gem behind bullet proof glass, and place it off limits, a few people will visit the museum and look through the glass, but it loses its luster. While some gems are so valuable they need to be placed off limits to all humans, the NCAs will be most valuable to people if they are available to use and enjoy.*

It is a challenge protecting world-class resources, while fostering important traditional resource uses. Most know about biking at Kokopelli, hiking the arches, rafting the river, and OHV riding in Rabbit Valley; many people are not aware of the other traditional uses that are just as spectacular. McInnis Canyons NCA is one of only four desert bighorn sheep hunting areas in Colorado. Each year, four of the 13 once in a lifetime desert bighorn sheep hunting licenses issued by Colorado Parks and Wildlife across the state are for the herd in MCNCA. These hunts are highly prized by our hunters, as well as our permitted outfitters, who can help a novice have the experience of a lifetime. The Fruita Front Country is one of only a few places in the U.S. where BLM manages for "dog walking" and "enjoying frequent exercise". Our partner, Colorado Canyons Association, even has a "Dogs of the NCAs" calendar at the Colorado Canyons

Association bookstore! The Colorado River has great turkey and waterfowl hunting. Hunters apply every year for a limited spring turkey license in Unit 30. Those lucky enough to draw can have a unique experience floating Ruby-Horsethief and hunting turkey. Big mule deer bucks and bull elk also call the Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness Area home.

The MCNCA permits grazing on 21 allotments, where 10 local ranchers' cattle spend part of the year fattening up. These ranches are important to local economies, protect thousands of acres of private land from development, and have sustained local families on the landscape for generations.

The Black Ridge communications site hosts 15 radio towers, including important services like Mesa County 911, and local radio stations like KAFM, where you can listen to the show "Your Public Lands" each month at noon on Thursday.

I believe the success of this relatively new system of National Conservation Lands rests upon the balancing act; the people value their protected lands when they are allowed to use them. This year, I have been fortunate to have some experiences that really brought that paradigm to the forefront of my mind. I am proud that so many people around here choose to belong to the NCA community!

- NCA Manager Collin Ewing



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

McInnis Canyons

National Conservation Area

Southwest District Office
Bureau of Land Management
Grand Junction Field Office
2815 H Rd.
Grand Junction, CO 81506
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