

**Northwest Resource Advisory Council Meeting,
August 18, 2016**

White River Field Office, Kent Walter

WRFO “pilots” unmanned aircraft projects – The White River Field Office recently partnered with BLM’s Unmanned Aircraft System Team to help evaluate the use of drones in natural resource management. The small, lightweight quad copters were used for their precise navigation and high resolution imagery. They have the capability to cover much more area over a shorter period of time than employees on the ground as well as access rugged and remote areas that employees cannot safely access. They used UASs to survey ferruginous hawk nests, survey remote areas for cultural resources, vegetation monitoring (AIMs), white-tailed prairie dog surveys, and oil and gas pipeline reclamation inspection.

Oil Shale RD&D leases being reclaimed – American Shale Oil announced in April that they would stop research on their RD&D oil shale lease. They are scheduling complete reclamation by this fall, and it will likely be a minimum of three growing season before they met reclamation standards. Shell is continuing to finalizing the reclamation of their three leases, and the Chevron-held lease has been reclaimed and is waiting for vegetation to become established. Exxon has relinquished their lease, with no reclamation necessary because no surface disturbing activity had occurred. Simple Oil (Natural Soda) is now the only active RD&D oil shale lease in Colorado. They are currently working with EPA on an injection permit.

WRFO oil and gas consolidation update – The White River Field Office has been working on the May 2017 oil and gas lease sale review, which includes more than 100,000 acres in Grand, Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco and Routt counties in the White River, Little Snake and Kremmling field offices. Public scoping ends Sept.7, after which the Field Office will write an environmental assessment. WRFO has processed 47 APDs since Oct. 1, 2016, mostly within WRFO boundaries but also in Little Snake.

New ATV/UTV trail reroute completed – The White River Field Office recently partnered with the U.S. Forest Service State-wide OHV Trails Crew to complete a one mile reroute of a motorized trail in the Wilson Creek area about nine miles north of Meeker. The 2004 Wilson Creek Transportation Plan in this 4,500-acre planning area included decisions to reroute two ATV/UTV routes to provide a safer and more sustainable access to Sheriff Ridge and Agee Ridge. These trails receive high use during the big game hunting seasons and provide access to high quality big game hunting opportunities.

Additional fencing constructed along Wild Horse HMA boundary – The White River Field Office has completed about 4.5 miles of new fencing along the boundary of the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area to replace portions of the fences that are not functional or not fenced at all, resulting in horses getting onto the highway, outside the HMA, and onto private lands. The perimeter of the designated HMA boundary is estimated at 137 miles and is located approximately 20 miles southwest of Meeker. A Hotshot crew cleared the fencelines and agreements were put in place with private land owners and companies to construct fence through private lands. The HMA is approximately 190,130 acres of federal, state, and private lands. The

4.5 miles includes the 2.6-mile Highway 64 segment, 0.75-mile Main Barcus Creek segment, and 1.1-mile County Road 5 segment. Priorities to complete are the 1.9-mile Tommy's Draw segment and 0.9-mile Duck Creek segment.

Kremmling Field Office, Stephanie Odell

EIS being prepared for proposed land exchange – A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published in the Federal Register on April 19, 2016, initiating the scoping period that was open from April 19, 2016 to June 8, 2016. During the scoping period, two public open houses were held by the BLM. The first public meeting was held on May 23, 2016 at the Summit County Library in Silverthorne, Colorado. The second public meeting was held the following day on May 24, 2016 at the Grand County Extension Office of the Fairground in Kremmling, Colorado. During the scoping period, the KFO received approximately 68 comment submittals. Under the proposed land exchange, the BLM would trade nine parcels totaling 1,489 acres in Grand County for nine parcels totaling 1,832 acres of mostly private lands in Grand and Summit counties. BLM is conducting the EIS to determine whether the exchange is in the public's interest to complete, and what the potential impacts of the exchange would be. The exchange could increase public access and increase publicly-held big game winter range, while the proponent would consolidate its holdings. Approximately 300 acres of the 1,832 acres gained by the public would be acquired by the U.S. Forest Service, with the remainder going to BLM. More than half of the BLM acreage (792 acres) that would be exchanged is surrounded by private land and has no public access. The majority of other BLM lands being considered for exchange are small, isolated parcels that receive little public use. The proposed exchange was initiated more than a decade ago but was deferred while the field office completed its Resource Management Plan Revision. We currently expect a final decision about whether or not to proceed with the exchange in 2017. A Draft EIS should be available for public review in late 2016.

Kremmling to begin user capacity study for the Upper Colorado SRMA – The Kremmling Field Office is planning to begin a user capacity study to help its management of the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area. The last capacity study for the Upper Colorado River was in 2001. Over the last 15 years, private use has increased by 40,000 users, while commercial use has remained stable. The field office is partnering with the Upper Colorado Wild & Scenic River Stakeholders Group to accomplish this task within the next couple of years. The results of the user capacity study will be used to make future decisions about the management of the river for the benefit of the public and natural resources.

Bark Beetle mitigation work continues – The Kremmling Field Office awarded the 3 Mile Sanitation Salvage Sale located in Jackson County in September 2015. The sale encompassed 113 harvest acres and 890 thousand board feet (MBF) of timber. The Beaver Creek Fire has burned this area, in addition to another sale that was on Independence Mountain. The office awarded the Smith Mesa Sanitation Salvage Sale located in Grand County in November of 2015. This sale encompassed 303 harvest acres and 1503 MBF of timber. KFO is currently administering 13 timber and biomass sales encompassing approximately 1,800 acres of harvest units in Grand and Jackson counties. The KFO expects to offer 4 to 5 sales later this summer encompassing about 500 acres, 2,500 MBF of timber and approximately 3,500 tons of biomass.

Beaver Creek Fire: The Beaver Creek Fire has burned a total of 35,429 acres of USFS, BLM private and Colorado State Trust Lands in Jackson County, CO and Carbon County WY, including approximately 13,671 acres of BLM land on Independence Mountain and nearby ridges. The fire originated on USFS lands on June 19, the origin is being investigated by Forest Service and BLM investigators. The fire has destroyed some of the BLM timber sales and stewardship contracts in the area. We will be evaluating the status of the sales once the fire has been identified as contained. There is currently a NIMO team managing the fire, with representatives from other agencies present as part of the team. This fire is currently being managed/administered by six agencies.

Colorado River Valley Field Office, Karl Mendonca

Hubbard Mesa education efforts – CRVFO is working with the Town of Rifle and Garfield County on education efforts about recreational target shooting in the Hubbard Mesa Off-highway Vehicle Open Area. This area has long been a popular area for target shooting, but it has seen significant increase in OHV, mountain biking and other recreational use over the past decade, creating potential user conflicts. Once the BLM, county and town have agreed on a basic approach for signing and education, they will meet with the various stakeholders.

CRVFO Partners with communities for trail reroute -- A recently completed trail in the recently designated Crown Special Recreation Management Area provides a great example of connecting with communities as envisioned under the BLM Recreation Strategy. The Colorado River Valley Field Office designated the Crown SRMA as part of its land use plan revision in 2015. The SRMA is managed to provide close-to-town mountain biking opportunities. While there was a substantial system of routes designated concurrently with the land use plan, several of those routes are too steep to be sustainable. Other popular routes in the area trespass on private land. For this first Crown trail re-route, the CRVFO partnered with a local trails group called the Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association and a volunteer board that oversees public funds dedicated for trails in the Eagle County called the Mid Valley Trails Committee of Eagle County. A popular trail known locally as the Lower Buckhorn connects a paved bike path with the network of mountain bike trails on the Crown. A re-route was needed because this 1.6-mile trail included steep grades of 20 percent and crossed into private land. First, the field office worked with RFMBA, MVT and many dedicated users to layout the new trail. The field office then completed the NEPA process for the 1.6-mile re-route. RFMBA hired a contractor to build the trail using by a \$30,000 donation from MVT and a \$5,000 donation from RFMBA.

Consolidation continues – The Colorado River Valley Field Office will continue to process drilling permits, write environmental documents, and conduct inspections for its office, the Grand Junction Field Office and the Uncompahgre Field Office following the district reorganization. CRVFO has increased staff, including petroleum engineering technicians to meet the increased workload.

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crews assist with important wildlife habitat, wilderness inventory and fencing projects in CRVFO -- The Rocky Mountain Youth Corps has partnered with the Colorado River Valley Field Office on a number of key projects in the field office this summer. One crew spent two weeks helping to maintain important Greater Sage-grouse habitat.

One of the biggest threats to Greater Sage Grouse habitat in this area has been pinyon and juniper encroaching into open sagebrush areas. Over the course of two weeks in June and July, a crew of nine corps members gridded more than 300 acres, cutting more than 16,000 young pinyon and juniper trees encroaching into previously treated areas. Another crew spent two weeks conducting wilderness inventories and will be back for a third. Crews also helped build, repair and remove fencing in a number of locations in the field office to ensure better livestock distribution, improve wildlife habitat, and protect sensitive areas. The Rocky Mountain Youth Corps is a program for youth between ages 18-25 that frequently partners with BLM Colorado. The RMYC participants get experience with real-world natural resource issues, and the BLM benefits from their work.

Little Snake Field Office, Bruce Sillitoe

Wild Horses

We continue to work closely with a group of volunteers known as the Sand Wash Advocate Team (SWAT) in applying our PZP darting program and the Great Escape Mustang Sanctuary (GEMS) in providing us an alternative to housing removed horses outside of the overburdened adoption/long term holding pipelines.

In conjunction with GEMS, we are planning a small-scale bait trap gather in which approximately 50 horses would be removed, processed through Canon City, and held by GEMS.

Grand Junction Field Office, Katie Stevens

Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area

The Proposed RMP/Final EIS was released July 1. The protest period closed July 31. The Governor's Consistency Review will continue for another 30 days until the end of August.

Recreation

Recreation Strategy-We had the first of four meetings to develop GJFO's local Recreation Strategy under the Colorado and National Recreation Strategies. National direction encourages us to connect with local communities about how we can fit with local desires for recreation developments that will benefit local economies and quality of life. GJFO already has extensive local partnerships with area activity clubs and groups, and one of the important elements of the new strategy is the concept of repositioning toward the partnerships and areas most likely to be successful, by including additional partners (community service providers-e.g., other entities invested in recreation) in the discussion of what recreation benefits and opportunities are most desired and important.

New motorized trailhead—We've completed final analysis and design work for a new, additional trailhead near Little Park Road. This trailhead will serve the motorized trail network in Bangs, and provide opportunities to safely park off the main Little Park Road. IT's gone out for bid and we expect construction this fall.

Progress on motorized trail connector—Grand Mesa Jeep Club and BLM have completed initial construction on the Tabeguache Connector. Before it can be opened, CDOT will need to approve a safe crossing of Highway 141. This work was funded by the state with a 2016 trail grant. In the coming weeks, we will be meeting with CDOT, Mesa County staff, and Grand Mesa Jeep Club to prep for the permit and other work needed to open the new trail segment.

Colorado Access Grants—The GJFO partnered with Mesa County on a proposal to obtain Federal Lands Access Program funding to pave 18 Road, along with a couple other projects. This project would improve both road biking and mountain biking opportunities around the community of Fruita and accessing BLM’s 18 Road (North Fruita Desert) mountain bike trails system. The current gravel road gets heavy use, and does not provide an adequate surface for road biking. By paving the road and shoulder, it would improve the draw of the region as a biking destination and make access for trail riding in the 18 road area safer and more enjoyable.

Wild Horses

GJFO hosted an open house to discuss the use of motorized crafts in future gathers. About 20 people attended the session.

Colorado BLM was presented with a “Thank You” letter signed by over 500 wild horse advocates supporting Colorado’s program and management techniques.

Range

We are working on 9 environmental documents for permit renewals to be completed this year. The permit renewal process has gotten more complex over the years with more time needing to be built in for interdisciplinary review and consultation with interested publics. Six of these documents include allotments in Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat.

Oil and Gas

The GJFO and CRVFO are reviewing 24 parcels to be offered in the November lease sale, containing 18,349.47 acres of Federal mineral estate. Two of the 24 parcels include portions of both the GJFO and the CRVFO resource areas. The remaining 22 parcels are located entirely in the GJFO resource area. The combined area of the parcels is distributed as follows: approximately 16,364 acres in Mesa County and 1,985 acres in Garfield County, with 17,429 acres in the GJFO and 920 acres in the CRVFO.

GJFO and CRVFO are also working on two Master Development Plans, Homer Deep and De Beque Southwest, in Garfield and Mesa Counties.