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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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In Reply Refer To:
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EMS TRANSMISSION 06/30/2022
Instruction Memorandum No. CO-2022-029
Expires: 09/30/2025

To: District and Field Managers

From: Deputy State Director, Resources

Subject: Conservation of Important Big Game Habitats, Movement Routes, and Migration Corridors

Program Area: All.

Purpose: The intent of this Instruction Memorandum (IM) is to provide interim guidance for protecting important big game habitats, movement routes, and migration corridors in Colorado. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Colorado will continue to coordinate with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) on current and future management actions that may conserve or improve important big game habitats on public lands.

Policy/Action: The BLM will continue to coordinate with CPW on the implementation of management actions that consider or benefit important big game habitats on public lands, including federal mineral estate. BLM Colorado will consider future land use actions and decisions to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts to big game species.

Background: CPW recommended oil and gas (O&G) development density restrictions in important big game habitat during the BLM's O&G leasing process. In 2020, a BLM biologist team reviewed existing literature concerning impacts to big game species associated with O&G activities and compiled a big game summary review paper. The team recommended that consideration for potential development of a lease should be assessed by BLM, CPW, and the lease holder, as early as possible in the planning process to ensure the functionality of important big game habitats, while affording the best opportunities for adaptive management across the landscape in response to changing needs and conditions. This preplanning may include identification of key development

avoidance areas or areas where centralized or intensive development may be least detrimental on the landscape.

This IM is intended to acknowledge and emphasize current BLM policy and agreements to coordinate with CPW on current and future management actions that may conserve or improve important big game habitats on public lands while BLM evaluates a statewide big game resource management plan amendment (RMPA) to incorporate, where appropriate, additional conservation measures and management actions to benefit big game important habitat.

Ongoing Coordination and Management Actions:

The BLM Colorado will implement the Master Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BLM Colorado and CPW (2020), coordinating and communicating on wildlife related issues as expressed in Appendix B (Planning and Cooperative Agency Status) and Appendix C (Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game Habitats, Including Winter Range & Migration Corridors in CO).

The BLM will continue to adhere to Secretarial Order 3362, *Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors*, and collaborate in support of State executive orders, plans, and rules, including:

- CO EO D2019 011: *Conserving Colorado's Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors*,
- CPW Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy (2014),
- Colorado Big Game Action Plan (updated 2021), for the identification and implementation of habitat improvement projects in Priority Big Game Areas,
- Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) *1200 Series Rules for Protection of Wildlife Resources*, for oil and gas location permitting,
- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Wildlife and Transportation Alliance, safe passage for wildlife in priority migration corridors across the state.

Through the development of a statewide big game resource management plan amendment, the BLM will seek input from CPW as a cooperating agency to:

- Identify, prioritize, conserve, and improve important big game habitats, movement routes, and migration corridors.
- Analyze big game O&G summary report considerations and recommendations for big game conservation on public lands.
- Identify important resource or land use spatial mapping layers that may inform analysis of appropriate conservation or management on public lands, consistent with *Draft National Inventory and Mapping of BLM Priority Habitats and Wildlife Connectivity guidance*.
- Identify existing conditions, management actions, and current or future threats across land management boundaries that may influence the effectiveness of conservation measures or management actions on public lands to protect BG habitats and movement.

Additionally, the BLM will continue to support BG research and collaborate on habitat improvement projects such as:

- Support ongoing CPW big game research and monitoring to refine and prioritize BG migration routes across the state.
- Support big game research in Piceance Basin intended to develop an O&G planning tool.
- Implement and monitor compliance of existing seasonal area closures on public lands to protect big game species.
- Identify important big game habitats, movement routes, and migration corridors that should be mitigated through avoidance, minimization, and mitigation.
- Identify and implement vegetation treatments to improve big game habitat.
- Modify or remove fences that hinder movement of big game across the landscape.
- Construct and maintain wildlife water projects to provide water for big game species.

Directives Affected: This IM supports continued implementation of SO 3362: *Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors*, and coordination and communication under the Master MOU between CPW and BLM, including Appendix C and B and complements objectives outlined in CO EO D2019 011: *Conserving Colorado's Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors* and the CO West Slope Mule Deer Strategy.

Timeframe: Effective Immediately.

Budget Impact: No additional funding associated with coordination activities. Funding for some management actions or project implementation will be achieved through annual Budget/Budget Proposal System (BPS) process.

Coordination: Coordinated with CO 930 (resources and planning) and CO 922 (fluid minerals).

Contact: If there are any questions regarding this IM, please contact Robin Sell, BLM Colorado Wildlife Program Lead, at rsell@blm.gov or (303) 239-3723.

Signed by:
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