



Attachment 1: Northwest Resource Advisory Council Field Manager Updates January 26, 2023

Northwest District

Kremmling Field Office (KFO – Kremmling)

❖ **Steve Leonard, Acting Field Manager, (970) 724-3002, sleonard@blm.gov**

Blue Valley Land Exchange: The BLM issued a Notice of Decision to exchange nine parcels, totaling 1,489 acres of Federal lands managed by the BLM in Grand County, Colorado for nine parcels totaling 1,830 acres of non-Federal lands in Summit and Grand counties, Colorado, owned by Galloway, Inc., the owners of the Blue Valley Ranch (BVR). The exchange results in a net gain of 341 acres of public land. In July 2021, the Kremmling Field Office published the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that was publicly available for 30 days. During the public availability period numerous comments were received both in support and against the land exchange. Comments were consistent with what BLM received in response to the Draft EIS. The strongest support in favor of the land exchange was received from Summit County Commissioners, Grand County Commissioners, Trout Unlimited, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The decision initiates a 45-day protest period.

Upper Colorado River (UCR) Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP): The Upper Colorado River SRMA is very popular, hosting approximately 95,000 visitors each year. These numbers are collected from commercial outfitters' use reports and Recreation Use Permits collected at Pumphouse, Radium, and State Bridge Recreation sites. Private boaters' use of the river has grown steadily, increasing by 567%, from approximately 7,274 in 2000 to approximately 48,556 in 2016. Over that same period, commercial use has reflected greater up and down variation, ranging from a low of 29,449 in 2005 to a high of 44,639 in 2016. In 2019, the Kremmling Field Office issued an Environmental Assessment to implement the UCR RAMP. Over the past two years, the Kremmling Field Office has completed numerous projects in support of this initiative and in the Spring of 2023 will introduce the supporting Business Plan to the RAC for establishing or increasing fees for sites developed or improved as part of the RAMP.

Hebron Mobile Air Quality Station: The Hebron area in North Park has active oil and gas exploration and development. In 2021, despite new Colorado oil and gas regulations, several well pads were still utilizing flaring to dispose of natural gas. In the early spring of 2021, Ajax Analytics located a portable station to measure benzenes in the Hebron area. The Ajax site was located to the northeast of the proposed location and was a solar powered station. In late July 2021, Ajax Analytics removed their equipment due to renewed oil and gas activity on the east slope. The BLM Colorado State Office supported continued monitoring and decided to relocate



a portable monitoring station to the Hebron area. An electric line was installed from an existing pole to the station, and in June 2022, the station was operational. The air quality station continually monitors weather, visibility, particulate matter, ozone, and nitrogen dioxide concentrations. Until October 2022, samples were collected for VOC lab analysis, until the funding ran out under the contract modification. A new contract will hopefully be funded and awarded this spring, so that sampling could resume. The station is planned to remain at the site for at least two more years and current station conditions are publicly available online.

White River Field Office (WRFO – Meeker)

❖ Bill Mills, Field Manager, (970) 878-3800, wmills@blm.gov

Wild Horse Adoptions: In November 2022, the Northwest District conducted a Wild Horse Adoption at the Mesa County Fairgrounds in Grand Junction. A total of 34 horses were adopted (33 from the Piceance East Douglas HMA, 1 from the Sand Wash HMA). The adoption was conducted in partnership with Piceance Mustangs and 100% of the horses were successfully adopted. Future adoptions are planned in April in Meeker, and in June in Craig or Hayden.

Meeker Mustang Makeover (MMM): This year's MMM is scheduled for August 25-26, 2023, at the Rio Blanco Fairgrounds in Meeker. This year's event will feature horses from the Northwest District that were gathered in 2021/2022. The WRFO continues to partner with MMM to provide assistance with event planning and processing adoption applications.

Rangeland Management: The White River Field Office (WRFO) met goals for fully processed grazing permits in 2022 and is actively working with permittees to complete land health assessments and apply changes requested by permittees where possible. In the fall of 2022 WRFO Range Management Specialist, Tyrell Turner, was selected for the NWD Wild Horse Specialist Position. Aimee Huff, previously from the Little Snake Field Office, was selected to replace Tyrell and had completed initial meetings with her assigned permit holders.

Mineral Development / Oil and Gas Development: The White River Field Office (WRFO) currently processes the oil and gas for all three field offices in the Northwest District (Kremmling Field Office (KFO), Little Snake Field Office (LSFO), and the WRFO). There are approximately 4,000 active oil and gas wells located within the Northwest District Office (approximately 3,400 in WRFO, 300 in LSFO, and 200 in KFO), The largest oil and gas workload is located within the WRFO. In 2022, the WRFO's processed a total of 45 Applications for Permits to Drill (APD) (43 in WRFO, 0 in LSFO, and 2 in KFO). In 2023, WRFO will be working to complete NEPA analysis for multi-year plans of development for two separate companies. In addition to the processing of APDs the field office processes

approximately 2,000 sundry notices annually. The WRFO also completes the oil and gas inspection and enforcement covering all three field offices. The WRFO anticipates completing over 370 total oil and gas inspections (265 within WRFO and 105 within LSFO and KFO planned). Currently, WRFO only has two active drilling rigs located in the Piceance Basin with plans of perhaps increasing that number to 4 by the end of the year. WRFO also manages a nahcolite solution mine as well as a number of gravel and decorative rock mining permits.

Realty Infrastructure Projects:

Transwest: Along with the Gateway South project, Transwest was issued a Record of Decision to approve the Transwest Transmission Project which is a 735-mile 500-kilovolt (kV) transmission line which spans Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and ends in the southern portion of Nevada. The Transwest project is currently working to get its notice to proceed in March 2023, so that it can begin construction activities in the summer of 2023.

Wolf Creek Reservoir: In June 2022, the Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District (RBWCD) submitted an application to the BLM for a right-of-way grant for the Wolf Creek Reservoir. The proposed reservoir would store approximately 66,720 acre-feet (AF) of water and inundate approximately 2,031 surface acres. The BLM is the lead Federal agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The BLM has also determined that an amendment to the White River Resource Management Plan (RMP) would be required and will evaluate the RMP amendment concurrently with its review of the reservoir application (i.e., in the same EIS). In September 2022, the BLM provided project introductions to potential Cooperating Agencies and Native American Indian Tribes. The BLM is currently working on executing MOUs with the Cooperating Agencies and anticipates participation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, CO Department of Public Health & Environment, CO Department of Natural Resources, CO Department of Agriculture, UT Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office, Rio Blanco County, Moffat County, Uintah County, Town of Rangely, Yellow Jacket Water Conservation District, Colorado River District, White River & Douglas Creek Conservation Districts, Western Rio Blanco County Recreation and Metropolitan District, and the Uintah Water Conservancy District. The BLM has also heard from 24 Native American Indian Tribes who wish to consult on this project, including four Tribal governments who also wish to participate as Cooperating Agencies. Also, in September 2022, the BLM presented a project introduction to the NW RAC. The BLM has committed to providing additional public engagement prior to publishing the Notice of Intent (NOI), which was supported by the NW RAC. The WRFO is currently working with the BLM CADR program and a neutral facilitator to develop a Situation Assessment and Engagement Plan for the project. During the Situation Assessment, some members of the community may be contacted to participate in individual interviews with a neutral facilitator. The BLM anticipates



completing the Situation Assessment and Engagement Plan in early May; an opportunity for public involvement prior to the NOI will occur after the Situation Assessment is completed.

Little Snake Field Office (LSFO - Craig)

❖ Valerie Baxter, Assistant Field Manager, (970) 826-5000, vbaxter@blm.gov

Emerald Mountain SRMA Good Neighbor Authority Project: The BLM Little Snake Field Office is working with the Colorado State Forest Service to address forest health and fuel loading concerns on approximately 520 acres of insect and disease impacted timber in the Emerald Mountain Special Recreation Area near Steamboat Springs. The project is taking place under the Good Neighbor Authority which allows agreements between the state and the federal government to accomplish forest restoration work on BLM land cooperatively. The NEPA analysis is currently underway with a public scoping meeting scheduled for February 16, 2023, at the Bud Werner Memorial Library in Steamboat Springs.

Large Power Transmission Lines - PacifiCorp's Gateway South (GWS) and TransWest Express (TWE) (update): GWS construction started in June 2022. It has slowed over winter but will be picking back up as weather allows. The Colorado portion will be shut down from Mar. 1-Apr. 15 due to Sage Grouse timing limitations. TWE is working towards a Notice to Proceed by March 2023, with construction starting summer/fall of 2023. Staff continues to work through Plan of Development reviews. LWC funding was agreed upon and the Colorado State Office is working with NFWF on the deposit documents. GRSG mitigation is still being worked out between the agencies and TWE.

Emerald Mountain Visitor Survey: In compliance with Government Performance Results Act (GPRA), the LSFO's recreation team conducted a visitor satisfaction survey during the summer of 2022 at the Emerald Mountain Special Recreation Management Area. Designed by Washington State's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, the survey measured the sites performance related to two Department of Interior Mission Areas, "Enhance Public Satisfaction" and "Ensure Public Receives Fair Market Value for Resources". The survey received 126 responses from the public and scored a Satisfaction Measure of 92% GRPA.

Travel Management: Approximately 4,000 miles of routes exist in Travel Management Areas (TMAs) 1, 2, and 3. The TMA 2 decision is complete, and the TMA 1 decision is under appealed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals. All steps in the NEPA process are complete for TMA 3 and the decision will be drafted in 2023. In the future, routes in Special Recreation Management Areas will be inventoried and designated.



Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Mitigation: The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) will be administering compensatory mitigation funds for authorized impacts of the Gateway South Transmission Project to Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in Colorado. NFWF will be requesting funding proposals in the first quarter of 2023 for projects that will restore, reclaim, preserve, conserve and/or enhance wilderness characteristics in Colorado.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants: In 2022, the LSFO was awarded \$500k from a 2021 submission for a LWCF grant. This grant was submitted in response to 2020 Dingell Act Public Access submissions and ongoing recreation planning with partners in Moffat County. The LSFO has submitted additional LWCF grant requests and will be looking into opportunities to work with landowners interested in land tenure adjustments to improve public access to public lands.

Upper Colorado River District (UCRD)

Supplemental EIS/RMP for Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) and Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO): CRVFO and GJFO continue to work on the court ordered Supplemental EIS to address issues related to analysis of downstream greenhouse gas emissions and the range of alternatives for acres available for leasing under their 2015 RMPs and Records of Decision. The CRVFO consolidated oil and gas team will be writing the EIS, with support from a contractor managed by the Colorado State Office. The BLM is currently working with the cooperating agencies on the Draft EIS.

Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO) including McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (MCNCA) and Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (DENCA)

❖ Greg Wolfgang, Field Manager, (970) 244-3010, gwolfgan@blm.gov

Managing Livestock During Drought: Over the past 10 years the Grand Junction Field Office has billed for approximately half of the use authorized on grazing permits and anticipates this trend to continue. Range staff will continue to work with permittees to verify drought conditions within areas of the field office. Recommendations are determined based on site visits to each allotment. Lower elevation allotments are being impacted the most by the ongoing drought and several permittees have agreed to reductions or complete non-use of their permits this winter.



North Fruita Desert Trails Master Plan: In April 2022, BLM signed an Environmental Assessment approving the North Fruita Desert Trails Master Development Plan which includes 32 miles of new trails and trail reroutes and authorizes the use of Class 1 e-bikes on current and future trails in the North Fruita Desert (NFD) Special Recreation Management Area. The Mesa County Trail Crew, Western Colorado Conservation Corps, and volunteers began construction of the new trails and have completed approximately eight miles of new singletrack trails.

North Fruita Desert (18 Rd) Campground and Event Staging Area: The campground reservation system through Recreation.gov has been working smoothly. Several large-scale events were hosted at the event area in the spring and fall of 2022, including two mountain bike festivals, a mountain bike race and a running race. The BLM is planning to develop approximately 25-30 new campsites in the area in 2022.

Bangs OHV trail planning and development: Approximately nine miles of new OHV trails (ATV, motorcycle and 4x4 rock crawling) routes were completed and opened to the public in 2022. Most of the construction was completed by OHV crews funded by Colorado Parks and Wildlife OHV grants. Planning is underway for another six miles of proposed OHV trails in the Bangs Special Recreation Management Area.

Land Tenure:

Meridian Junction (D-E NCA): In partnership with Western Rivers Conservancy, BLM acquired a 26-acre inholding along the Gunnison River within the Dominguez-Escalante NCA to improve the management of riparian habitat and public access.

Latham Property: The Conservation Fund, in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), acquired the 1,600-acre Latham property, within and on the edge of the South Shale Ridge ACEC. Accessible by a county road, BLM's acquisition improves and secures public access, expands recreation opportunities, protects wildlife habitat, and preserves historic sites. Most of this land is in Mesa County.

Currier Direct Sale: BLM issued a patent for the disposal of 48.53 acres located approximately 13 miles east of Collbran. The direct sale was to Merial Currier of Currier Gravel Pit Inc. and was in accordance with a settlement agreement with the BLM Colorado State Office and U.S. Attorney's Office. This sale resolved a long-standing inadvertent trespass that included a reservoir and gravel pit dating back almost 30 years.

County Road 200: High Lonesome Ranch (HLR), a large ranching operation in Garfield County, locked a gate on their property boundary on Garfield County Road 200 (CR200), which blocked motorized public access to large tracts of BLM-administered public lands.

In 2015, Garfield County requested HLR to remove the gate to allow public access. A dispute ensued and HLR filed a lawsuit against the county to acquire quiet title to the road. Garfield



County filed a counterclaim, which alleged the road is a Revised Statute 2477 right-of-way, arguing that they hold prescriptive rights to the road from the gate to the BLM tracts.

In 2020, a federal judge ruled in favor of Garfield County and ordered HLR to remove its lock and gate, allowing public access to the BLM administered lands. The road currently remains open. BLM roads not included in the court decision remain closed to public motorized use pending an appeal. The new access that CR 200 provides allows for expanded foot and horse access on the administrative routes. An appeal to this case was held on January 18, 2022. BLM is awaiting the outcome of the appeal.

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area

❖ Amber Koski, NCA Manager, 970-244-3000, akoski@blm.gov

Rabbit Valley Campgrounds: The Grand Junction Filed Office will implement an online reservation system for overnight camping on February 1, 2023, for the five campgrounds in the Rabbit Valley area of McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area. The Recreation.gov online reservation system will help manage the increased popularity of the area and will ensure campsite availability prior to arrival.

Visitors may make online reservations at www.recreation.gov or call 1-877-444-6777. Reservations can be made up to six months in advance or on-site using a mobile device. The Equestrian campground will be closed to the public from February through April each year to accommodate livestock operations.

The camping fee is \$20 per night plus a \$8 transaction fee for each reservation. Approximately 50 percent of the sites in each campground will be available for online reservations on a six-month rolling window, with the rest of the sites available on a four-day rolling window to accommodate spontaneous trips. Camping in the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area is limited to 7 nights per month.

Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (D-E NCA)

❖ Amber Koski, NCA Manager, 970-244-3000, akoski@blm.gov

Gunnison River Campsite Designation and Permit System: The BLM implemented a decision from the 2017 D-E NCA RMP to require overnight boaters on the Lower Gunnison River, from Delta to Whitewater, to obtain a permit. BLM staff updated signage and conducted outreach regarding the change with places like Mountain Buzz and American Whitewater. For now, the BLM has implemented a free, self-issued, permit that is filled out on-site. We estimate compliance at 50-70% and expect compliance to increase with additional education and outreach.



Moving forward, the BLM will refine the permit system, implement a reservation system, designate river campsites, and develop an allocation for permitted outfitters. Staff spent over 50 days in the field conducting outreach to the public and soliciting input to the planning process. Staff also contacted river outfitters and collaborated with partners like Colorado Canyons Association for outreach. BLM drafted a proposed action for campsites along the Gunnison River and conducted public scoping on the proposal during the winter of 2021. We received over 100 comments – several substantive comments have shaped the proposed action and alternatives in the Environmental Assessment which is slated for completion in March of 2023. BLM plans to write an environmental assessment and make it available for a 30-day public comment period in the spring of 2023.

Camping Fees Business Plan: BLM has begun drafting a business plan that explores charging fees for camping in Dominguez-Escalante NCA where amenities already exist. We expect to be ready to brief the RAC(s) in 2023. We are interested in seeking solutions to incorporate RAC input into this process efficiently given that D-E NCA is partly in the areas covered by both the Southwest and Northwest RACs as discussed at the October 2021 RAC meeting.

Artist In Residence 2022: Dominguez-Escalante and McInnis Canyons NCAs is hosting Artist In Residence Andrea Stolarczyk who has named her project “A Year in the Canyons”. Stolarczyk began her experience this past June in McInnis Canyons and Dominguez-Escalante NCAs to highlight the scenic landscape through a variety of art mediums. Stolarczyk’s journey can be followed on “A Year in the Canyons” Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/ayearinthecanyons/about>

Artist In Residence 2023: Dominguez-Escalante NCA is hosting Native American jazz trumpeter Delbert Anderson and his group D’DAT August 11-12, 2023. Anderson and D’DAT will hold a musical workshop at 11 am on Aug. 11 that works directly with students of all ages and interested community members on developing a basic musical framework. On August 12, Anderson and D’DAT will play a free public concert at 7 pm at the Fruita Town Park. The group will also highlight local area artists. You can learn more about Anderson and D’DAT at:

<https://www.facebook.com/BLMNational/videos/blm-artist-in-residence-delbert-anderson/1051061982206676/>

Cactus Park Special Recreation Management Area: The 2017 D-E NCA RMP designated the Cactus Park Area as a Special Recreation Management Area targeting family friendly motorized trail riding and associated camping. The BLM is currently working with Western Slope ATV Association (WSATVA) on projects to improve recreation opportunities and protect sensitive resources in the area. WSATVA received a motorized trail grant from Colorado Parks and Wildlife to conduct archaeological surveys on the proposed new Ponderosa Loop Trail. In addition, the BLM is working on layout and design of the Farmers Canyon Trail reroute. This will reroute users outside the mule deer winter range that is closed to travel during the winter to



protect mule deer. The BLM completed biological surveys and finished the archaeological surveys during spring of 2022. The Gibbler Gulch Trail Crossings Environmental Assessment approved several reroutes of the popular Gibbler Gulch ATV Trail. The reroutes decreased sediment contributions to an intermittent creek and improved trail access during higher water levels. In addition, the project designated approximately one mile of trail as open to ATV, motorcycle, bicycle, equestrian and foot travel. The newly designated trail is on lands BLM recently acquired with Land and Water Conservation Funds. The new trail ends at a historic cabin on the acquired parcel that will be available for heritage tourism and interpretation.

Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO – Silt)

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Resources:

Hazardous Fuels Collaboration and Coordination: In recent months the field office has begun engaging with the Mid-Colorado River Watershed Council and other stakeholders to begin standing up another Wildfire and Fuels Collaborative similar to the Roaring Fork and Eagle Valley Collaboratives. While the focus and mission of this group are still being developed, with relatively less Wildland Urban Interface than up-valley areas, this Collaborative may have more focus on pre-fire treatments higher in the watersheds, as well as WUI treatments and post-fire mitigation around municipal and other water users' infrastructure.

CRVFO New and Expanded Trails: Consolidated Reservoir Trail - BLM is working with the Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council to plan a four-mile foot and horse trail that will provide spectacular views for all levels of riders and horses. The field office will be conducting additional outreach through the media prior to posting the Draft EA on ePlanning to help fully engage stakeholders that may have been missed during project scoping. If approved, the horse council plans to hire a Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew to help with trail construction. The trail will include some existing trail as well as new hand-built sections.

Energy, Lands and Minerals:

Mid-Continent Quarry Noncompliance: On August 30, 2022, the BLM issued a Noncompliance Order to Rocky Mountain Industrials to address operations that are outside the scope of their approved plan of operations, including surface disturbances associated with an access road and mill bench, as well as stormwater structures and topsoil storage. This resulted in the company needing to submit a Major Plan Modification that the BLM received last week following RMI's initial proposal for addressing the noncompliance items. The BLM is currently reviewing this Plan Modification to ensure it is complete, per the Mining Law Regulations. If deemed



complete, the BLM will identify next steps for addressing the items of in noncompliance, including any consideration needed under the National Environmental Policy Act. This is strictly related to the areas where the current operations at the Mid-Continent Quarry are out of compliance. It will not address the proposed expansion, which is being handled separately.

Regarding the proposed quarry expansion, nothing has changed since the last update due to the continued holding pattern while the mineral examination (a.k.a. DCV or Determination of Common Variety) is completed by a BLM mineral exam team.

Thompson Divide Proposed Withdrawal: Last Fall the USDA Forest Service requested that the US Department of Interior consider withdrawal of approximately 224,704 acres of federally managed lands and minerals in the Thompson Divide area that runs north to south generally between Glenwood Springs and Crested Butte. If approved, the withdrawal would withhold Federal land from settlement, sale, location or entry for a 20-year period. The effects of withdrawal include:

- A withdrawal from the “settlement, sale, location, or entry under the general land laws”, which would prevent the Federal government from disposing (selling) the land within the withdrawal boundary.
- A withdrawal from “location, and entry, under the mining laws”, which means the surface and subsurface estates are closed to disposition under the mining laws and that mining claims cannot be staked.
- A withdrawal from “operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws, subject to valid and existing rights”, which means the subsurface estate is closed to new leasing applications and offers.

The CRVFO participated in a December 2022 public meeting in Carbondale and the BLM will serve as a Cooperating Agency with the USDA Forest Service, which will complete the requisite NEPA. **Xcel Energy multiyear transmission powerline rebuild projects:** The CRVFO is completing NEPA to authorize two Xcel Energy rebuilds. The first line runs from Glenwood Springs to Cameo through several substations. This line is currently operating at 69kV but will be built out with upgraded infrastructure to accommodate the future needs of 115kV. The larger voltage results in taller structures and a greater right-of-way. The second rebuild is a 115kV line and originates in Leadville, snakes down the Frying Pan Valley, and turns northwest at Basalt to terminate at the Fischer Creek substation. Both projects are complete rebuilds with all new structures and wire.

Fire Station 46: Roaring Fork Fire Rescue approached the BLM in 2018 about opportunities for locating a public fire station on public lands managed by the BLM. The BLM was able to convey approximately 2.25 acres via a 99-year Right-of-Way in 2019. On December 9, 2022, the CRVFO celebrated the Open House for Roaring Fork Fire Rescue’s new Fire Station 46. The BLM was able to waive the application and rental fees, in turn, saving the fire department over \$80k. The



Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Pitkin County, the Roaring Fork Fire Rescue, and local donations collectively funded the new station that totaled an estimated \$2.87 million. A dedication plaque reads, *“This project was a private, government partnership for the protection of people and properties in this community.”*

Oil & Gas:

Current and Forecasted Drilling Activity - Currently there is one drill rig working in the Colorado River Valley Field Office. It is currently operating on a TEP well being drilled in the Beaver Creek area south of Rifle. In addition to drilling operations, the BLM has worked with operators to plug three wells to date in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, primarily in the Grand Junction Field Office. Additional drilling and plugging are expected to continue at a similar pace for the remainder of this FY.