



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

Northwest Resource Advisory Council Meeting

August 22, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Grand Junction, Colorado



Photo: Erin Jones



AGENDA

8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks and Introductions
8:30 - 9:00 a.m.	Review and Discuss Field Tour
9:00 -10:30 a.m.	Discussion: North Sandhills Recreation Area business plan
10:30 -10:45 a.m.	Break
10:45 -12:15 p.m.	Herd Management Areas update
12:15 -1:15 p.m.	Lunch On Your Own
1:15 - 2:30 p.m.	Field Manager Updates
2:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Public Comment Period
3:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Open Discussion and Closing Remarks
3:30 p.m.	Adjourn



Review and Discuss Field Tour



Photo: Erin Jones



North Sand Hills Overview

- **A small, semi-active parabolic sand dune complex located in the northeast portion of North Park in Jackson County.**
 - **The area has been visited by the public - primarily for motorized recreational purposes - for the last 50 years, and potentially as far back as the 1930s, along with historic traditional uses, such as livestock grazing.**
 - **It is the only sand dune area in Colorado open for OHVs . The nearest Sand dunes also open for OHVs are at least a days drive away in Utah and Wyoming.**
 - **The active open sand area of the dune complex is primarily on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Kremmling Field Office (KFO)**



Historical Use

- Roughly 60,000 Visits per year
 - Increasing at approximately 5% annually
- Use is concentrated around holidays and weekends. Most visitors stay for 1-3 days at a time.
- There is a 4-month main recreation use period
 - (June – Sept). Summer vacation times.
 - 3 Additional months of lower use levels before and after the main use period – weather permitting.
- Most visitors come from the front range metropolitan areas (Cheyenne to Colorado Springs)





What is Working

- The 2015 RMP provides strategic direction for the area and crews have been taking implementation actions to protect fragile landscapes:
 - Sensitive dune vegetation
 - North Sand Creek (303D Impaired Stream) .
- BLM has been gathering use trends and satisfaction data – mostly GPR Survey and RMIS traffic counts and public contacts.
- Ongoing CSU research





Challenges in Management

- Providing for Public Health and Safety. - OHV use has naturally high risks, especially in concentrated areas. Medical response incidents are increasing.
- Changing Use trends – seasons of use, types and numbers of visitors, types and capabilities of equipment are all changing.
- Decreasing federal budget - (OHV Registration Fees annually acquired through CPW Grants currently fund 100% of current management)
- Significant non-compliance with Colorado OHV Registrations - proactive outreach, education and information efforts are lacking as is LEO availability for enforcement.
- Overlapping management emphasis: Special Recreation Management Area, Instant Wilderness Study Area



Current On- ground Actions

- Staffing entrance contact station at all holiday weekends
- New Bi-Lingual signage in staging areas developed by Colorado Stay the Trail and BLM
- New Bi-Lingual information signage and maps in development for Spring 2025
- Updating all BLM web-based information for Spring 2025
- Recreation staff and Youth Corps crews maintain and repair existing facilities on a regular schedule- including protective fence installation and unburying.





A proposal to consider - An Entrance Fee to meet the management challenges now and in the future.

- Implement a Basic Entrance Fee Structure:
 - \$10 per vehicle per day
 - \$25 for a three-day pass
- All fees collected will be spent on the site for the benefit of the users. Health and safety are primary needs.
- No additional camping facilities are planned at this time.





Collection Considerations

- An automatic fee device at the entrance is preferable to hand collections to eliminate staff time collecting and processing payments. BLM uses existing types in other developed and high-use recreation sites. Staff will have to do compliance monitoring onsite and improve and modify its outreach efforts for users before they arrive.
- A stand-alone automatic unit typically costs about \$8,000 - \$10,000 for purchase and installation and \$2,500 a year to operate. BLM State Office will assist with costs. It will be removed during non-fee periods. It will not accept cash to reduce theft and vandalism potential.
- Alternatively, BLM has investigated establishing the fee site with a commercial fee entity such as Rec.gov. but overhead costs as compared to facilities offered on site do not make this a preferred possibility as BLM fee rates would have to be higher.



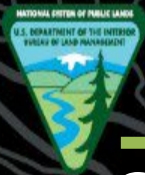
Potential Management Improvements

- Safety – CPW could possibly hire seasonal law enforcement staff, BLM cannot hire seasonal LEOs, but could use additional funds for providing short-term detail LEO Rangers at high use periods from other BLM offices across the agency. Jackson county could possibly also use additional funds for similar types of shared Deputies from other counties as well as developing improved medical responses with the BLM and CPW.
- Visitor Information Services - BLM could hire additional seasonal or term recreational staff to improve its onsite and off-site presence targeting proper travel management ethics and OHV regulations
- BLM could hire additional Colorado Youth Corps staff and/or BLM seasonal staff for improved facility operations and services to meet user expectations – such as trash removal or resource protection



Questions?





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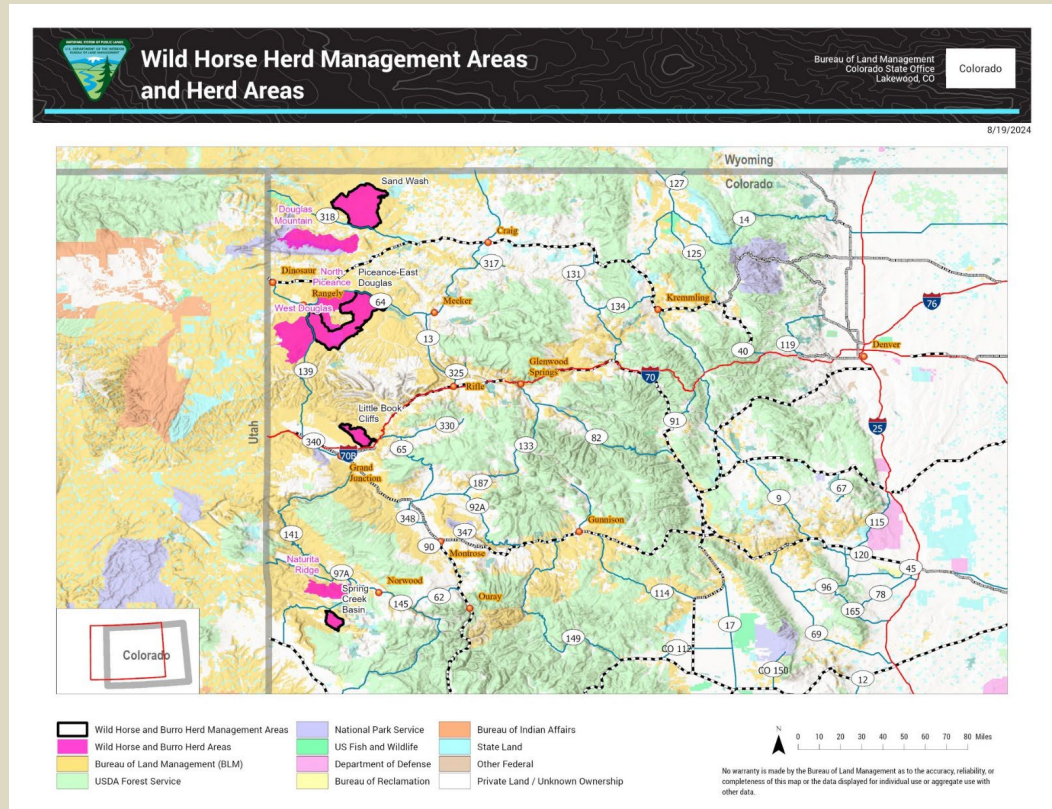
Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Program

BLM NW RAC – August 2024



Herd Management Areas/Range/Herd Areas

- Sand Wash Basin, HMA
- Piceance East Douglas Creek HMA
- Little Book Cliffs, HMA-Range
- Spring Creek Basin HMA
- North Piceance HA
- West Douglas Creek HA
- Naturita Ridge HA
- Douglas Mountain HA



Sand Wash Basin, HMA

- Little Snake Field Office
- Appropriate Management Level; 163-363 animals
- Last Gathered (drive trap) 2021, removed 684 released 52
- Current Population as of July 2024;
 - 409 within, 38 outside, total of 447 animals
- Bait trapping started this week with a goal of capturing 60, removing 45, and returning 15 after fertility control is administered



Piceance East Douglas Creek, HMA

- White River Field Office,
- Appropriate Management Level; 135-235 animals
- Last Gathered (bait trap & drive trap) 2022, removed 867, released 41
- Current Population as of April 2024;
 - 424 within, 141 outside, total of 565 animals
- May be on a gather schedule for 2025?



Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range

- Grand Junction Field Office
- Appropriate Management Level; 90-150 animals
- Last Gathered (bait & drive trap) 2018, removed 55, released 41, 10 fertility treated
- Current Population as of August 2024; 223
- September 2024 drive trap, objective is to remove approximately 100 animals



Spring Creek Basin, HMA

- Tres Rios Field Office,
- Appropriate Management Level; 50-80 animals
- Last Gathered (drive trap) 2011, removed 40 animals, 10 fertility treated
- Current Population as of August 2024; 76
- No removals are scheduled



Herd Areas

- North Piceance
- West Douglas
- Douglas Mountain
- Naturita Ridge

BLM's Colorado WH&B Vision

- Achieve AML on all HMAs
- Maintain AML
- Pursue Healthy Rangelands
- Pursue productive partnerships and recognize current partnerships
- Adopt as many horses in state as possible



Logistical Constraints in Colorado

- Limited BLM staff qualified and support staff to complete on- and off-range operations
- Limited partnerships to support on- and off-range management
- At the National Level - limited ability to acquire off-range holding capacity – need funding, available contractors, and BLM staff



National Program Update

Reported Accomplishments *(as of 08/02/2024)*

Gathered	12,183
Removed	11,353
Fertility Control Treatments	471
Animals Placed into Private Care Placement	5,729
Animals Titled	3,831
Animals in ORCs/ORPs/PORPs	63,034

- FY2025 Remove 20,000 animals; treat 1,300 animals; and efforts to place 20,000 animals into private care
- Tentative FY2025 Gather Schedule is not posted and may not be posted until after Jan. 1st.
- FY 2025 Gather is Contingent on:

New Pastures Pending NEPA, 7 New Contracts, 3 Expansions, ~7,500 new spaces

New Pastures Pending NEPA 2024 Multi-State Solicitation; Seeking 10,000+ new Spaces Recapture ~10,000 existing



Increase Private Care Placement Efforts

- Offer a minimum of 20,000 animals through:
 - Increase number of events
 - Online Corral (OLC)
 - Corral/Satellite Events
 - Partnerships (NOFOs)
- Acquire strategically placed facilities to support adoption and sale events, OLC pickups, and our partners



Next Steps

- Continue to move towards achieving AML in all HMAs
- Increase our adoptions
- Engage and increase our partners in fertility control, rangeland health/monitoring and new science applications
- Evaluate a small holding facility on the western slope
- Fill our open positions in the WH&B Program





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Questions?



Credit: Frank



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Field Manager Updates

Northwest Resource Advisory Council Field Manager Updates August 2024

Northwest District

Kremmling Field Office (KFO – Kremmling)

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

Supplementary Rules - Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO), Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO), Kremmling Field Office (KFO), and the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (D-E NCA) in northern Colorado published proposed supplementary rules in the Federal Register for a 60-day public comment. The rule would implement decisions related to resource protection and public health and safety issues that were addressed in each field office resource management plan. Each unit has proposed rules to address specific concerns and general rules that apply to all four units. All four sets of rules are being announced through the same process to avoid concurrent, redundant processes.

The BLM accepted public comments on the proposed supplementary rule for 60 days following the March 25, 2024 publication in the Federal Register. The BLM received 427 public comments. Public comments resulted in the identification of one area that was identified for closure in error (Coal Gulch winter closure) and identification of one proposed rule that should have been applied to each field office as well as the NCA (target shooting rule). No substantive changes to the rules resulted from public comments. The BLM is working internally on the final rule, which can be implemented 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.

Recreation - The OHV Crew have recorded over 1,800 public contacts approaching Labor Day weekend. The crew installed approximately 1,250 feet of post and cable in the North Sandhills to protect sensitive dune vegetation. The crew also raised and maintained 43 existing posts that were partially or fully buried in the sand. The damaged Government Ditch Trail north and middle entrances were repaired by resetting posts and restringing the cable barriers. The vegetation restoration is ongoing. Gates were installed on Owl Ridge, Independence Mountain and Wolford SRMA. Width restrictors were installed in Wolford, Jaques, and North Sandhills.

Recreation staff held two community meetings with local community riders to discuss naming the trails in the Wolford SRMA and to seek input on how to provide more opportunities for recreation in the community.

Kinney Creek Stream Restoration - The East Troublesome Fire burned over the area in the fall of 2020. On 8/5/24, work began on the Kinney Creek Stream Restoration project to promote a more complex and resilient riparian system along Kinney Creek. The structures should help dampen the flood flow peaks that are the result of the burn scar and help deposit sediments

outside of the stream channel, reducing sediment and ash loads to the Colorado River. The water table across the floodplain will be maintained or enhanced, further promoting wetland revegetation. Aquatic habitat will benefit with more complexity and pools, which will benefit the fishery.

North Park Restoration Area - KFO received 5 million dollars for investment in aquatic, riparian, wetland and terrestrial habitat improvements, fuels reduction and invasive species management will preserve historic and cultural sites and enhance recreational opportunities. Projects for the North Park Restoration area include:

Bolton Draw Meadow Restoration - Colorado Open Lands, Rocky Mountain Youth Corp, and BLM staff completed Zeedyk rock structures and other process-based methods to stop the gully advancement and help detain runoff across the mesic meadow.

North Sand Creek protective fencing - North Sand Creek is a 303d listed stream for sediment. Fencing will reduce impacts from OHV use induced sediment.

Mansfield Draw Fen - Continue management of a restored fen that supports pale blue-eyed grass, saline variation of a rich fen with five springs within the fen. After restoration work, an electric fence has been used each grazing year to protect the mire head with quagmire. Trespass livestock have required additional restoration work, leading to the need of a permanent fence around the water sources.

Travel Management Plan Implementation (TMP) - KFO accelerated implementation of the 2015 TMP to close cross country route proliferation. The OHV crew have installed width restrictor gates and closer gates to limit travel to designated size of vehicles or eliminate vehicle travel on closed routes.

Virtual fencing - KFO is working with the Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge to initiate virtual fencing allowing the reduction of cross fencing which impacts wildlife. Funding will be placed into an agreement with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. Implementation of the project is slated for spring 2025.

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 KFO 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 initiated a 45-day protest period.

The BLM received an appeal and request for stay on the land exchange. The Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) dismissed the request for stay and the Solicitor is developing the response to the submitted appeal for the court to rule on.

The dismissal of the request for stay allows the land exchange to proceed forward while the court rules on the appeal. Completion of the exchange is expected to take 4 to 5 months.

The Upper Colorado Special Recreation Area Business Plan (KFO and CRVFO) -

To meet increasing demands, operating costs and maintenance of developed facilities and services provided to the public; in addition to the modification of the fee schedule, additional fee sites are proposed where improvements and additional visitor services are required due to increased visitation and use.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) authorizes and provides guidance for the BLM and other agencies to charge and collect recreational fees on federal recreation lands and waters. FLREA allows agencies to utilize collected recreation fees to supplement appropriated funds and provide a funding source for deferred maintenance, site enhancements, operations, facility repair, interpretation and visitor services, visitor needs assessments, signs, habitat restoration, law enforcement related to public use and recreation, and direct operating or capital costs associated with the recreation and visitor services program.

FLREA requires the BLM to prepare business plans for fees associated with facility and recreational use of public lands. An initial request for input for the fee schedule was presented at the RAC meeting on September 15, 2022. The NW RAC voted to approve the fee structure at their October 2023 meeting.

Since the October 2023 RAC Meeting, KFO and CRVFO have been working with BLM Headquarters staff to ensure the business plan is in line with current BLM guidance. As part of that effort, the CRVFO is currently developing an Environmental Assessment (EA) that analyzes making the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area a “Special Area” in terms of FLREA. The CRVFO hopes to have the EA ready for public comment as soon as possible.

White River Field Office (WRFO – Meeker)

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

Meeker Mustang Makeover (MMM) - This year’s MMM will take place August 23-24, 2024, at the Rio Blanco Fairgrounds in Meeker. Nine trainers ranging in age from 13-17 are competing in the Yearling In-Hand competition this year. Additionally, nine under saddle competitors will be competing this year and many are returning from previous years.

Recreation - Over the last two years of planning, WRFO has received over \$789,000 in funding to support the recreation program. The recreation program was awarded \$72,794 in CPW State Motorized Grant funds for 2022-2023 and implemented two newly designated OHV Open Areas; LO7 and North Rangely. Design features included on/off loading ramps, parking delineators, wildlife fencing, graveled access roads, a skills course, mud bog pits, kiosks and signs.

The CPW grant award for 2023-2024 was \$163,625. Implementation included a two-person OHV crew, erosion control structures, visitor service parking area and trail maintenance, kiosk and sign installation for designated routes, patrol and monitor illegal routes, deploying trail counters, making public contacts in the field and educating visitors on Stay the Trail and Leave No Trace ethics. Funding also is being used for materials, supplies and equipment costs

including a UTV, trailer, trail counters and radios. WRFO has been awarded \$125,587 for the 2024-2025 grant cycle that will be used for the OHV crew, materials, supplies, and equipment.

In 2024, WRFO was awarded \$301,114 to implement Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Public Outreach, Education, Interpretation, and a Kiosk Project from the GWS/TWE. WRFO also received \$116,000 in BIL funding through BPSS projects allowing further implementation of the OHV Open Area, improvements at North Rangely and other maintenance updates to recreation sites.

WRFO received \$10,000 from the Colorado State Office last year to support our annual Recreation and Cultural 4th grade Every Kid Outdoor field trip. This program reaches approximately 100 kids and families yearly.

Rangeland Management - The WRFO range program is waiting for two new rangeland management specialists to be hired after losing one to retirement and one to a promotion with the NRCS. This has left the program with one RMS and one newly hired range technician who started in January. As we have been able to keep up with billing and livestock control agreements, our permit renewal workload has and will continue to be slow going until more staff is hired. We also are unable to process permittee requests for change of livestock on allotments as it requires additional NEPA analysis and new transfers are taking longer to process than normal.

New range projects will also be delayed until additional staff are hired. Other staff have been very supportive in assisting where they can with the range program and the morale of the resource staff continues to be high. We were able to hire two RMYC interns to assist with weed treatments and standard field work. We have not been able to complete as many land health assessments as we programmed. In addition to the range vacancies, we have been unable to hire a hydrologist.

Oil and Gas Development - WRFO currently processes the oil and gas for all three field offices in the Northwest District. 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.

Currently, WRFO has processed 68 Applications for Permit to Drill (APD) and has 15 pending APDs. Of the 15 pending APDs 6 are on a single well pad within the KFO and the remaining wells are within the WRFO. We anticipate the submission of additional APDs in all three FO's during FY 2024. There are currently two active drilling rigs located in the Piceance Basin.

The WRFO witnesses approximately 40 to 50 well plugging annually. Recently, the WRFO worked with Chevron USA to complete the plugging and closure of the Wilson Creek Field which is located approximately 11-miles north of Meeker.

Buffalo Horn Land Exchange - In January 2021, the BLM issued a decision to approve a land exchange with Buffalo Horn Properties, LLC that will convey 14 parcels of Federal lands in Rio Blanco and Moffat Counties in the Strawberry Creek area (total of 2,652 acres) to acquire one parcel of non-Federal lands in Rio Blanco County in the Smith Gulch area (total of 1,327.06). (Note: Land exchanges are balanced based on appraised values rather than acreage.)

The BLM will also accept Buffalo Horn's offer to donate four parcels of non-Federal land in Rio Blanco County (totaling 508.2 acres) that are isolated "inholdings" between the non-Federal exchange parcel and other BLM-managed public land. The appeal filed by Colorado Wild Public Lands included a request for stay which was denied by the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). The WRFO recently updated the Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) and is coordinating with the Colorado State Office to prepare for closing while the appeal is pending.

PacifiCorp Gateway South - The WRFO continues to assist with variance work associated with the continued installation of this project. It is anticipated that construction will continue through the fall of 2024.

TransWest Express - 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 has received a notice to proceed for geotechnical and non-surface disturbing pre-construction activities within Colorado but does not plan on beginning construction in Colorado in 2024.

*NOTE: For the past few months the LSFO has taken the lead with project managers for both GWS and TWE. Due to staffing changes the primary point of contact will shift to WRFO until vacancies are filled.

Little Snake Field Office (LSFO - Craig)

Kymm Gresset, Field Manager, (970) 826-5089, kgresset@blm.gov

PacifiCorp Gateway South - Gateway South (GWS) construction started in June 2022. The CO portions for pad sites, foundations and anchors are 100% completed. 96% of structures are erected and 62% of wire has been strung. Reclamation efforts have occurred on pad and pulling and tensioning sites with more this year. Construction has been approved to be completed at the Little Snake Substation. Energization of the line in the fall of 2024 is expected to be completed with pad reclamation starting in the fall.

TransWest Express - TransWest Express (TWE) received their Notice to Proceed (NTP) on April 10, 2023. TWE is a 732-mile, a high-voltage transmission line that will extend from south-central Wyoming through northwestern Colorado and central Utah, ending in southern Nevada. TWE will deliver electricity generated by the largest onshore wind generation project in North America. The TransWest project has received a notice to proceed for geotechnical and non-surface disturbing pre-construction activities within Colorado but does not plan on beginning construction in Colorado in 2024.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics - The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has awarded grant money collected for compensatory mitigation funds for authorized impacts of the GWS Transmission Project to LWC lands in Colorado. Two proposals related to LSFO were awarded \$3.2 million dollars and \$1.9 million dollars respectively. The awards were made for proposals from two consulting firms in conjunction with partners and collaboration with the field office. Tribal consultation on the Cross Mountain project has begun. The other proposal with

Logan Simpson on Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and LWC wilderness lands throughout the field office will begin this year.

Greater Sage-Grouse Funds - 15 million dollars were tentatively awarded to 6 projects from the Greater Sage-Grouse Mitigation for GWS, leaving over 3 million. These projects are in restoration and proposed acquisitions and conservation easements.

Outcome Based Grazing Pilot Project - OBGA management continues with internal changes in the permittee's organization. Due to this, there likely will not be cattle on the OBGA allotments in 2024. However, monitoring for greater sage-grouse presence and habitat quality will continue this year. LSFO Assistant Field Manager, Hunter Seim, helped narrate a training module for flexibility in grazing use that will be available agency wide.

Sand Wash Herd Management Area - A census flight was conducted in May 2024 and an estimated 409 horses were counted. A bait trap gather will commence August 18th with the objective of gathering up to 60 horses, with up to 15 mares being treated with PZP and released and up to 45 horses being removed. All removed horses will go to the off-range facility in Canon City.

Upper Colorado River District (UCRD)

Supplemental EIS/RMP for Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) and Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO)

The 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 BLM released the Proposed RMP/Final Supplemental EIS for the public protest period (30 days) and Governor's consistency review (60 days) on June 21, 2024. A Record of Decision is anticipated in fall 2024. ePlanning project site: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2016085/510>

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

Stacey Colón, Field Manager, (970) 244-3010, scolon@blm.gov

Little Bookcliffs Wild Horse Range Gather - In June, the BLM issued a Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record for Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range management over a multi-year period. In accordance with the decision, the GJFO is planning for an initial gather in September 2024 to gather and remove of excess wild horses, with a helicopter drive trap with assisted roping where necessary, to achieve a population of approximately 105 to 120 horses. The appropriate management level (AML) is 90-150 horses, and the most current count, including this year's foals, is 220 horses.

North Fruita Desert Trails Master Plan - Implementation of the trails master plan has been in full swing over the past year, with approximately 27 miles completed out of the 32 miles planned in the North Fruita Desert (NFD) Special Recreation Management Area. The master plan was funded by a CPW non-motorized planning grant in partnership with the City of Fruita, the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association (COPMOBA) and the BLM. The Mesa County Health Department (MCHD) obtained a CPW non-motorized trail construction grant which funded a contract for professional trail construction services. The MCHD also hosts a 5-person trail crew which has been involved with construction of the new trails as well as maintenance of trails in the North Fruita Desert as well as other non-motorized trails in the GJFO.

Also, in the North Fruita Desert, Phase 3 of planned campground construction in the Lower Campground began in July. This phase will add 22 new campsites, additional vault toilets, and new shade structures. Visitation to the campground continues to grow with many sold-out weekends during the spring and fall busy seasons. Campground fee receipts hit a record last fall.

Clifton Parcel - Mesa County has requested acquisition of a BLM disposal parcel located Clifton Colorado near 32 Road (Clifton parcel). The disposal process for this parcel is a multistage process due to an existing withdrawal on this parcel to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Reclamation filed a Notice of Intent to relinquish approximately 31.10 acres of land withdrawn from the public domain as part of the Grand Valley Reclamation Project since they no longer have need for the entire 31.10 acres parcel. Approximately 8.25 acres will remain withdrawn to Reclamation for project purposes that include the Government Highline Canal. The partial revocation is needed to open the land to appropriation under the public land laws, subject to valid existing rights, to facilitate a proposed land disposal. The BLM completed a categorical exclusion for the NEPA compliance for the revocation of the withdrawal. The Public Land Order was published finalizing the revocation and bringing the parcel back into BLM administration. The BLM is working on completing the disposal action to transfer the parcel to Mesa County. BLM recently concluded public scoping and is working on completing the disposal action to transfer the parcel to Mesa County. Remaining steps in the disposal action include the completion of an environmental assessment for the sale, an appraisal, and the publication of a Notice of Realty Action in the Federal Register.

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (MCNCA)

Matt Heinritz, Acting NCA Manager, (970) 244-3049, mheinritz@blm.gov

Rabbit Valley Fire - Approximately 1,500 acres burned in the Rabbit Valley Fire in June in the 'High North' area of the NCA on the north side of I-70. The fire burned through a campground, a national Audubon Society important bird area (IBA), and two BLM grazing allotments. To address post-fire soil stabilization, invasive species and weed control, and to help protect cultural and natural resources, the BLM completed an emergency stabilization and rehabilitation (ESR). The ESR plan includes aerial herbicide applications targeting cheatgrass, drill and aerial seeding, new pasture fencing, green stripping along I-70, and monitoring. Overall, it has been a busy fire season in the NCA, with several starts in the Black Ridge Wilderness.

Rabbit Valley Campgrounds - The BLM is continuing efforts to make the public aware of the 2018 Rabbit Valley Camping plan, which includes upgraded designated camping facilities and reservation system through Rec.gov. Rabbit Valley now has 75 campsites in five different campgrounds, all of which are thoughtfully constructed and placed to facilitate visitor engagement in different activities while staying in this popular multi-use area. To help the public outreach efforts the BLM has brought on an additional career seasonal park ranger who will have responsibilities in Rabbit Valley for maintaining facilities and engaging visitors.

NCA Management Personnel Update - Dan Ben-Horin moved on from the interim NCA Manager position to become the permanent Uncompahgre Field Office Manager on July 1. Matt Heinritz was selected as the interim acting NCA Manager through the end of October, and the GJFO is working with HR on the permanent recruitment.

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

Matt Heinritz, Acting NCA Manager, (970) 244-3049, mheinritz@blm.gov

Gunnison River Campsite Designation and Permit System - The BLM is continuing to implement 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 in October 2023. For now, the BLM is asking the public to complete a free, self-issued, permit that is filled out on-site. Compliance is estimated at 50-70% and is expected to increase with additional education and outreach.

BLM will continue to implement design features of the campsite EA, including stipulations for the Colorado hookless cactus and determining which cultural sites may be used for interpretation and education. The BLM anticipates that the campsites will be reservable on recreation.gov beginning in the 2025 river season, pending the approval of the D-E NCA Business Plan.

Dominguez-Escalante NCA Business Plan - The proposed business plan that would establish two types of recreation fees for existing and future camping sites is available on the BLM website for public comment until September 19, 2024 at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/permits-and-fees/business-plans>.

The plan proposes an expanded amenity fee for each developed campsite of \$20 per night for up to two vehicles and no more than 5 people per vehicle, with an additional vehicle cost of \$10 per night. An individual special recreation permit for the Gunnison River is proposed to cost \$20 per night for small groups (1-5 participants), \$50 per night for medium groups (6-14 participants), and \$100 per night for large groups (15-25 participants). Revenue from the fees will be spent on the sites where they are collected, and will help pay for expenses such as recreation site improvements, new site developments, law enforcement services, and increased campground operating and maintenance costs.

Escalante Ranch Acquisition - On July 15, 2024, The Conservation Fund (TCF) acquired the Escalante Ranch property, an inholding of non-Federal parcels of private land and interests in land that lies within the designated boundaries of D-E NCA along Escalante Creek and the

Gunnison River, from Mika Ag. As the property is still under private ownership, access for the public has not changed.

The BLM is developing an interim management plan consistent with the objectives of surrounding BLM-administered lands per the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) for when the BLM acquires the property from TCF in the Summer of 2025.

BLM is making plans to initiate a visioning (pre-NEPA) process that will guide the formal development of a long-term management planning framework. The BLM intends to invite robust community engagement, including through RAC, cooperating agency, and public involvement in the development of the long-term management plans for the acquired lands. The BLM intends to organize a sub-committee to the Southwest RAC to help guide this process, with the opportunity for NW RAC members to participate in the sub-committee.

Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO – Silt)

Erin Jones, Acting Field Manager, (970) 244-3008, erjones@blm.gov

Proposed Rock Crawling Trail in the Silt Mesa ERMA - The CRVFO has been partnering with the Hi Country 4 Wheelers to designate a new 1.2-mile out-and-back rock crawling trail in the Silt Mesa ERMA, approximately 2.5 miles north of the Town of Silt. The proposed trail would provide a high-quality, unique rock-crawling trail experience within a naturally restricted draw, incorporating natural tread, gravel, and boulder features, and slickrock uplifts. No major construction would be needed due to the unique nature of this trail type. Cultural and paleontological surveys have been completed. The public scoping period closed on April 11. Of the 38 comments received, 32 are in favor of the proposed trail, including comments from the Blueribbon Coalition, Hi Country 4 Wheelers, Rifle Area Mountain Bike Organization (RAMBO), and Washington Off-highway Vehicle Alliance. Six individuals provided comments in opposition to the proposal. The BLM is currently analyzing issues raised from public comments and hopes to have a decision in the coming weeks.

Upper Colorado River SRMA Carrying Capacity Study - The CRVFO and KFO hired a contractor to conduct a carrying capacity study on the Upper Colorado River SRMA to determine current and future trends of visitation and uses and identify current and potential future impacts to Recreational Setting Characteristics identified in each office's RMP. The study includes interviews with various stakeholders, observational studies, analyses of existing facilities, and a compilation/review of existing data. The contractor has been conducting observational studies at various locations including Pumphouse, State Bridge, Two Bridges, and Catamount and on-river inventories this summer. The results will be provided in a report by December 2024.

Integrated Fuels and Habitat Improvement Projects - The CRVFO is in various stages of planning and implementing several integrated vegetation management projects to improve wildlife habitat and reduce fuels including the following:

Ongoing Projects with BLM Staff and Women's Fire Crew - 1) The West Elk Ridge project north of New Castle and Silt is a collaboration with CPW's Habitat Partnership Program (HPP)

involving mastication and lop and scatter work. 2) Dry Hollow south of Silt is a mastication project. 3) Crews are re-treating the Cedar Mountain project north of Silt and Rifle. The original project was a collaboration with the Mule Deer Foundation, Muley Fanatic Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and HPP. Work on these projects will continue based on crew availability until complete.

Cultural Inventories Contracted for Future Projects - 1) Sopris Mountain Ranch will be a cross boundary project with the USFS and private landowners south of Basalt. It will include a combination of mastication and prescribed fire with expected 2025 implementation. 2) Antelope Creek near McCoy will be a mastication project with 2025 implementation. 3) King Mountain – Linear feature survey for forest health and hazard fuel mitigation work.

Good Neighbor Authority Projects with Colorado State Forest Service -

1) Bellyache Phase II – Dead, diseased, and dying mixed conifer will be removed from around a subdivision and important communication tower. Project will include biomass utilization. Potential implementation is fall 2024.

2) Cottonwood Pass Project – Cross boundary project with private landowners, USFS, and State Trust Lands to build a fuel break around the south side of Gypsum. Had the Lake Christine fire continued to burn, it could have reached Gypsum. Potential fall 2024 implementation.

3) King Mountain SRMA Proposed Treatments. Ongoing collaboration with the Colorado State Forest Service and stakeholders. Cultural survey contracted for first phase.

Prescribed Fire -

1) Cottonwood Creek Rx, northwest of Eagle (141 acres) – Considering fall 2024 window.

2) June Creek Rx, south of Silt and Uncle Bob Mountain – Likely a fall 2024 window.

Mechanical Mastication and Lop & Scatter -

1) Copper Spur Mx – PJ and sagebrush mastication project near McCoy with expected 2024 or 2025 implementation depending on funding.

2) Light Hill – Additional 150 acres of mastication in collaboration with HPP, planning on 2024 implementation.

3) The Crown – 300 acres of Gambel oak, sagebrush, and PJ mastication, planning on 2024 or 2025 implementation.

4) Winter Ridge Maintenance – Maintain 300-1000 acres of greater sage-grouse habitat treatments near Burns in 2024.

Anderson Camp Direct Sale - The BLM is proposing to sell a 7.55-acre parcel in Eagle County to Sweetwater Rydev LLC, operator of Anderson Summer Camp. The proposed sale will resolve a more than 100-year-old inadvertent trespass and help the Anderson Summer Camp continue serving non-profit organizations and at-risk youth. The land is being sold for the fair-market value as appraised by the Department of the Interior's Office of Valuation Services. The purchasers will reimburse BLM for its staff time processing this sale. A Notice of Realty Action was published on 12/21/2023 in the Federal Register and had a 45-day public comment period on the proposed sale. The comment period ended on February 5th, 2024, and two comments were

received in support of the sale. The NEPA Decision Record and FONSI for the Environmental Assessment have been signed and the BLM is in the final stages of the sale process.



Public Comment Period

2:30 – 3:00 p.m.

In Person Overview

Zoom Participants Overview



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

Open Discussion and Closing Remarks