

Northwest Resource Advisory Council

Field Manager Updates

April 2025

Northwest District

Kremmling Field Office (KFO – Kremmling)

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Recreation - Recreation staff held two Special Recreation Permit holder meetings to review the permitting process and associated requirements. Better adherence to required timelines of the permitting process will streamline the permitting process for permit holders and BLM staff.

Blue Valley Land Exchange – On January 13, 2025, The BLM completed the closing of the exchange of 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.

Implementation of the recreation design features at Green Mountain Recreation Area, and the Spring Creek Bridge Area will begin in the spring. River restoration work is expected to begin in the spring of 2026.

Construction of the Confluence Recreation Area will begin in 2026 to allow a review of the trail location in association with irrigation water. The delay is necessary to determine if associated water rights can continue to be used on the associated hay fields without impacting recreation design features.

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

To meet increasing recreation 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.

A Federal Register notice was published on January 6, 2025. New fees will go into effect no sooner than June 7, 2025. Existing fee site increases in the KFO will be implemented on April 1, 2025.

Signage of fee changes are being placed at recreation sites to notify the public of the change.

Tri-State Right Of Way (ROW) Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association (Tri-State), a wholesale electric power producer and supplier, owns and maintains the approximately 45-year-old Gore Pass–Windy Gap 230-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line in Grand County, Colorado. The 25.0-mile-long transmission line extends east from the Gore Pass Substation west of U.S. Highway 40 and northwest of the town of Kremmling on the south side of the Wolford Mountain Reservoir to the Windy Gap Substation, north of Windy Gap Reservoir and west of town of Granby.

Tri-State's requested for reauthorization of their ROW grant for the Gore Pass–Windy Gap 230-kV Transmission Line with incorporation of associated access routes that cross public lands in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), as amended.

The reauthorization of the ROW will allow Tri-State to replace or perform maintenance on aged infrastructure. KFO anticipates signing the decision to renew the ROW mid April.

White River Field Office (WRFO – Meeker)

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Meeker Mustang Makeover (MMM) - This year's MMM will take place August 22-23, 2025, at the Rio Blanco Fairgrounds in Meeker. Up to 10 trainers ranging in age from 13-17 are competing in the Yearling In-Hand competition this year. Additionally, 15 under saddle competitors will be competing this year and expect some returning from previous years. New this year there will also be an adult In-Hand division with 2-year-old horses in which up to 10 trainers will be competing.

Piceance East Douglas Herd Management Area (PEDHMA)- Several Range Improvement Projects were completed in 2024 to assist in herd management including installation of 2 miles of water line, reconstruction of one mile of HMA boundary fence along HWY 64 and redevelopment of spring. Further projects are planned for 2025, including pond and fence maintenance. The last census for the PEDHMA included all horses inside and outside the HMA including those wild horses within the West Douglas Herd Area (WDHA). That census was conducted in December of 2023.

Recreation - Over the last three years of planning, WRFO has received over \$789,000 in funding to support the recreation program. The recreation program was awarded \$163,625 in CPW State Motorized Grant funds for 2023-2024 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, CXT's, a skills course, mud bog pits, kiosks and signs. 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 to pay 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 additional funding through BPSS projects allowing further implementation of the OHV Open Area, improvements at North Rangely and other maintenance updates to recreation sites which is currently undergoing the first phase of implementation.

In March of 2025 WRFO was awarded \$45,000 dollars from Yamaha Motorsports to continue implementation work at the LO7 open area including an accessible cabana for OHV and community visitors to use.

WRFO continues to conduct our Recreation and Cultural 4th grade Every Kid Outdoor field trip. This program reaches approximately 100 kids and families yearly.

Oil and Gas Development - 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 57 pending Applications for Permit to Drill (APD) on 5 well pad locations within the WRFO and additional four APDs proposed from one well pad in KFO outside of Walden. WRFO is anticipating the submission of additional APDs in all three FO's during FY 2025 based on our conversations with several of the local oil and gas operators.

The WRFO witnesses approximately 40 to 50 well plugging annually. Recently, the WRFO worked with Chevron USA to complete the plugging operations in Wilson Creek Field, and we continue to work with Chevron on several well pad clean-up projects and final abandonment activities. The Wilson Creek Field is located approximately 11-miles north of Meeker.

Oil and Gas Leasing - In November 2024 the Colorado State Office posted a scoping notice for the September 2025 lease sale. The WRFO is currently working with the Colorado State Office complete the NEPA review which to analyzes leasing on 13 oil and gas parcels. Of the 13 parcels 10 are located within the WRFO totaling 10,391.25 acres (9,393.05 within RBC and 998.2 within Moffat County).

The Bureau of Land Management Colorado State Office today opened a 30-day public scoping period to receive public input on 61 oil and gas parcels totaling 51,068 acres that may be

included in a December 2025 lease sale in Colorado. The comment period ends March 17, 2025. Proposals are located within White River, Little Snake and Kremmling Field Offices.

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.

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 WRFO until 2026.

Little Snake Field Office (LSFO - Craig)

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PacifiCorp Gateway South - Gateway South (GWS) construction was completed, and the line energized in December 2024. Reclamation efforts have occurred on pad and pulling and tensioning sites with more reclamation continuing beginning spring of 2025.

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 and plans on beginning construction in Colorado in 2025.

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 - Fifteen million dollars were tentatively awarded to six 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 - The Little Snake Land & Livestock OBG pilot project is no longer a pilot. The OBG program has been made BLM-wide policy under IM2025-020. BLM offices will have the option to work with operators who are willing to participate in grazing management under permits that include flexible and outcome-based tools. BLM will be releasing a series of training modules for flexibility in grazing use that will be available agency wide.

Sand Wash Herd Management Area - In 2024, a permanent bait trap site was constructed in the Sand Wash HMA at the Lake Draw Well. Trap operations utilizing water were initiated in August 2024 and concluded in October 2024 with a total of ten horses removed. Currently, operations are scheduled to commence in the first week of July 2025 with the objective of gathering 60 horses and removing 45. A census flight for areas outside of the HMA is planned for the spring of 2025. [This spring, we are receiving reports of larger than normal groups of wild horses, one permittee counted 80 horses, drifting into Colorado from the Salt Wells and Adobe Town HMAs in Wyoming. This information has been conveyed to the Colorado WHB program leads.](#)

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 have finished 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 Record of Decision for this planning effort on October 17, 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)

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Watershed Scale Land Health Assessments – The Grand Junction Field Office is a national pilot office for watershed scale land health assessments. We have divided the BLM managed land in the GJFO into 20 different watersheds (HUC 10 level modified slightly to allotment boundaries) and scheduled completion of watershed scale land health analysis and evaluations on a ten-year cycle, with intent to complete two watershed per year. These assessments will include locally collected data as well as remote sensing data. If lands are not achieving land health standards, a determination will be completed identifying the causal factors for not achieving land health and recommendations made for how progress can be made to achieve standards. These

assessments be used for many different types of projects, including grazing permit renewals, habitat treatments, and recreation management.

Grazing Permits – GJFO currently manages 124 grazing permits. The permits have been grouped by watershed and will be fully processed with NEPA over the next ten-year cycle based on the land health assessment scheduled noted above. This approach to permit renewals will help BLM prioritize work within defined areas of the office and assist with long-term planning of NEPA workload. The GJFO will address the challenges of shifting the watershed approach to permit renewals, including the need to split some permits if they overlap watersheds, and change to the permit application schedule changes that depend on the watershed-level land health assessment schedule.

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.

18 Road Right-of-Way – Mesa County applied for and were granted authorization to amend their existing BLM right-of-way grant and for authorization of extra workspace to improve 18 Road that connects to the North Fruita Desert (NFD) Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). Mesa County is working in cooperation with BLM and the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) to pave and upgrade 18 Road to improve public safety and improve access to a key recreation area. The project includes reconstructing approximately 6.25 miles of 18 Road, approximately 7 miles north of Fruita, Colorado. The road improvements begin just north of the Government Highline Canal and continue to the end of 18 Road in the NFD SRMA. Public safety will be improved by providing a safe and sustainable roadway with upgraded roadway geometry, surface conditions, striping, signs, roadway widening, shoulders, bike lanes, and guardrail installation at select locations to meet current design standards. Upgrades to the road will reduce Mesa County maintenance costs and provides safer access to BLM managed public lands within the North Fruita Desert Special Recreation Management Area, which is a high use recreation area.

Funding for the project is being provided through the FHWA Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP). FHWA was the lead federal agency for environmental compliance. The BLM adopted the FHWA categorical determination and issued an amendment to the right-of-way grant. Construction for the project commenced in November of 2024 and is projected to be completed in the fall of 2025.

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 a withdrawal on this parcel to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). The Reclamation withdrawal was revoked in January 2024 which returned approximately 31.10 acres of land to the public domain. In December 2024 the CONVEY Act was signed into law directing the BLM to complete this conveyance process. Approximately 8.25 acres will remain withdrawn to Reclamation for project purposes that include the Government Highline Canal. The BLM is working on completing the disposal action to transfer the parcel to Mesa County. BLM has completed public scoping, drafted the Environmental Assessment, drafted the Mineral Potential Report and completed the Phase I Environmental Assessment to work towards conveying the parcel to Mesa County. BLM will sell the surface and mineral estate for no less than the appraised fair market value of \$31,000, and is routing a Notice of Realty Action for publication in the Federal Register. .

Garfield County Road 200 – The BLM met with members of the Garfield County Manager’s office in March to discuss opening access to public lands beyond private parcels along County Road 200 in Garfield County, west of De Beque. The field office is working toward updating travel management of certain segments previously designated as “mitigated closed” in the 2015 Resource Management Plan to open to all vehicles, and is examining options with the County for future maintenance, including a possible memorandum of understanding or right of way. The next step is a field visit to assess immediate and future maintenance needs desires, planned for later this spring.

Laramie Energy’s Cascade Creek Projects - Laramie Energy will mobilize a drill rig on April 4, 2025, to drill three new Federal wells on the proposed fee/fee CC 0697-15-08 well pad and 15 new fee wells. The pad is at approximately 8,525 feet in elevation and 16 miles northeast of DeBeque, Colorado, on the divide between Parachute and Roan Creeks.

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (MCNCA)

Jim Lovelace NCA Manager, (970) 244-3049, jlovelac@blm.gov

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area 25th Anniversary – The BLM is celebrating the 25th anniversary of the McInnis Canyons NCA on October 24, 2025. The BLM will work on anniversary-specific events later in the year, and will continue to support the Colorado Canyons Association in hosting educational events, volunteer trainings and events, and outreach for learners of all ages throughout the year, including Paleo Days (March 10-12), Nature Knowledge Days (April 21-23 and April 29-30), among others.

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

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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 in the 2026 river season.

Dominguez-Escalante NCA Business Plan - The business plan establishes two types of recreation fees, special area fees and expanded amenity fees, for existing and future camping sites and areas within the NCA where recreation requires special management to be continued sustainably. The public comment period from August 26 to September 25, 2024, yielded no comments which altered the final plan. The final version of the business plan is available on the BLM website at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/permits-and-fees/business-plans>. A notice concerning these fees and business plan was published in the Federal Register on 1/13/2025 and can be viewed here <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/13/2025-00507/new-recreation-fee-areas-and-new-fees-for-existing-individual-special-recreation-permits-for>.

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 intends to invite robust community engagement, including through RAC, cooperating agencies, and public involvement in the development of the long-term management plans for the acquired lands.

Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO – Silt)

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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, 2024. Of the 38 comments received, 32 are in favor of the proposed trail, including comments from the Blue-ribbon 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 finalizing the Section 106 NHPA process and anticipate a decision this spring

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 compiling and reviewing existing data, interviews with various stakeholders, observational studies, and analyses of existing facilities. The contractor completed observational studies at various locations including Pumphouse, State Bridge, Two Bridges, and Catamount and on-river inventories last summer. Stakeholder interviews were conducted in January, and BLM is reviewing the draft report.

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.

CRVFO is working with staff and the Women's Fire Crew on the West Elk Ridge Project north of New Castle and Silt. This project is a collaboration with CPWs Habitat Partnership Program (HPP), involving lop and scatter work. The collaboration is also working with BLM to retreat the Cedar Mountain project north of Silt which includes partnering with the Mule Deer Foundation, Muley Fanatic Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and HPP. The crews are also working in Dry Hollow south of Silt and re-treating the Cedar Mountain project north of Silt and Rifle. Work on these projects will continue based on crew availability until complete.

We are hoping to have good weather windows in the Spring to implement prescribed burns at Cottonwood Creek, northwest of Eagle and June Creek south of Silt and Uncle Bob Mountain. We are also looking to perform mastication projects that will reduce fuels on over 450 acres.

Cultural Inventory Contracts for Future Projects

The CRVFO has entered into contracts to conduct cultural inventories to support future fuels reduction projects. The Sopris Mountain Ranch project finds us partnering with USFS and private landowners, south of Basalt, to use a combination of mastication and prescribed fire to reduce fuels. At the Thomson Creek Project, BLM is partnering with the Colorado State Forest Service to create fuel breaks in the wildland urban interface in the Thompson Creek and Thompson Divide areas southwest and southeast of Carbondale. We are also working with the Roaring Fork Coalition to enhance defensible space near Colorado Mountain College as part of the Spring Valley Wildland Urban Interface Project.

The cultural contracts will also support multiple oak brush and PJ treatments in throughout the Field Office.

Good Neighbor Authority Projects with Colorado State Forest Service

CRVFO continues to use its Good Neighbor Authority to implement multiple projects with Colorado State Forest Service. We are working on Bellyache Phase II to treat dead, diseased, and dying mixed conifer from around an important, subdivision communication tower. We anticipate the project will include biomass utilization and hope to implement the project this year. We are also working with USFS and State Trust Lands to build a fuel break around the south side of Gypsum. We are working on getting the appropriate cooperative agreements in place to implement the project. Lastly, for the King Mountain SRMA proposed treatments, we completed cultural survey first phase and are evaluating proposed treatments along linear features (e.g., fence lines, roads, ditches) to reduce hazard fuels and improve forest health.

Oil and gas activities

The CRVFO staff engaged operators Caerus and Laramie in plugging wells, including wells that were on a pad near the boundary of the Spring Creek fire south of Parachute that was found to be sliding downhill. We expect the operator TEP to conduct drilling activities in 2025 and potentially Laramie as well.

Rocky Mountain Industrials (RMI) – Mid-Continent Quarry

On January 3, 2025, the Department of Interior issued a Decision Letter regarding the quarry. The letter implements the findings of the Determination of Common Variety (DCV) report, which was completed in January of 2024. We have also been working with the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety (DRMS) and the Mine Safety and Health Administrations (MSHA) on the post rock fall actions and permitting. On Jan. 31, 2025, RMI submitted payment as directed in the Jan. 3, 2025, letter. On that same day, RMI also submitted a modification to their plan of operations that addresses: (1) issues associated with the rockfall that occurred in 2023; (2) ongoing compliance concerns. After reviewing RMI's modified plan of operations, the BLM determined the plan was incomplete and sent a letter to RMI requesting additional information.