

BLM UNCOMPAHGRE FIELD OFFICE RECREATION FOCUS GROUP REPORT



A STUDY BY THE MESA STATE COLLEGE
NATURAL RESOURCES AND LAND POLICY INSTITUTE
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I. Executive Summary

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office is currently undergoing a revision of their Resource Management Plan (RMP), this is the document that guides management decisions on approximately 675,677 acres of public lands around us for the next 20 years. The Planning Area is much of the Uncompahgre Field Office, but does not include the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, or the Dominguez-Escalante NCA.

This is public land held in trust for the people of the United States as a collective whole. The question is how to hear and articulate the “will of the people”. The BLM accomplishes this by mandating that every 20 years all land use planning documents go through a public review process. The result is the revision of the Resource Management Plan (RMP). The revision process requires a number of places for public input including the scoping process (90 days at the beginning of the process), Resource Advisory Committees (with representatives from a variety of interest groups in the area), focus groups, visits with those using public lands in some way, and a number of other scheduled public comment periods throughout the revision process (scheduled to last about two years or more).

This report is the result of extensive focus group data collection with public lands users concerning recreation on public lands in the UFO. The staff at the Natural Resource and Land Policy Institute at Mesa State College (NRLPI) was contracted by the BLM-UFO to gather data from the public on their preferences for recreational management of the public lands in the field office. Six focus group meetings were held at locations across the field office with over 130 participants attending at least one of the meetings. Handouts were given requesting a written response to a variety of questions asking the participants to identify special places and locations of outstanding recreational opportunities and to indicate what activities and characteristics (settings) of the area make them special. Additional questions were asked about the San Miguel River Basin Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), BLM management activities that enhance or diminish the quality of the identified special places, sources of information about BLM lands in the field office and partnership opportunities to keep the public involved in the management process. A total of 124 written responses were received and developed into a database for analysis; this report is based on those written responses and the discussions that took place within the focus groups.

It is clear from the responses that the BLM-UFO is currently managing the land according to a multiple-use mandate. The participants identified 122 different special places and 85 outstanding recreation areas. A total of 76 unique activities were associated with special places, and 56 activities with outstanding recreational opportunity locations. Although many locations were identified by the participants in their written comments, eight or nine locations received by far the largest share of responses. They include: San Miguel River Basin, Jumbo Mountain, Dolores River, Roubideau Canyon, Paradox Valley, North Delta OHV//Adobe badlands, Dry Creek, Spring Creek and Tabeguache. Likewise, a wide variety of activities were

identified in both the special places and outstanding recreational opportunities, but there was remarkable consistency in the most frequently mentioned activities with hiking (69 mentions¹) being the most prominent followed by fishing (35 mentions), hunting (28 mentions), mountain biking/biking (39 total mentions) and camping (25 mentions). It should be noted that OHV activity was actually divided by many participants based on the mode of transportation, but if all OHV activities were combined it ranks as the second most frequent activity response (36 mentions) in both the special place and outstanding recreational opportunity questions. Participants offered a wide variety of suggestions that are place specific to BLM management activities that enhance or diminish these places. They also offered a rich set of possibilities for public/private partnerships to help manage the land. Every written comment has been combined into a database for analysis which has been provided to BLM office for management planning purposes.

¹ All frequencies of activities mentioned are based on responses to special place activities. The order is similar on outstanding recreational opportunities, but the frequency count is less.

II. Focus Group

A. Methodology

Between February 2, 2010 and February 10, 2010, six focus groups were conducted by the Natural Resource and Land Policy Institute of Mesa State College with various communities in the Uncompahgre BLM Field Office's (UFO) management area. The communities included Delta, Paonia, Montrose, Ridgway, Telluride and Naturita. The purpose of the focus groups was to ascertain what participant's preferences were for special places and outstanding recreational opportunities on BLM land (excluding the NCAs in the planning area which have their own planning process); setting characteristics that might enhance or diminish those places and opportunities; and the appropriate role of collaborating partners in planning and managing public lands collaboration. Often in public land planning, managers determine the sites for SRMAs based off of their field experience and then use focus groups to enhance their understanding of the public's preferred recreational outcomes in those locations. This focus group design differs in that few assumptions were made about where SRMAs or other outstanding recreational opportunities are located prior to the focus group meetings themselves. Rather, these focus groups were intentionally left open to allow the public to identify the places and activities that have meaning for them, then the results of those discussions and written responses would provide a starting point for recreational planning staff to begin to identify areas in need of special attention. By starting with public input and then moving toward planning alternatives, this process allows the public to have a more meaningful role early in the process to help shape the outcomes they desire. The data collected as a result of this process will be used in the revision of the UFO Resource Management Plan. The following table summarizes the location and size of the focus groups:

Table 1: Focus Group composition and location

| Date | Community | Number of Participants |
|---------|-----------|------------------------|
| 2/2/10 | Delta | 18 |
| 2/3/10 | Paonia | 38 |
| 2/3/10 | Montrose | 31 |
| 2/9/10 | Ridgway | 18 |
| 2/10/10 | Telluride | 18 |
| 2/10/10 | Naturita | 12 |

B: Design

Focus groups lasted an average of an hour and a half and were held in locations throughout the field office. The focus groups were populated by open invitation on the BLM website, local media sources, flyers put up in the communities and e-mail invitations from lists

of participants who signed up at earlier scoping meetings for the UFO-BLM RMP process. A total of over 130 participants attended the focus groups. Participants were asked to indicate their home zip code on the front of the handout provided. The entire field office population was represented based on their response to the zip code question, with participants attending from 23 different zip codes. The following table indicates where these participants came from:

Table 2: Participants zip codes and home towns

| Number of participants | Zip code | Location |
|------------------------|----------|----------------|
| 2 | None | None |
| 16 | 81401 | Montrose |
| 11 | 81403 | Montrose |
| 1 | 81410 | Austin |
| 3 | 81413 | Cedaredge |
| 2 | 81415 | Crawford |
| 9 | 81416 | Delta |
| 8 | 81419 | Hotchkiss |
| 8 | 81422 | Naturita |
| 3 | 81423 | Norwood |
| 3 | 81424 | Nucla |
| 1 | 81425 | Olathe |
| 2 | 81426 | Ophir |
| 2 | 81427 | Ouray |
| 26 | 81428 | Paonia |
| 3 | 81430 | Placerville |
| 14 | 81432 | Ridgway |
| 8 | 81435 | Telluride |
| 1 | 81501 | Grand Junction |
| 1 | 81505 | Grand Junction |
| 1 | 81507 | Grand Junction |
| 1 | 81526 | Palisade |

The general format of the focus groups was the same for all communities. A copy of the script is located in Appendix 1, and the power point that guided the discussion is located in Appendix 2. Participants were given handouts to fill in so that all participants were able to give input to the process, even if they did not have the opportunity to speak up at the meeting. The results of these responses have been recorded in an excel spreadsheet for ease of analysis, and complete data from these written responses has been give to the BLM field office for further analysis and planning. Initially, the participants were asked to describe characteristics of special places in order to establish a specific criterion for that particular community as to what constitutes a special place. With that discussion as a referent, participants were then asked to identify on their handout special places in the BLM field office by naming them, describing their favorite activities there, and indicating what characteristics make the place special (setting

characteristics). Some results that were written down were discussed as a large group, the rest are recorded in the excel spreadsheet provided to the BLM. Next the participants were asked to identify areas of outstanding recreational opportunities in the BLM planning area. Once again, they were given time to write their responses and circle the areas on maps provided. They also indicated what activities they do in the area, and what characteristics of the area enhance the recreational opportunities (setting prescriptions). After a discussion of the results of their responses, several questions were asked about what the BLM could do in the RMP to enhance or diminish those places, and opportunities for partnerships and further involvement in the process. The participants were encouraged to record their responses to these questions on the handouts provided and the results of those written responses are also recorded on the excel spreadsheet provided to the UFO-BLM. While every effort was made to remain true to the scripts of each focus group type, inevitably the open ended nature of the questions would lead the conversation away from the script temporarily. The facilitator tried to honor comments when they were made, and redirect the group back to the questions in the script in order to comprehensively cover all areas of interest to BLM planning staff. All focus group meetings were digitally recorded and converted into MP3 files and have been submitted to the BLM along with this report as part of the administrative record. Additionally, BLM staff from the UFO were present at all meetings to listen to the responses without adding their own take on the proceedings. This presence of the BLM was a sign to participants that their concerns will be heard even if not all of them are acted upon.

C: Data:

Participants were asked to fill out handouts which mirrored the questions asked in the focus group. A total of 124 handouts were returned with written responses to some or all of the questions. The data was then compiled into a database to facilitate queries of the data, and maximize the opportunity to listen to every written comment. The following table indicates how many participants attended and returned handout with comments:

Table 3: Participant Handout Response Rates

| Number of Participants | Meeting Location | Number of Handouts returned with comments |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 18 | Delta | 18 |
| 38 | Paonia | 33 |
| 31 | Montrose | 27 |
| 18 | Ridgway | 18 |
| 18 | Telluride | 14 |
| 12 | Naturita | 12 |

Participants were asked to circle “special places” on maps of the Uncompahgre BLM Field Office, excluding the NCAs. The participants could indicate more than one special place.

There were 122 different special places identified. While most areas were only mentioned once or twice, the following table indicates how often the top nine locations were identified.

Table 4: Special Places

| Number of times identified | Location | Number of meetings identified |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 36 | San Miguel River Basin | 6 |
| 18 | Jumbo Mountain | 2 |
| 16 | Dolores River | 6 |
| 15 | Roubideau Canyon | 4 |
| 15 | Paradox Valley | 5 |
| 12 | North Delta OHV//Adobe badlands | 2//3 |
| 10 | Dry Creek | 3 |
| 10 | Spring Creek | 4 |
| 7 | Tabeguache | 4 |

In addition to identifying the special places, participants were asked to indicate what they like to do in the area (activities), and what makes it a special place (settings). While the settings comments (and all other data) are linked to the locations in the database, the settings comments are site specific therefore there is no summary data of settings offered. A total of 76 unique activities were identified, and the total number of activities mentioned in a special place location was 437. The following table indicates the most popular mentioned activities² associated with the special places identified:

Table 5: Special Place Activities

| Special Place Activity | Number of mentions |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Hiking | 69 |
| Fishing | 35 |
| Hunting | 28 |
| Camping | 25 |
| Mountain Biking | 23 |
| Biking | 16 |
| Watching Wildlife | 16 |
| Rafting | 14 |
| Photography | 12 |
| OHV | 10 |
| Archeological sites | 9 |
| ATV | 9 |

² The activities in the table were mentioned by 4 or more returned written responses. There are many activities mentioned by less than 4 participants that might still be important. A complete list is identified by count in the database provided to the UFO-BLM staff.

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Gold prospecting | 9 |
| Horseback riding | 9 |
| Exploring | 8 |
| Bird watching | 7 |
| Four-wheeling | 7 |
| Wood hauling/cutting | 7 |
| Boating | 6 |
| Grazing | 6 |
| Motorcycling | 6 |
| Floating | 5 |
| Picnic | 5 |
| Trail running | 5 |
| Climbing | 4 |
| Driving | 4 |
| Kayaking | 4 |

Later in the focus group, participants were asked to circle “outstanding recreational opportunities” on maps of the Uncompahgre BLM Field Office excluding the NCAs. The participants could indicate more than one special place. There were 85 different outstanding recreational opportunity locations identified. A total of 56 unique activities were identified, and the total number of activities mentioned in an outstanding recreational opportunity location was 248. While most areas were only mentioned once or twice, the following table indicates how often the top eight locations were identified:

Table 6: Outstanding Recreational Opportunities

| Number of times identified | Location | Number of meetings identified |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 15 | San Miguel River Basin | 6 |
| 15 | Jumbo Mountain | 3 |
| 10 | Dolores River | 6 |
| 10 | Paradox Valley | 5 |
| 9 | Roubideau Canyon | 3 |
| 8 | Spring Creek | 3 |
| 7 | North Delta OHV | 2 |
| 7 | Dry Creek | 3 |

In addition to asking what are the outstanding recreation opportunity locations, participants were asked to identify what they like to do in the area (activities), and what makes it an outstanding recreational opportunity (settings). While the settings comments (and all other data) are linked to the locations in the database, the settings comments are site specific therefore there is no summary data of settings offered. A total of 56 unique activities were identified, and

the total number of activities mentioned in a special place location was 248. The following table indicates the most popular mentioned activities³ associated with the outstanding recreation opportunity locations identified:

Table 7: Outstanding Recreational Opportunity Activities

| Outstanding Recreational Opportunity Activity | Number of mentions |
|---|--------------------|
| Hiking | 38 |
| Fishing | 23 |
| Hunting | 17 |
| Mountain biking | 16 |
| Camping | 11 |
| Watching Wildlife | 11 |
| Biking | 10 |
| Photography | 9 |
| OHV | 8 |
| ATV riding | 6 |
| Dirt biking | 6 |
| Rafting | 6 |
| Boating | 5 |
| Motorcycle | 4 |
| Skiing | 4 |
| Trail running | 4 |
| Four wheeling | 4 |
| Backpacking | 4 |
| Exploring | 4 |
| Target shooting | 4 |
| Climbing | 3 |
| Horseback riding | 3 |
| Snowmobiling | 3 |
| Rock gathering | 3 |
| Relaxing | 3 |

³ The activities in the table were mentioned by 3 or more returned written responses. There are many activities mentioned by less than 4 participants that might still be important. A complete list is identified by count in the database provided to the UFO-BLM staff.

III. Analysis

While much of the analysis of the data will be done by the recreational staff of the BLM Uncompahgre field office, a few observations about trends that emerged from the meetings are in order here. First, it seems obvious to this observer that the attendance and willingness to participate in the sessions is an indication that these participants generally believe that this BLM office will listen to their concerns. Further evidence of the belief of a responsive BLM office can be found in the lack of comments during the focus groups and subsequent handout responses that the BLM does not listen. Rather, there were several positive comments regarding the BLM office and its partnership with the communities. This does not just happen by chance; it is nurtured over years of interaction between the BLM and the public. This positive relationship between the two is not always common across the country. In fact, BLM-public interaction is often characterized by tension over public participation and management actions. It is refreshing to see a more positive relationship between the BLM and the public. The strong presence of BLM staff from the UFO at each of the focus groups gave the public the impression that the BLM is concerned about their comments in the management process. The staff of the BLM-UFO are to be commended for actively working to develop partnerships with the public that enhance their effectiveness in managing public lands and reduce the amount of effort needed to respond to a more hostile public. When the public takes ownership in the process as evidenced by the strong turnout in these focus groups, they are more likely to support and participate in the management actions outlined in the RMP. This is not to suggest that there is no dissension in the UFO, but it appears to be significantly less of a problem due in no small part to the ongoing activity of the staff at the BLM-UFO.

It is also clear that for the participants of these focus groups representing the residents within the field office boundary, recreation is a huge part of their quality of life. There were a lot of activities mentioned in both the special places and the outstanding recreational opportunities on public lands indicating the success of the management strategy for multiple use recreation already present in the field office. Many respondents suggested that recreational activities are a big part of what makes "special places" important to them. As such, recreation ought to play a significant role in the revision process of the RMP. This increased emphasis on recreation is part of a much larger trend nation-wide on BLM lands as people begin to articulate the value of recreation on these lands. While there were lots of special places and outstanding recreational opportunities identified, few areas offer broad enough activity and interest to be considered for management as a special recreational management area (SRMA) except for the existing SRMA along the San Miguel River. Another area to be considered for SRMA status might include the land within the Dolores River corridor. Based on the large turnout at the Paonia meeting and numerous comments about Jumbo Mountain, there is real concern over the status of that location even though it is only mentioned in half of the focus groups across the field office. Several requests were made to consider Jumbo Mountain as an SRMA in at least one of the planning alternatives. There were also several locations identified that require the BLM to consider their

recreational management beyond simply leaving them as open spaces. These include the Paradox Trail, Dry and Spring Creek, Roubideau Canyon and the North Delta motorized area.

The participants expressed concerns regarding the over regulation of public lands that might result from the RMP revision process. There was strong agreement among participants at the focus groups that one of the attractive qualities of these special places on BLM land is the unrestrictive nature of those lands. While some regulations are necessary to maintain public lands, the UFO should be careful not to “over-regulate” those lands. The most common concern expressed at the meetings and in the handouts appears to be the lack of access to many public lands in the field office. This is particularly true of the area known as Jumbo Mountain.

There were a number of comments regarding the Wild and Scenic River designation process for the Dolores and San Miguel watersheds. Most of the comments were in favor of some designation, but those opposed to the designation are intensely concerned about the consequences of such designations on their chosen activities such as gold prospecting. Most of the participants also support the multiple use concept, but several comments suggested not all lands are suitable for all activities. There is support for separate user groups in some areas especially between motorized use and mechanized/quiet uses.

There was general concern expressed in several focus groups about the diminishing effects of oil, gas and mineral development in these special places. There were also several concerns raised over the negative environmental consequences of grazing on special places and recreational opportunity locations, especially in riparian areas. Additionally there was some concern expressed about the need to increase disabled access especially in the North Delta area. There was also a lot of concern for the protection of habitat for wildlife. Watching wildlife was seen as an important quality to many of the special places identified.

Given the fact that hiking was identified more than any other activity (almost double in both special places and outstanding recreational opportunities), the need for additional hiking trails in the field office should be taken seriously in the alternatives to the RMP developed as part of the process. OHV users were primarily concerned about maintaining access to their special places. Some also expressed an interest in the development of more loop trails, although opinions on their value were mixed as some suggested that not all existing trails should be turned into loop trails. There were also several comments made about the need to expand the opportunities for single track mountain biking experiences across the field office. Specific locations for these loop trails and expanded single track opportunities are evidenced in the comprehensive data base provided to the staff of the BLM-UFO.

In each of the focus groups, participants were asked about the current management of the San Miguel River Basin SRMA. Opinions of current management practices were generally very positive. Particular mention was made of new camping facilities and improved access as a result of the development of these sites. Suggestions were made for more public-private partnerships

with local communities and home-owner associations in the area. While most participants believe the SRMA management plan for the San Miguel River basin is moving in the right direction, some concerns still remain over the permitting process for local commercial outfitters. Concerns were also expressed about how to manage the growing number of visitors to the river basin, some of which has been spurred by easier access as a result of SRMA management focus. Participants expressed a good deal of concern about the need to more clearly designate private from public property. Management suggestions on addressing this problem include more fencing and signage. While many of these comments surfaced in the discussion of the San Miguel SRMA, concerns about trespass and public -private boundaries were expressed in almost every focus group and about lands beyond the San Miguel River SRMA as well. This is clearly an on-going issue of concern for the BLM staff to be aware of.

Few comments were offered on marketing the field office lands as a tourist destination. The NCAs will serve this function while many agreed that the remaining land should be managed for local use. According to handout responses when asked about sources of information, the BLM office is considered to be the key source of information about the recreational opportunities available on public lands. There was particular mention of the website of the BLM-UFO as a growing source of information. There is some use of local network groups such as COPMOBA and local chambers of commerce as another source of information about the lands. More information could be made available on areas such as the North Delta OHV area. Noticeably absent from the comments on information source were traditional means of communication such as the media and BLM kiosks at the trailheads. While these are important sources of information for some, the BLM staff should concentrate their limited resources on more common sources of information such as their website.

Several suggestions were also offered regarding opportunities for partnerships with the BLM office. In addition to being important sources of information, groups such as COPMOBA and local area chambers of commerce seem to be a likely source for such partnerships as well. There was also some concern expressed about the seeming inability for the BLM and other local land agencies such as the USFS to get along and share the management of a landscape that is often unaware of the boundary. Suggestions for public involvement seemed to congregate around public meetings and surveys. There was also a useful suggestion at one of the meetings to push information out through social networking sites such as Facebook.

In general, the participants seemed to be reasonably pleased with the management of the land in the Uncompahgre Field Office. There were several concrete suggestions about what could be done to enhance the quality of the experience in special places. Participants seemed to believe that the BLM would come and listen to their concerns, and that this field office is already doing a great job at addressing many of these issues. The strong attendance and robust participation in the focus groups across the field office indicates that the public is willing to work with the UFO-BLM staff in the planning and management of public lands. The open nature of the focus groups helped to identify a number of areas that merit further consideration for

recreational planning. This dialogue is important to enhance the public's acceptance and support for future management decisions. With such open ended public input, the BLM managers are better able to understand the public's desires and are less likely to be able to "set the agenda" for what makes special places important. This seems to be in keeping with the spirit of such important laws as NEPA and FACA which grant priority to public input in the planning process. Future BLM planning actions should consider this model as a way to enhance public understanding of land management and to enhance the agencies understanding of public desires on public land.

Appendix 1.Focus Group Script

Script Outline for Recreational Focus Groups

Uncompahgre Field Office of Bureau of Land Management
Resource Management Plan Revision Process

Spring 2010

Facilitated by Tim Casey, PhD

Natural Resource and Land Policy Institute at Mesa State College

1. Introductions

Welcome, introduce process and all participants, discuss hospitality issues

“Good evening, my name is Tim Casey, I am a professor of Political Science at Mesa State College and the field coordinator for The Natural Resource and Land Policy Institute at Mesa State. We have been asked by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to help them understand the desires of the public for recreational management on particular areas in and around the Uncompahgre Field Office as they relate to public lands.

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office is currently undergoing a revision of their Resource Management Plan (RMP), this is the document the guides management decisions on approximately 675,677 acres of public lands around us for the next 20 years. The Planning Area is much of the Uncompahgre Field Office, but does not include the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, or the Dominguez-Escalante NCA. Your participation in this focus group is a critical part of this planning process. I want to thank you for your willingness to spend some time with us to better understand recreational desires as they relate to BLM public lands.

Your participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary, and you are welcome to leave at any point, or simply choose not to answer a question if you don't want to. Your answers to these questions will remain anonymous, but the responses in this focus group will be part of the public administrative record of the RMP process. I'm going to capture your concerns and desires on my presentation screen. I'm also tape recording this session so that I can go back and fill in the blanks on anything I miss. The entire focus group experience should take about an hour and a half, and there are some snacks in the back that you are welcome to go and get at anytime. Are there any questions so far?

The purpose of this meeting is to learn about your concerns and desires for recreation and tourism in the Uncompahgre Field Office, a map of these lands is on the wall behind me. This information is needed to help BLM and its collaborating partners responsively manage the area and provide services.”

I want you to feel free to express your views and not be threatened by anyone else in the room. Hitchhike on things others say if you want, but please don’t criticize what they say. To be fair to everyone, we need to stick to our meeting format and keep the discussion appropriately focused.

“Feel free to change your views, and don’t worry if what you have to say differs from what others are saying—even if you know they disagree. Our goal is to find out precisely what matters to each of you. So I will not allow you to interrupt others, or argue with their opinions. As the facilitator of this focus group, I’ll work hard to create and maintain an open and permissive environment, remain neutral ourselves, and give everyone an opportunity to be heard—all as time allows.”

To make sure we cover the same ground in each of these meetings, I will be following a consistent format between this meeting and the other 5 scheduled in the field office, you do not need to attend more than one. Please stay involved to the end. We hope to finish this meeting by 6:30 pm.

2. Special Places

A: Let’s begin by thinking about the places that are special to you around this area,

Question - What makes a place special?

B: Exercise - The participants will be invited to complete page 2 of hand out (see attached) and reminded that these will be collected at the end for a complete account of what is important to them, even if the place does not get mentioned in the group discussion. Nevertheless, we will be discussing several of their responses after they finish filling them out.

The text for the question on page 2 is as follows:

Please take a couple moments to think about a few areas or places on BLM managed public lands in the Uncompahgre Planning Area(highlighted on the attached map) that have special personal meaning and importance for you. Note that the planning area does not include the Gunnison Gorge NCA, or the Dominguez-Escalante NCA. For each of these places please do the following: 1)

circle it and number it on the attached map labeled “Special Places”; then in writing below 2) name and locate the place; 3) indicate the things you do when you visit there; and 4) indicate the reason that this place has special meaning for you.

C: Brainstorm – (interactive map on overhead projector)

Participants are asked to star their most important special place, then asked to share that location so it can be circled on the overhead map. Then the facilitator will ask how many others have that place on their list. The original participant who shared the location will then be asked to share their answers to the activity question and why it is special. The group will continue this process of naming, mapping and discussing additional “most important special places.”

3. Recreational Opportunities

A. Exercise – The participants will then be invited to complete page 4 of hand out and reminded that these will be collected at the end for a complete account of what is important to them, even if the place does not get mentioned in the group discussion. Nevertheless, we will be discussing several of their responses after they finish filling them out.

The text for the question on page 4 is as follows:

Please take a couple moments to think about a few areas or places on BLM managed public lands in the Uncompahgre Planning Area (highlighted on the attached map) that should be noted for their outstanding recreational opportunities. Note that the planning area does not include the Gunnison Gorge NCA, or the Dominguez-Escalante NCA. For each of these places please do the following: 1) circle it and number it on the attached map labeled “Recreational Opportunities”; then in writing below 2) name and locate the place; 3) indicate the recreational activities you do when you visit there; and 4) indicate the reason that this place is an outstanding recreational opportunity for that activity.

B. Brainstorm – (interactive map on overhead projector)

Participants are asked to star their most important recreation opportunity, then asked to share that location so it can be circled on the overhead map. The facilitator will then ask how many others have that place on their list. The original participant who shared the location will be asked to share their answers to the activity question and why it is a good place to do that activity. The group will

continue this process of naming, mapping and discussing additional most important recreational opportunities.

4. Management Actions

Now we will turn our attention to a number of questions that relate to how the BLM public lands are managed for recreation within the Uncompahgre Planning Area.

A. Question – What BLM management actions might enhance your special places or outstanding recreational opportunities?

B. Question - What BLM management action would diminish the specialness of your special place or the quality of your recreational opportunity?

C. Question (for Telluride and Naturita focus groups only): The San Miguel River Basin is already an Special Recreation Management Area, which means it has a special status for recreational planning. What do you like about how the SRMA is currently managed? What would you like to see changed?

D. Question: Where do you go for information about recreation on BLM land? What are the informal networks (groups) you are involved with that use BLM lands for recreation? Are there others we should be talking to about recreation on public lands who are not here today?

E. Question: What opportunities do you see for the public to participate with the BLM on recreational management of BLM lands in this field office? Are you interested in staying involved?

5. Other Comments

A. Question – Are there other comments you have related to the recreational planning process on BLM lands that we haven't covered that you wish to address?

B. Closing –

“We have come to the end of our evening together, and on behalf of the BLM and all of us at the Natural Resource and Land Policy Institute hear at Mesa State College, I want to thank you for your time, your attention, your responses and your thoughtfulness.

On the screen is all the information you need to contact us. We will conduct over a dozen of these focus groups and compile the results in a report that will become part of the administrative record for the BLM Uncompahgre Field Office Resource Management Plan Revision process. The results will help shape the alternatives offered in revision of the management plan.

When our report is available later in the Summer, we will e-mail you a link to it if you have left us an e-mail address on the sign in sheet.

Please visit the Uncompahgre planning web site for additional information on the RMP planning effort. Go to www.uformp.com; this address will immediately redirect you to the planning web site.

If you have any questions about these focus groups or the results, please feel free to contact us. Thank you again, good evening.

Appendix 2. Recreation Focus Group Presentation for UFO RMP planning area

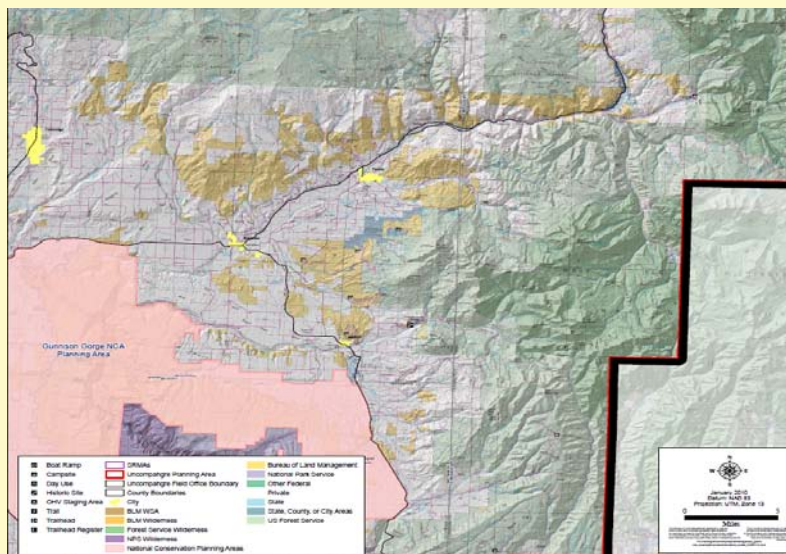


What makes a place on public lands a
“special place”?

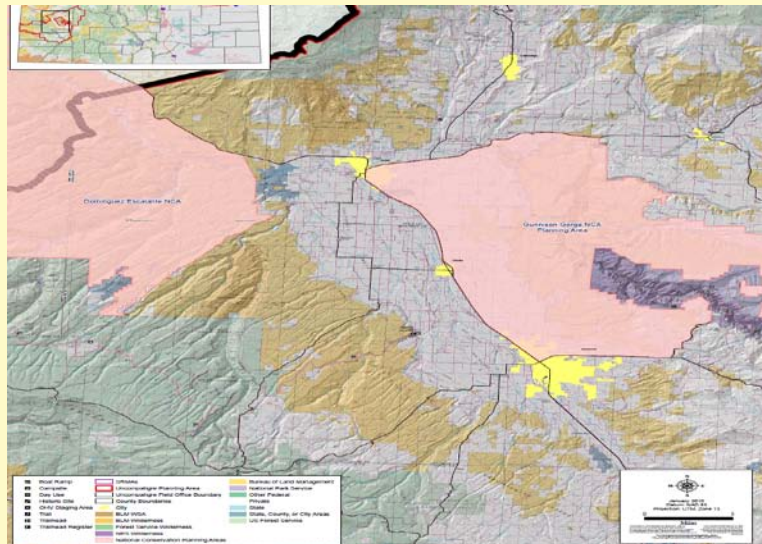
Where are the special places for you
on BLM lands in the planning area?



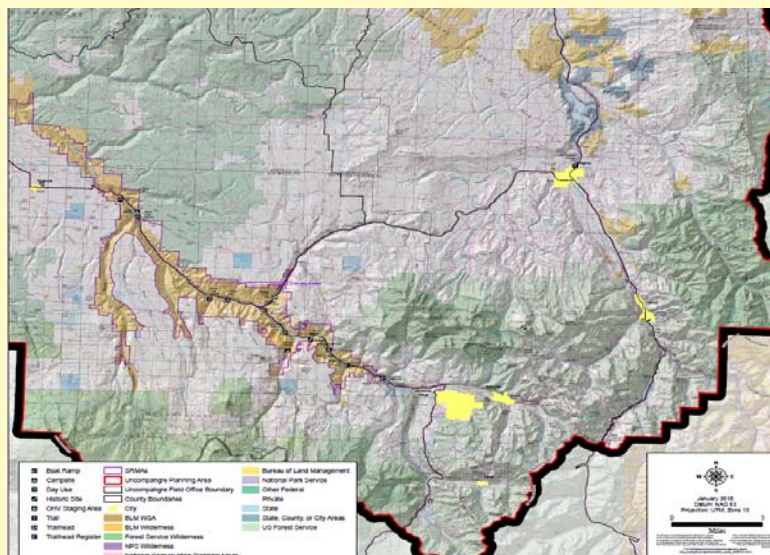
North Fork Valley Area



Delta Montrose Area



Southeast Area



West end

Special Places

| Number | Name | Actions | Qualities |
|--------|------|---------|-----------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

What are the places in the planning area with outstanding recreational opportunities?



Outstanding Recreational Opportunities

| Number | Name | Activity | Qualities |
|--------|------|----------|-----------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

What BLM management actions might **enhance** your special places or outstanding recreational opportunities?

What BLM management action would **diminish** the specialness of your special place or the quality of your recreational opportunity?

San Miguel River Basin SRMA



What do you **like** about the current management of the SRMA?

What ought to be **changed** regarding the management of the San Miguel River SRMA?

Services and Partnerships



Where do you go for information about
recreation on BLM land?

Opportunities for public participation
in planning?

Any other comments?

Thank you!



Appendix 3.Focus Group Meeting Notes

Bureau of Land Management

Delta – UFO

Administered by: Dr. Casey

Feb. 2, 2010

Start: 5 pm

Dr. Casey starts off meeting explaining why the BLM is interested in public opinion, also explains that the participation of these groups is voluntary and the participants are free to leave at any time.

Special Places:

Dr. Casey elaborates on what a “special place” is according to public lands.

What are special aspects?

- A. Getting away from populated areas, getting away from city life. Being alone.
- B. Away from the concrete and the noise. Trails, the different trails for different people. Few limits. There needs to be more differentiation on different types of recreation.

(The two debate on the differentiation of recreation.)

Dr. Casey intervenes, “Some people think these places are special because of the different recreations held on public lands.”

Dr. Casey asks the participants to point out the special places on a map provided.

Participants fill out handout on special places.

Question 2- Recreational Activities:

Dr. Casey shows participants examples of areas recreational activities occur. Also mentions trying to gather a broad view on how people are using the landscape.

Where are opportunities for recreational activities?

- A. The spring creek area, for motorcycling and the 7 miles of technical terrain, it is very challenging.
- B. Indian Ridge area, gold dredging, resources , gold and water
- C. Paradox valley, I take my motorcycle up there
- D. Lereaux creek (north of Hotchkiss, spelling?), fishing, hiking, atv-ing.

Dr. Casey- What are the outstanding recreational opportunities in these areas?

Dr. Casey has participants turn to the next page on the handout. Point out the types of recreation they enjoy doing in those areas and why

(Participant mentions that access plays a large role in recreation activity.)

- A. Cushton Mesa (Spelling?)

Management:

Dr. Casey explains the actions that the BLM may take to enhance public lands.

What BLM management actions might enhance these areas (special areas/recreational areas)?

- A. For motorcycle riders loops trails are much more enjoyable on mountain passes.
- B. (Agreed)
- C. Loop trails are enjoyable for horseback riding as well. Having some areas not motorized.
- D. Water and chopping for wildlife. Also they could add more maps to areas, for education and safety.
- E. If there is a way to maintain the management philosophy to not over restrict. I like that I can park wherever I want.

What BLM management might diminish those qualities?

- A. The restrictions on the wild and scenic areas.
- B. Closure of existing trails, it concentrates use.
- C. Too much emphasis on conservation. Needs to be more balance between enjoyment and conservation.
- D. If they allow over use of these landscapes it takes away from the natural beauty of the ecosystems.

The San Miguel River Basin is already a Special Recreation Management Area, which means it has a special status for recreational planning.

What do you like about how the SRMA is currently managed?

- A. It is quiet
- B. They haven't closed the roads yet.
- C. The campgrounds.
(Dr. Casey explains the map.)
- D. I like the river access.

What do you think should be changed in this area?

- A. There is a cabin there they should get rid of.
- B. Better marks of the trails.

Where do you go for information on recreation of BLM land?

- A. A coffee shop
- B. The BLM sites, they have really nice maps outside of the trails, I downloaded them.
- C. I used to be able to get the maps from the forest service but they don't have those anymore.

Dr. Casey asks as people are leaving to point out people who should be involved in this process, those who really participate in outdoor activities, and shape community opinions.

What do you see as the opportunity for the public to participate and form partnerships with the BLM?

- A. Public lands, working together with the public lands.
- B. Quarterly meetings.
- C. There are a bunch of special interest groups in this area that are eager to get input and public support.
- D. There are clubs that take the management responsibility out of the BLM's hands.

Dr. Casey concludes the meeting by thanking all the participants and giving them contact info if they have any questions.

**Bureau of Land Management
Paonia-UFO
February 3, 2010
Administered by Dr. Casey**

Start: Noon

Dr. Casey starts off meeting explaining why the BLM is interested in public opinion, also explains that the participation of these groups is voluntary and the participants are free to leave at any time.

Special Places:

Dr. Casey elaborates on what a "special place" is according to public lands.

What are special aspects?

- A. Solitude.
- B. Convenience.
- C. Natural barriers, natural sounds.
- D. Wildlife.
- E. Multiple use.
- F. Access to placer mining in the rivers.
- G. Natural view shed.
- H. Lack of restrictions
- I. Quiet, protection.
- J. Proper travel management.

Where are these special places on BLM lands?

- A. All the land.
- B. The North Delta OHV area, it's accessible, family friendly, quality for solitude and convenient.
- C. East of Paonia.
- D. Area over by Norwood.

The topic turns to what do people like to do in these areas:

- Trail running
- Dog running
- Hunting, fishing

Dr. Casey asks the participants to point out the special places on a map provided.
Participants fill out handout on special places.

Question 2- Recreational Activities:

Dr. Casey shows participants examples of areas recreational activities occur. Also mentions trying to gather a broad view on how people are using the landscape.

Where are opportunities for outstanding recreational activities?

- A. Outstanding hunting and OHV areas.

Management:

Dr. Casey explains the actions that the BLM may take to enhance public lands.

What BLM management actions might enhance these areas (special areas/recreational areas)?

- A. Continuing management as multiple use areas.
- B. Keeping the access on public lands, and not restricted with the private property.
- C. I think that there needs to be more individual responsibility.

What BLM management might diminish those qualities?

- A. Seasonal closures.
- B. Closing to some groups and not others.
- C. Closing cultural sites.

The San Miguel River Basin is already a Special Recreation Management Area, which means it has a special status for recreational planning.

What do you like about how the SRMA is currently managed?

- A. Concentrating on the camping areas allows other areas to keep the wildlife and improves access.

What do you think should be changed in this area?

- A. The landscape becomes overwhelmed with travel.

Where do you go for information on recreation of BLM land?

- A. Private businesses.
- B. We found some information in an office in Craig, CO.
- C. If organizations worked more closely together information could get around more easily.
- D. The internet, the BLM website.

Dr. Casey asks as people are leaving to point out people or groups who should be involved in this process, those who really participate in outdoor activities, and shape community opinions.

What do you see as the opportunity for the public to participate and form partnerships with the BLM?

- A. Partnerships with land owners.
- B. Team up with people who want to clean up the countryside, or expand on groups who are already doing that.
- C. Work with people with common problems and find common solutions.

Dr. Casey concludes the meeting by thanking all the participants and giving them contact info if they have any questions.

**Bureau of Land Management
Montrose-UFO
February 3, 2010
Administered by Dr. Casey**

Due to recording equipment failure, this meeting was only recorded for 21 minutes

Start: 5 pm

Dr. Casey starts off meeting explaining why the BLM is interested in public opinion, also explains that the participation of these groups is voluntary and the participants are free to leave at any time.

What qualities make a place special on public lands?

- A. Access
- B. Clean and natural, lots of forest life.
- C. Any place I can drown a worm. A trail system.
- D. Getting away from other people, quiet, solitude, a natural setting.
- E. I would say a place that is more special is one that is not readily accessible. The working to get there makes it rewarding. The experience of discovery. The richness of unusual numbers of plants and wildlife.

Where are those special places to you?

** The recording ends.

**Bureau of Land Management
Ridgway-UFO
February 9, 2010
Administered by Dr. Casey**

Start: 5 pm

Dr. Casey starts off meeting explaining why the BLM is interested in public opinion, also explains that the participation of these groups is voluntary and the participants are free to leave at any time.

Special Places:

Dr. Casey elaborates on what a “special place” is according to public lands.

What are special aspects?

- A. Wildlife
- B. Scenery, the large mountains, the hiking.
- C. The places that you can hear the natural sounds.
- D. The solitude and feeling of public ownership and the quiet.
- E. The rivers and water.
- F. Access.

(Dr. Casey addresses people who came in late, and filled them in on the handout).

Where are these special places on BLM lands?

- A. Softhead
- B. The BLM land across from the reservoir.
- C. Owl Creek pass
- D. The archeological sites.

Dr. Casey asks the participants to point out the special places on a map provided.
Participants fill out handout on special places.

Question 2- Recreational Activities:

Dr. Casey shows participants examples of areas recreational activities occur. Also mentions trying to gather a broad view on how people are using the landscape.

Where are opportunities for outstanding recreational activities?

- A. Scenic drives
- B. Historic mines, the discovery historic areas.
- C. The river corridor

Management:

Dr. Casey explains the actions that the BLM may take to enhance public lands.

What BLM management actions might enhance these areas (special areas/recreational areas)?

- A. Clear boundaries, the clarification of the use of areas.
- B. Some areas that are non motorized, keeping them that way
- C. The areas of quiet use
- D. The areas of ecological sound-scapes, the BLM is paying attention to it, and I like it.
- E. The economic value of having these public lands, it brings more to towns than the BLM thinks.
- F. Looking at certain activities that are a better use of particular lands than others.

What BLM management might diminish those qualities?

- A. Having areas of quiet use be interrupted.
- B. Diminishing the quality if there is a lack of monitoring and management of land.
- C. A lack of management of water and other sensitive areas.

The San Miguel River Basin is already a Special Recreation Management Area, which means it has a special status for recreational planning.

(Over half of the focus group uses SRMA land.)

What do you like about how the SRMA is currently managed?

- A. The camping access along the corridor.
- B. The improvements with the nature conservation, the fishing access.

What do you think should be changed in this area?

- A. Things are stuck management wise, listening more to the local public on management issues.
- B. Oil and gas lease every quarter.
- C. The BLM needs to wake up to the fact that the country is in a recession, they need to help the economy, there are opportunities to help.

Dr. Casey asks as people are leaving to point out people or groups who should be involved in this process, those who really participate in outdoor activities, and shape community opinions.

Where do you go for information on recreation of BLM land?

- A. Local, regional shops, outfitters, outdoors store.
- B. Using the internet, the BLM and outfitter websites.
- C. Going to the senior citizens that have been living here for a long time.

What do you see as the opportunity for the public to participate and form partnerships with the BLM?

- A. The nature conservations.
- B. Interagency cooperation and cooperation between the two BLM field offices.
- C. Develop some method to interact with user groups.
- D. Getting more involved with the community.

Dr. Casey concludes the meeting by thanking all the participants and giving them contact info if they have any questions.

**Bureau of Land Management
Telluride-UFO
February 10, 2010
Administered by Dr. Casey**

Start: Noon

Dr. Casey starts off meeting explaining why the BLM is interested in public opinion, also explains that the participation of these groups is voluntary and the participants are free to leave at any time.

Special Places:

Dr. Casey elaborates on what a “special place” is according to public lands.

What are special aspects?

- A. Wild and undeveloped places
- B. Places that I attended earlier, that held important events.
- C. Wildlife, scenic views, the challenging terrain, the river.
- D. The recreation, natural sounds.
- E. The opportunities to develop.
- F. Openness to public, remoteness, accessibility.

Where are these special places on BLM lands?

- A. This very large canyon on the San Miguel, it is not developed, beautiful wildlife, geology is incredible, virtually no development, there are some hunters.
- B. Beaver Creek.
- C. Dolores River, Gunnison River.
- D. Cerdax (spelling) valley

Dr. Casey asks the participants to point out the special places on a map provided.
Participants fill out handout on special places.

Question 2- Recreational Activities:

Dr. Casey shows participants examples of areas recreational activities occur. Also mentions trying to gather a broad view on how people are using the landscape.

Where are opportunities for outstanding recreational activities, and what qualities does it possess?

- A. San Miguel, hiking, fishing, rafting
- B. South creek, hiking, biking, camping, climbing, wild life.
- C. Unaweep, climbing, the access is difficult, the camping is good.

Management:

Dr. Casey explains the actions that the BLM may take to enhance public lands.

What BLM management actions might enhance these areas (special areas/recreational areas)?

- A. The BLM can help support an RICD.
- B. Access.
- C. Preserving wildlife habitat.
- D. Withdrawal all mineral development from BLM lands, maintain grazing in and around canyon.
- E. Regulate designated trails more.

What BLM management might diminish those qualities?

(Ran short on time to elaborate on this question, Dr. Casey jumps ahead to the next question).

The San Miguel River Basin is already a Special Recreation Management Area, which means it has a special status for recreational planning.

What do you like about how the SRMA is currently managed?

- A. There has been infrastructure enhancement over the past 10 years that I have enjoyed.
- B. Adequately addressed the needs that are there as far as boat ramps, but there is a need for more.
- C. Norwood canyon should remain undeveloped.
- D. Just because it is good now does not mean we need to really add any more.

What do you think should be changed in this area?

- A. The maps are labeled with possible development areas, which should change.
- B. Initially the development helped the local economies but lately applications that are submitted are getting rejected, also addressing issues of operations with regional proximity.

Dr. Casey asks as people are leaving to point out people or groups who should be involved in this process, those who really participate in outdoor activities, and shape community opinions.

Where do you go for information on recreation of BLM land?

- A. The website, the BLM site and some other outdoor websites.
- B. Local press, flyers and advertisement.
- C. The local media can help push this information.

What do you see as the opportunity for the public to participate and form partnerships with the BLM? (In both the planning and management process).

- A. More communication with the county and HOA with the use of private land, also the use of forest land, appropriately thinning the forest.
- B. Coordinate efforts within organizations.

Dr. Casey concludes the meeting by thanking all the participants and giving them contact info if they have any questions.

**Bureau of Land Management
Naturita-UFO
February 10, 2010
Administered by Dr. Casey**

Start: 5 pm

Dr. Casey starts off meeting explaining why the BLM is interested in public opinion, also explains that the participation of these groups is voluntary and the participants are free to leave at any time.

There is a discussion on what exactly recreation is, and how it is different from person to person.

What are the qualities of public lands that make them a special place to you?

- A. Access.
- B. No trash in area.
- C. A comfortable place to go fishing.
- D. Privacy.
- E. Multiple uses including grazing, timber, and any multiple uses that's out there.

Dr. Casey gives participants time to write on handouts, identifying their special places on maps.

Where are these special places?

- A. A section on the San Miguel river that is special (specified on map), there are no roads, it's very remote, a challenging area.
- B. Paradox trail, very rugged trail, a challenge for mountain biking. I have seen some four wheelers on this trail too though.
- C. One of the beauties of living in the west is the whole area is remote, I could not designate an area because it is just a pointer for people, then it isn't remote anymore. Also it calls for regulation and then limitations are set in place.
- D. The designated rock crawling areas.

Where are the areas for recreational opportunities?

- A. Paradox
- **Ran out of time for these questions. Dr. Casey moves on to the Management portion of the meeting.

What BLM management actions might enhance these areas (special areas/recreational areas)?

- A. Keeping roads open.
- B. Portable toilets put into place.
- C. Keeping the public involved.

What BLM management might diminish those qualities?

- A. Over publicizing areas.
- B. Restrictions in and on certain areas.
- C. Closed roads and limited access.
- D. The lack of interaction between different user groups.

The San Miguel River Basin is already a Special Recreation Management Area, which means it has a special status for recreational planning.

What do you like about how the SRMA is currently managed?

- A. I like that there are no fences, or toilets, that everything is how it's supposed to be. That it is a real wilderness experience.
- B. The sunbathers.
- C. I like how the different user groups interact well with others, it's very friendly and balanced.

What do you think should be changed in this area?

- A. The roads to campgrounds need to be maintained.
- B. More fishing areas.

Where do you go for information on recreation of BLM land?

- A. I go to the county.
- B. Word of mouth, it gets around.
- C. Websites, the BLM websites

Dr. Casey asks as people are leaving to point out people or groups who should be involved in this process, those who really participate in outdoor activities, and shape community opinions.

What do you see as the opportunity for the public to participate and form partnerships with the BLM?

- A. Direct input in certain areas.
- B. I don't think I would want to be involved with managing the lands. I am not law enforcement.

Dr. Casey: Let's take a step back and define what management is.

He gives example of trash and road maintenance.

- C. Ongoing contact.

Dr. Casey concludes the meeting by thanking all the participants and giving them contact info if they have any questions.

Appendix 4. Advertisement/Invitation to Meetings



United States Department of the Interior BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT Uncompahgre Planning Field Office Notice of Recreational Planning Meetings

Facilitated by Natural Resource and Land Policy Institute at Mesa State College

The revision process of the Resource Management Plan for the BLM - Uncompahgre Field Office⁴ requires and encourages a variety of opportunities for public input into the planning process. One such opportunity is a series of community based focus groups designed to better understand the public's desires for recreational planning across the entire field office. These focus groups provide the public with an opportunity to tell the BLM what recreational places, activities and outcomes are important to you and why they are important. The staff at the Natural Resource and Land Policy Institute of Mesa State College have been contracted to facilitate these conversations. The meetings will last approximately 90 minutes. They have been scheduled in multiple locations and varying times to make it more convenient for the public to participate. Choose the time and location that works best for you. The format in each location will be the same and cover the entire planning area so you only need to attend one. For more information contact Tim Casey with Mesa State College at nrlpi@mesastate.edu or (970) 248-1095.

| Date | Community Location | Time | Meeting Location |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Tues. 2/2/2010 | Delta | 5-6:30 pm | Technical College Grand Mesa Room |
| Wed. 2/3/2010 | Paonia | Noon – 1:30 pm | Community Center |
| Wed. 2/3/2010 | Montrose | 5-6:30 pm | Chamber of Commerce |
| Tues. 2/9/2010 | Naturita | 5-6:30 pm | Community Room |
| Wed. 2/10/2010 | Telluride | Noon – 1:30 pm | Community Room "Old Library" |
| Wed. 2/10/2010 | Ridgeway | 5-6:30 pm | Community Center |

⁴ Note: the planning area of these focus groups does not include BLM managed lands in either the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, or the Dominguez-Escalante NCA which have a separate planning process.



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