

**NWCOS Areas of Special Designation and Lands with
Wilderness Characteristics Subcommittee March 10, 2005
Meeting Summary**

Attending

Steve Bonowski, Vanessa Cameron, Jeremy Casterson, Jeff Comstock, T. Wright Dickinson, Stephen Flaherty, Tom Gray, Fred Julander, Wes McStay, Reed Morris, Ann Oliver, Brad Petch, Marianna Raftopoulos, Luke Schafer, Rob Schmitzer, Jane Yazzie, Kristi Parker Celico, and Heather Bergman.

Action Items

1. NWCOS members are encouraged to provide input to Rob Schmitzer (and copy Helen Littrell) regarding three items:
 - Words of concern on page 9 of the “BLM Input on Goals and Objectives and Alternatives Shell” document, which is available at <http://www.nwcoss.org/79505/44463.html>. Particular issues of concern include:
 - lack of mention of valid existing rights
 - lack of mention of if/how BLM might assess the continued suitability of existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)
 - lack of mention of if/how BLM might keep existing ACECs from being automatically deleted
 - lack of mention of the socioeconomic impacts of special designations
 - Comments on Vanessa’s document on partnering to enhance wildlife experiences, which can be found at <http://www.nwcoss.org/79505/index.html> (at the bottom of the page).
 - Creative ideas regarding alternatives, either along the lines of Vanessa’s approach or more specific to the alternatives framework, if possible. Please do not resend your scoping comments unless they are specifically formatted in terms of alternatives.

Prior to providing input, please share your ideas with someone from a different interest to help work out some of the kinks. Get them to Rob at rob_schmitzer@blm.gov and Helen at hlittrell@keystone.org by **April 8** so that he has time to try to incorporate them. Please inform Helen if you do not want your comments posted on the NWCOS website.

2. Several participants committed to contacting individuals or interests who are not currently represented on the subcommittee and invite/encourage them to come to future meetings. Those participants and the folks they agreed to contact are:
 - Kristi Parker Celico: someone from Off-Highway Vehicles sector
 - Kristi Parker Celico: Beverly Rave, State Land Board
 - Luke Schafer: someone from Wild Horses sector
 - Reed Morris: someone from river runner sector
 - Tom Gray: Daryl, BOCC member (land owners)
 - Jane Yazzie: someone from archaeology sector
 - Ann Oliver: someone from the Endangered Fish Recovery Program
 - Ann Oliver: someone from the Colorado Native Plant Society

3. The Keystone Center will create a listserv for the subcommittee that members can use to share information and ideas. (Facilitator's Note: Keystone has created this listserv. The email address is NWCOSspecdesigsubcom@keystone.org. Anyone on this list (which is everyone on the subcommittee) can send email to the list, and any email sent to this address will be received by everyone on the subcommittee. When using the listserv, please remember that "Reply to All" is a great tool if everyone is interested in or will benefit from your reply to a message on the listserv. However, if your comment is only relevant to a small number of people, please do not "Reply to All" as this just fills up inboxes unnecessarily.)
4. Jeff Comstock agreed to be responsible for recording future subcommittee meetings and making tapes available as a resource for anyone interested in listening to them.
5. Several participants agreed to provide maps they have regarding resources and use in the Resource Area. The following people will provide maps and descriptions of what they show to Kristi as soon as possible for posting on the NWCOS website: Ann Oliver (species maps), Reed Morris (Citizens' Wilderness Proposal maps), Brad Petch (species maps), and Rob Schmitzer (BLM maps). Ann Oliver will work with Rob and Jeremy to help develop maps that will be the most helpful to NWCOS in tracking overlapping interests. Anyone else with relevant data or maps is encouraged to do the same.
6. Rob Schmitzer committed to bringing the alternative shell to the next subcommittee meeting. BLM expects to have this document completed by the end of the first week in April and anticipates having it available for discussion at the next meeting.
7. Reed will send to the listserv data on the Citizens' Wilderness Proposal (CWP) lands and how much land they would protect in addition to what is already protected.
8. Rob and Jeremy will try to get BLM's Wild and Scenic Rivers specialist to come to the next subcommittee meeting.
9. Kristi and Jeremy agreed to provide the group with a summary of the terms and acronyms related to this topic. [Facilitator's Note: Please find a preliminary list of terms and definitions on the last page of this summary.]
10. Vanessa, Steve Bonowski, and Reed agreed to discuss their respective concerns regarding ACECs.
11. Brad agreed to look into transboundary species management issues and report back to the group.
12. Ann agreed to contact the Heritage Program for information about the state of the plant community in the Little Snake Resource Area (LSRA). She will report back to the subcommittee.
13. Please get comments on this summary to Kristi by Wednesday, April 13th at kpark@keystone.org or (970) 513-5848. If no comments are received, this document will

become final on April 14th. If comments are received, they will be incorporated into a final document that will be made available as soon as possible after receipt of comments.

Items from the Meeting Agenda (each is discussed below)

1. Make-up of Subcommittee
2. Overview and Goals of Subcommittee
3. Proposed Subcommittee Process
4. Goals and Objectives for Areas of Special Designation and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the Resource Management Plan (RMP)
5. Alternatives

Make-up of Subcommittee

Regarding membership, the subcommittee observed that several key interests were missing from the table, and certain members agreed to contact representatives of those interests. For specific assignments, see Action Item #2 above.

[Facilitator’s Note: Two agenda items—“Overview and Goals of Subcommittee” and “Proposed Subcommittee Process”—had been addressed during the Energy and Minerals Subcommittee meeting that was held immediately prior to this meeting. As there were no new members to the second meeting, the group agreed to accept the decisions on goals and process that had been made during the Energy and Minerals Subcommittee meeting. These decisions are reproduced below for the reader’s convenience.]

Overview and Goals of Subcommittee

The subcommittee agreed with the following goals (which were listed in the meeting agenda):

- ♦ Develop goals and objectives for resource
- ♦ Develop alternatives for analysis, including where resource uses (and the subcommittees that deal with them) overlap
- ♦ Comment on how alternatives should be analyzed, if above and beyond BLM’s process
- ♦ Comment on implementation issues that are critical to any alternatives (e.g., monitoring funds for any adaptive management options)
- ♦ Take periodic field trips to resource first-hand

Proposed Subcommittee Process

On the agenda for this meeting were three proposals regarding subcommittee procedures. These three proposals and the action the subcommittee took on them are:

- ♦ Subcommittees are not decision-makers. Subcommittees make recommendations to NWCOS, and NWCOS makes recommendations to BLM.
Action taken: The subcommittee agreed.
- ♦ Subcommittee membership will be open, but new members will be obligated to read past information and comply with NWCOS protocols.
Action taken: The subcommittee agreed.
- ♦ Subcommittees aim for consensus, though recommendations with at least 90% support will be carried to NWCOS along with the pros and cons of both the majority and minority positions.

Action taken: After some discussion, the subcommittee decided that setting a percentage minimum for agreement at this point in time was unnecessary. The subcommittee will aim for consensus and address the issue of what percentage agreement will be required on a case-by-case basis.

The subcommittee also agreed that minutes will reflect action items, decisions taken, and major themes of discussion, as well as particular areas of concerns or issues that arise.

It was suggested that it is often difficult to understand or remember what people said in a meeting based on minutes and memory alone, so the subcommittee decided that a tape recorder will be used at future meetings as a means of keeping a more accurate record. Jeff Comstock agreed to provide a recorder and make tapes available to interested NWCOS members.

Discussion of Goals and Objectives for Areas of Special Designation and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the Resource Management Plan

BLM provided two working documents for discussion by the subcommittee, both of which are available on the NWCOS website at <http://www.nwcoss.org/79505/44463.html> or from Jeremy Casterson at jeremy_casterson@blm.gov or (970) 826-5071. These two documents are:

- “Resource Topics and Associated Planning Information,” in which BLM has summarized for each resource existing agency guidance, the objectives from the 1989 Resource Management Plan (RMP), the management opportunities identified in the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), and the pre-plan questions that BLM has identified and will address in the RMP. Jeremy Casterson of BLM discussed this document.
- “BLM Input on Goals and Objectives and Alternatives Shell,” in which BLM has written its draft overall goals and objectives for the new RMP and its draft goals and objectives for each resource in the Planning Area. Fred Conrath of BLM discussed this document. It was noted that several common themes to goals and objectives for all resources were not listed for each resource and will be addressed in an overarching paragraph at the beginning of the RMP. These overarching items include all goals and objectives being subject to multiple use.

During the discussion of BLM’s draft goals and objectives, several members of the subcommittee had questions or concerns about the way that some of the goals and objectives were articulated by BLM. All of the specific issues that the group mentioned refer to page 9 of the document “BLM Input on Goals and Objectives and Alternatives Shell.” These issues are:

- lack of mention of valid existing rights
- lack of mention of if/how BLM might assess the continued suitability of existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)
- lack of mention of if/how BLM might keep existing ACECs from being automatically deleted
- lack of mention of the socioeconomic impacts of special designations

Some participants raised concerns about the confusion surrounding many of the terms and acronyms used in this discussion. Kristi and Jeremy agreed to provide the group with a summary of this information. [Facilitator’s Note: A preliminary list of terms is provided at the end of this meeting summary.]

Discussion of Alternatives Affecting Areas of Special Designation and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the Resource Management Plan

Rob discussed some of his initial thoughts on what some of BLM's alternatives might look like. (Please bear in mind that these are just preliminary thoughts and are in no way a BLM draft or any sort of BLM position.) The possible alternatives regarding areas of special designation and lands with wilderness characteristics that Rob mentioned were:

- No action alternative
 - Because the current RMP allows leasing in Vermilion Basin (it was administratively removed without an amendment to the RMP), the no action alternative will reflect this
- “Productive” alternative
 - could be no special designations, including no ACECs
 - could decrease use of lease stipulations
 - could open whole Resource Area to leasing
- “Protective” alternative
 - could extend protection to all of the lands in the Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal (CWP) by greatly restricting use, though these lands cannot be made into Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)
 - could create additional ACECs, expand existing ACECs
 - could restrict leasing in Vermilion Basin or have no leasing at all
 - could close CWPs and ACECs to motorized vehicles and/or other uses

Regarding the CWP lands, Rob noted that under current direction, BLM cannot expand existing WSAs, cannot decrease their size or eliminate them, and cannot create new ones. BLM only has latitude with regard to how to manage lands now and in the future if any WSAs are released.

Regarding ACECs, Rob noted that BLM could eliminate or change existing ACECs or create new ones. BLM has received two ACEC proposals to date: one from the Center for Native Ecosystems to protect prairie dogs and one from the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance for an area in Routt County that is sage grouse habitat. BLM has no deadline for accepting ACEC nominations, though eventually there will be a deadline so that BLM can begin analysis. BLM can also nominate its own ACECs. Jeremy said that just because an ACEC nomination is found relevant, this only means that it will be included in one alternative and not that it will definitely become an ACEC. Some concerns were expressed about ACECs being too broad and covering too much area.

Wild and Scenic River designation was discussed. Rob noted that it does not affect private land and only protects public land ¼ mile from river. Stream segments can be proposed directly to Congress for designation. To help clarify some of these issues, Rob and Jeremy will try to get BLM's Wild and Scenic Rivers specialist to come to the next subcommittee meeting.

A subcommittee member noted that there is a lack of awareness about the impact of full oil and gas development. Jeremy responded that the Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD) study will forecast the anticipated maximum development of oil and gas resources and the surface impacts associated with that development. BLM expects to have the RFD completed by the end

of March; it will be a public document. There is also the 1991 oil and gas amendment to the 1989 RMP, which is available on the web at <http://www.co.blm.gov/nepa/rmpdocs/lsfodocs/lsfopa.htm>.

Many subcommittee members expressed an interest in adaptive management. Some wanted to see it play an integral part of the generation of alternatives. Others noted that adaptive management may not be appropriate for all areas.

It was asserted that the group needs to acknowledge and pursue ways that multiple uses can exist on the same tracts of land, though some participants stated a belief that multiple use will not work in all areas.

The group discussed at length the relative merits of ACECs and leasing stipulations for protecting fragile resources. Some folks expressed a preference for ACECs because stipulations can be waived or changed, and they may not work. Others preferred stipulations because they are specific to a particular area, are more flexible, and only impact leased areas. It was added that ACECs don't dictate development; an ACEC is not the same as closing the door to drilling completely. Oil and gas can be allowed in ACECs. It was also added that the RMP is not the last stop for environmental protections, as every Application for Permit to Drill (APD) involves an on-site visit with industry and BLM staff and Plans of Development (PoDs) require further analysis. On-site decisions can be made about ways to protect fragile resources.

It was suggested that the group start identifying which areas have special value so that everyone can have a better understanding of what's out there, what's already protected, etc. To start addressing this need, several participants agreed to share the data and maps that they have at their disposal at the next meeting (see Action Item #5 for details). Ann Oliver will work with Rob and Jeremy to help develop maps that will be the most helpful to NWCOS in tracking overlapping interests.

It was suggested that NWCOS look into getting funding for monitoring and collaborative projects from outside sources, including the Colorado congressional delegation. The group agreed that there is some potential for getting more money for NWCOS efforts.

Participants were encouraged to create their own ideas for creative ways that special and/or fragile resources can be maintained while other uses are also allowed. An example of this kind of thinking is available on the NWCOS website at <http://www.nwcoss.org/79505/index.html>. Please share your ideas with one or more participants from another interest or sector in order to work through any major causes of concern prior to sending your suggestions to BLM. This will make Rob's efforts to incorporate your ideas go more smoothly. Vetted ideas should be sent to Rob at rob_schmitzer@blm.gov and copied to Helen at hlittrell@keystone.org. The Keystone Center will create a listserv for the subcommittee that members can use to share information and ideas. [This listserv has been created. See Action Item #3, above.] Members are encouraged to use this listserv as well as meetings as forums for bringing ideas to the attention of the subcommittee whenever they see fit. All ideas sent to the listserv will be posted on the NWCOS website; please notify Helen if you do not want your ideas posted.

Next Meeting / Next Steps

Facilitator's Note: The subcommittee meeting scheduled for April 7 has been cancelled because BLM has not completed the alternative shell. This meeting has been rescheduled for April 20 from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., at the BLM office in Craig (455 Emerson). This meeting will focus on discussion of BLM's alternative shell for areas of special designation and lands with wilderness characteristics.

The subcommittee agreed to tend to several tasks before the next meeting. These are specified in the Action Items at the beginning of this meeting summary.

Except where noted otherwise, these terms come from BLM's Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) for the Little Snake Resource Area. This document is available online at <http://www.co.blm.gov/lra/rmp/documents/LittleSnakeAMS.1-3-05.pdf>. These definitions are found in section 8-1.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Areas within the public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards (from H-6310-1, Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures).

Citizens' Wilderness Proposal (CWP). Areas identified by the public as having wilderness character. This is not a BLM designation. There is more information on the CWP on the website of the Colorado Environmental Coalition at <http://www.ourcolorado.org/wilderness/cwp.htm>.

Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). Areas in which significant recreation opportunities and problems are limited and explicit recreation management is not required. Minimal management actions related to the Bureau's stewardship responsibilities are adequate in these areas.

Herd Management Area (HMA). Public land under the jurisdiction of the BLM that has been designated for special management emphasizing the maintenance of an established wild horse or burro herd.

Lease. Section 302 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) provides the BLM's authority to issue leases for the use, occupancy, and development of the public lands. Leases are issued for purposes such as a commercial filming, advertising displays, commercial or noncommercial croplands, apiaries, livestock holding or feeding areas not related to grazing permits and leases, harvesting of native or introduced species, temporary or permanent facilities for commercial purposes (does not include mining claims), residential occupancy, ski resorts, construction equipment storage sites, assembly yards, oil rig stacking sites, mining claim occupancy if the residential structures are not incidental to the mining operation, and water pipelines and well pumps related to irrigation and non-irrigation facilities. The regulations establishing procedures for the processing of these leases and permits are found in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 2920.

National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. A system of nationally designated rivers and their immediate environments that have outstanding scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, and other similar values and are preserved in a free-flowing condition. The system consists of three types of streams: (1) recreation—rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad and that may have some development along their shorelines and may have undergone some impoundments or diversion in the past, (2) scenic—rivers or sections of rivers free of impoundments with shorelines or watersheds still largely undeveloped but accessible in places by roads, and (3) wild—rivers or sections of rivers free of impoundments

and generally inaccessible except by trails, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. **Outstandingly Remarkable Values.** Values among those listed in Section 1(b) of the Act: "scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, historical, cultural, or other similar values...." Other similar values which may be considered include ecological, biological or botanical, paleontological, hydrological, scientific or research values (from M-8351, BLM WSR Policy and Program). **Wild and Scenic Study River.** Rivers identified in Section 5 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for study as potential additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The rivers shall be studied under the provisions of Section 4 of the Act (from M-8351, BLM WSR Policy and Program).

Special recreation management area (SRMA). A public lands unit identified in land use plans to direct recreation funding and personnel to fulfill commitments made to provide specific, structured recreation opportunities (i.e., activity, experience, and benefit opportunities). The BLM recognizes three distinct types of SRMAs: community-based; intensive; and undeveloped big open. (from H-1601-1, BLM Land Use Planning Handbook).

Visual Resource Management (VRM) Classes. Visual resource management classes define the degree of acceptable visual change within a characteristic landscape. A class is based on the physical and sociological characteristics of any given homogeneous area and serves as a management objective. Categories assigned to public lands based on scenic quality, sensitivity level, and distance zones. Each class has an objective which prescribes the amount of change allowed in the characteristic landscape. (from H-1601-1, BLM Land Use Planning Handbook).

The four classes are described below:

- **VRM Class I** provides for natural ecological changes only. This class includes primitive areas, some natural areas, some wild and scenic rivers, and other similar areas where landscape modification activities should be restricted.
- **VRM Class II** areas are those areas where changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, or texture) caused by management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape.
- **VRM Class III** includes areas where changes in the basic elements (form, line, color, or texture) caused by a management activity may be evident in the characteristic landscape. However, the changes should remain subordinate to the visual strength of the existing character.
- **VRM Class IV** applies to areas where changes may subordinate the original composition and character; however, they should reflect what could be a natural occurrence within the characteristic landscape.

Wilderness. A congressionally designated area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, that is protected and managed to preserve its natural conditions and that (1) generally appears to have been affected mainly by the forces of nature, with human imprints substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least 5,000 acres or is large enough to make practical its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historic value. The definition contained in Section 2(c) of the

Wilderness Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 891) (from H-6310-1, Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures).

Wilderness Characteristics. Wilderness characteristics include size, the appearance of naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. They may also include ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. However Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 has been updated by IM-2003-195, dated June 20, 2003. Indicators of an area's naturalness include the extent of landscape modifications; the presence of native vegetation communities; and the connectivity of habitats. Outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined types of recreation may be experienced when the sights, sounds, and evidence of other people are rare or infrequent, in locations where visitors can be isolated, alone or secluded from others, where the use of the area is through non-motorized, non-mechanical means, and where no or minimal developed recreation facilities are encountered.

Wilderness Study Area (WSA). A designation made through the land use planning process of a roadless area found to have wilderness characteristics as described in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (from H-6310-1, Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures).