

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Dallas Creek Eastside Trails Project Final Environmental Assessment

**Western Colorado Area Office
Upper Colorado Region**



August 2013

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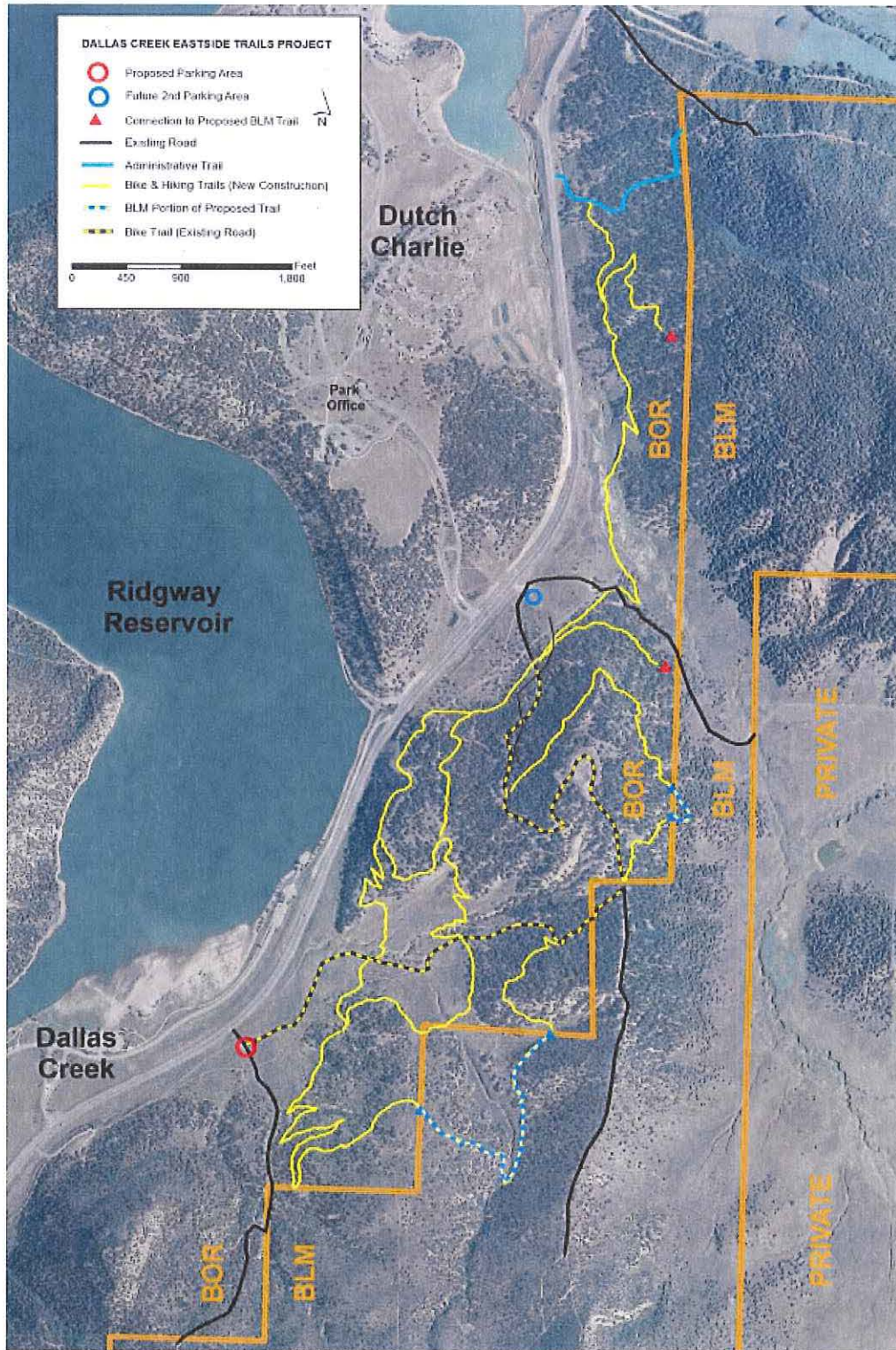


Figure 1 Project Area and Proposed Action

CHAPTER 1-- INTRODUCTION

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to develop five miles of pedestrian and bike trails on the east side of Highway 550 at Ridgway State Park. The new trails would be located on Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) land managed by Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) as Ridgway State Park (RSP) in Ouray County. There are no authorized bike trails in this area and bikes are currently limited to existing designated park roads. The new trails would also compliment an adjacent Bureau of Land Management (BLM) project, with three miles of trails connecting with proposed BLM trails, resulting in a combined 20 miles of new trails. A seasonal closure between December 1st and April 30th on the newly constructed trail system is proposed to protect concentrations of wintering big game.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), and the U.S. Department of the Interior's regulations (43 CFR Part 46).

NEED FOR AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Ridgway area is increasing in population and popularity as a destination area for tourism due to year-round public land access and a wide variety of recreational opportunities (BLM 2012). The citizens of the Town of Ridgway have expressed interest in expanding recreational opportunities for the surrounding communities and tourism industry. Local groups such as the Ridgway Area Trails (RAT) Group and the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association (COPMOBA) have shown interest in an inter-connecting trail system to establish more mountain biking, hiking, and trail running opportunities.

The purpose of the Dallas Creek Eastside Trails Project is to provide a sustainably designed trail system to promote quality recreational opportunities while maintaining the biotic integrity of the area and protecting the area's ability to help support wintering deer and elk populations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ridgway State Park – The Dallas Creek Project (Ridgway Reservoir) was authorized under the Colorado River Basin Project Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-537) as a participating project under the Colorado River Storage Project Act of 1956. Construction was completed in 1987. The project area is owned by Reclamation and the reservoir area is managed by CPW as Ridgway State Park.

Eastside Trails Project— In 2007, a local trail users group, Ridgway Area Trails (RAT) Group, proposed establishing a single track trails system on the east side of Highway 550 on BLM and Reclamation lands. The RAT Group applied for and received grant dollars for a conceptual trail design, which was completed by Greg Mazu of Single Track Trails. Since that time, Reclamation and RSP have moved forward in the planning process to determine if adding trails to the area is consistent with the purpose and desired future use of the east side of Highway 550. To date, the work accomplished toward this project includes flagging to mark the proposed trails, along with an archeological assessment of the area. This EA incorporates information provided in the associated BLM EA (BLM 2012) and by RSP staff, in addition to on-site investigations conducted by Reclamation.

DRAFT EA REVIEW AND SCOPING

The BLM's Uncompahgre Field Office began scoping initial phases of a travel management plan in February 2011. Their original proposal only concerned the construction of the new trails in the travel management area. They received 47 comments during their scoping period, and a decision was made to develop a comprehensive travel plan for the area. A second scoping period followed in April 2012, which resulted in 32 comments from individuals and organizations. The total 79 comments were placed into subject categories and summarized with the intention of addressing each concern in the different project alternatives (BLM 2012). While these scoping activities involved BLM lands and their travel management plan is beyond the scope of this project, much of the information is relevant to the proposed action being addressed by Reclamation. Therefore, Reclamation used BLM's public scoping to assist in the preparation of this EA.

The major issues brought up during scoping included:

- Access and Transportation
- Lands, Rights-of-Way (ROW), and Withdrawals
- Law Enforcement and Public Safety
- Noise
- Recreation
- Multiple-Use

- Socioeconomics
- Soils
- Vegetation
- Wildlife

The BLM released a final EA and issuing a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) dated May 10, 2013 (DOI-BLM-CO-SO50-2011-0011 EA).

CHAPTER 2 -- PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives evaluated in this EA include the No Action and variations of a Proposed Action Alternative.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under this alternative, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) would not establish a pedestrian and bike trail system at Ridgway State Park (RSP) east side of Highway 550, and the current use of this area would remain unchanged.

PROPOSED ACTION

Preferred Alternative

Under the preferred alternative, CPW would construct and maintain five miles of a sustainable pedestrian and single track bike trails at RSP eastside of Highway 550 for recreational use (see Figure 1). The newly constructed trails would be closed to all modes of travel from December 1 to April 30 to protect concentrated wintering big game.

The preferred alternative also includes connecting the newly constructed CPW trails to adjacent BLM trails.

Option Alternative

Under the option alternative, the proposed trails would be constructed as in the preferred alternative; however the seasonal closure (December 1 to April 30) would close the park area east of Highway 550 to public access and use to protect wintering big game.

Design

The trail design will adhere to guidelines established by the International Mountain Bicycling Association. Trail design will avoid long sightlines on shared-use trails, will avoid rocks and

other obstacles in beginner and intermediate trails, and will include drainage structures designed into the trails. The trails will have an average grade of 10%, and will consist of a minimum trail tread width of 24-36 inches. Corralling, or weaving, of the trail will eliminate long sightlines, which will help prevent user conflict by providing a visual buffer between trail users as well as slowing users to increase enjoyment. (Copeland, 2013)

Area Management

Parking will be limited to a new small, graveled parking area adjacent to US Highway 550 on the east side of the deer fence, as shown on the map in figure 1. This area will be equipped with a vault toilet. A second graveled parking area and vault toilet may be added in the future depending on the popularity of the new trail system. Access and use of the new trails beyond the parking area will be limited by a seasonal closure from December 1st to April 30th to protect adequate wintering grounds for the area deer and elk. The area will continue to be managed with enforcement by CPW staff. CPW will also be responsible for trail maintenance, but may be assisted by volunteer organizations.

Public Access and Use

The newly constructed trails would be closed from December 1 to April 30 to protect wintering big game concentrations. As an option Reclamation is also considering a seasonal closure of the park area east of Highway 550 to public access and use between December 1 and April 30 to further protect wintering big game concentrations.

CHAPTER 3 -- AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This chapter discusses resources that may be affected by actions taken to construct, manage, and maintain the proposed trails. For each resource, existing conditions and impacts are described. This chapter is concluded with a list of environmental commitments.

VEGETATION

Existing Conditions: The majority of the project area consists of pinyon-juniper woodland, with smaller areas of sage shrub land and montane shrub land. As is typical of pinyon-juniper woodlands at the project elevation, the pinyon pine is more abundant than the junipers, and overall the trees are larger and form a more closed-canopy stand than pinyon-juniper stands at lower elevations (Beason, 2011).

CPW is contracted by Reclamation to spray and control noxious weeds in the RSP area, so few noxious weeds are present in the proposed project area.

BIO-Logic, Inc. of Montrose, CO created a Rare Plant Survey Report for the adjacent BLM project area in June 2011. No federally listed or BLM sensitive species were found in the survey area, however the area is considered to have a limited potential to support Colorado desert parsley (*Lomatium concinnum*) and Montrose bladderpod (*Lesquerella vicina*), which are BLM sensitive species that are present to the north and northwest of the project area. (Graff, 2011)

Under the No Action Alternative:

The area is currently open to public use throughout the year. Under the no action alternative, there would be no change in impact to vegetation in the area. Street legal vehicles (i.e. cars, trucks, suvs) would have access to designated park roads throughout the year, and user-created trails may appear in the project area. Off road vehicles are prohibited.

Proposed Action:

The proposed action includes establishing five miles of recreational trails in the project area, connecting to proposed trails on adjacent BLM land. Routes are known to degrade vegetation either by vegetation removal in the trail area, or by off-route impacts which can affect vegetation along route sides. Off-route impacts can include reduced plant height and vigor, loss of trees and

shrubs, tree trunk damage, and composition change (Leung and Marion, 2000). The proposed trails will help mitigate any damaging effects by keeping recreationists to established designated trails. The use of a single-track trail system will keep the routes narrow, thereby removing less vegetation and limiting the potential effects along the route. Assuming a trail width of 3 feet, approximately 2 acres of vegetation would be cleared during trail construction.

Use of the area may cause an introduction of more weeds; however the area is currently open for hiking use without directing users to specific trails. The proposed action will help protect against noxious weed establishment by designating trail routes in the area.

Option:

The seasonal closure to public access and use of the park area east of Highway 550 would result in no negative effect on vegetation in the project area, and may provide the plant community an opportunity to restore itself after the heavier recreation months.

WILDLIFE

Existing Conditions: A variety of wildlife species are present in the project area. Large mammals such as deer and elk use the area year-round, and concentrate in the project area during the winter months. This area is considered crucial winter range for deer and elk by the BLM. The authorization for the Dallas Creek Project also recognizes Fish and Wildlife and Recreation as important project purposes. The east side of highway 550 within Ridgway State Park, which includes the trail system project area, has been managed for limited recreational use to help preserve wildlife habitat and wildlife values. Coyotes are common in the area, along with other large predators like mountain lions and black bears. These large predators include the area as part of their overall range; however the mountain lion likely uses the area when there is an abundance of deer and elk prey sources.

Migratory birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. A variety of migratory birds have nesting habitat within the project area. None of the species are endemic to the project area, and ample nesting habitat is available in the land surrounding the project area.

In April and May of 2011, the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) conducted surveys on raptors and other sensitive bird species in the adjacent BLM project area. Four raptor species were detected in the area, however no active nests were found, and other BLM sensitive species were present, including a population of Cassin's Finch which could be considered abundant. (Beason, 2011)

Table 2 is a list of bird species observed by the RMBO during a 2011 BLM survey adjacent to RSP.

Table 2. RMBO's list of birds detected during Ridgway Trails Project Survey, April – May 2011

Common Name	Scientific Name
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
Wild Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>
Great Horned Owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>
Black-chinned Hummingbird	<i>Archilochus alexandri</i>
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>
Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>
Gray Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax wrightii</i>
Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax oberholseri</i>
Ash-throated Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>
Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>
Plumbeous Vireo	<i>Vireo plumbeus</i>
Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>
Western Scrub-Jay	<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>
Pinyon Jay	<i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i>
Black-billed Magpie	<i>Pica hudsonia</i>
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>
Mountain Chickadee	<i>Poecile gambeli</i>
Juniper Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus ridgwayi</i>
Bushtit	<i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>
Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>
White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>
Rock Wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>
Mountain Bluebird	<i>Sialia currucoides</i>
Townsend's Solitaire	<i>Myadestes townsendi</i>
Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
Virginia's Warbler	<i>Vermivora virginiae</i>
Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>
Black-thoated Gray Warbler	<i>Dendroica nigrescens</i>

Western Tanager	<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>
Green-tailed Towhee	<i>Pipilo chlorurus</i>
Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>
Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerine</i>
Vesper Sparrow	<i>Poocetes gramineus</i>
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>
Black-headed Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>
Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>
Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>
Cassin's Finch	<i>Carpodacus cassinii</i>
House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>
Pine Siskin	<i>Spinus pinus</i>

Table 3 shows the most common terrestrial wildlife species, groups of species, their occurrence, and basic habitat types on adjacent BLM lands (BLM 2012). The BLM survey was conducted in similar habitat to the project area.

Table 3. BLM's List of Most Common or Noted Terrestrial Wildlife Species in the Planning Area

Species (Common Name)	Habitat Type	Occurrence
Mule deer	Pinyon-juniper, oak-mountain shrub, riparian, sagebrush, grassland	Common, year long, mostly during winter
Elk	Pinyon-juniper, oak-mountain shrub, riparian, sagebrush, grassland	Common, mostly during winter
Mountain Lion	All types, mostly along rim-rock areas	Common, year long, mostly during winter
Black bear	All types	Uncommon, spring and fall
Bobcat	All types	Uncommon, year long
Coyote	All types	Common, year long
Cottontail rabbit	All types	Common, year long
Porcupine	Pinyon-juniper, riparian	Common, year long
Raptor; Eagles, Hawks	All types	Common, year long
Merriam's Turkey	Riparian forests, Pinyon-juniper, oak-mountain shrub	Riparian communities and PJ in winter
Neo-tropical Birds	All types	Common, warm season
Small mammals	All types	Common, year long
Amphibians-Reptiles	All types	Common, year long

Under the No Action Alternative:

The area is currently open to public use throughout the year. Under the no action alternative, there would be no change in impact to wildlife in the area. Street legal vehicles (i.e. cars, trucks, suvs) would have access to designated park roads throughout the year, and unauthorized user-created trails may appear in the project area. Off road vehicles are prohibited.

Proposed Action:

The proposed action would close the new trail system in the project area from December 1st to April 30th to protect wintering big game habitat. There would be some minor clearing of vegetation for trail construction, along with increased human disturbance in spring through fall. The effects of the proposed action on migratory birds would primarily relate to additional fragmentation of habitat, although appropriate habitat is common in the lands surrounding the project area. While construction will occur outside of the nesting season, additional human disturbance will have long-term effects, and increased human activity may reduce the use of the area for nesting. These impacts are predicted to be minimal.

Option Alternative:

The seasonal closure to public access and use of the park area east of Highway 550 is predicted to have no negative effect on wildlife. In general, all wildlife would benefit from decreased disturbances.

SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES

Existing Conditions: Table 1 lists threatened and endangered species and other species of special status that potentially occur in the area.

Table 1. FWS’s List of Special status species occurring in Ouray County, Colorado

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	General habitat
Canada Lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>	Threatened	Spruce-fir, lodgepole pine, willow cars, and adjacent aspen and mountain shrub communities that support snowshoe hare and other prey
North American Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo luscus</i>	Candidate	Alpine and arctic tundra, boreal and mountain forests (primarily coniferous). Limited to mountains in the south, especially large wilderness areas
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	Endangered	For breeding, riparian tree and shrub communities along rivers, wetlands and lakes; for wintering, brushy grasslands, shrubby clearings or pastures, and woodlands near water
Clay-Loving Wild Buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum pelinophilum</i>	Endangered	Mancos shale badlands in salt desert shrub communities, often with shadscale black sagebrush, and mat saltbush; 5,200’-6,400’ in elevation

Colorado Hookless Cactus	<i>Sclerocactus glaucus</i>	Threatened	Salt-desert shrub communities in clay soils on alluvial benches and breaks, toe slopes and deposits often with cobbles, rocky, or graveled surfaces; 4,500'-6,000' in elevation
Uncompahgre Fritillary Butterfly	<i>Boloria acrocneuma</i>	Endangered	Restricted to moist, alpine slopes above 12,000' in elevation with extensive snow willow patches; restricted to San Juan Mountains

There are a few BLM special status species which have been observed in or near the project area.

Bald Eagle

Bald Eagles utilize the Uncompahgre River area for wintering grounds. There have been sightings immediately west of the project area, and foraging in the project area is possible. There is a communal roost site nearby.

Golden Eagle

Golden Eagles have been observed in the area, including two which were observed during the 2011 BLM survey. No nests were observed within the project area, so it's likely the two observed birds were utilizing the planning area for foraging. Golden Eagles nest in cliff and rock outcroppings, and given the limited suitable nesting spots within the project area, nesting is considered unlikely.

Midget Faded Rattlesnake & Milk Snake

No population data is available for the project area. These species may or may not be present in the project area, as the area contains potential habitat for both species.

Under the No Action Alternative:

The area is currently open to public use throughout the year. Under the no action alternative, there would be no change in impact to special status species in the area. Street legal vehicles (i.e. cars, trucks, suvs) would have access to designated park roads throughout the year, and unauthorized user-created trails may appear in the project area. Off road vehicles are prohibited.

Proposed Action:

The proposed action will increase the amount of non-motorized use in the project area. The increase in trails would result in a higher degree of habitat fragmentation. Habitat fragmentation poses a potential danger to edge-sensitive species. The reduction of user-created trails would reduce potential impacts to the sensitive species by confining recreationists to established trails. The proposed action would have no effect on threatened or endangered species.

Option Alternative:

The seasonal closure to public access and use of the park area east of Highway 550 is also predicted to have no effect on listed species. In general, all wildlife would benefit from decreased disturbances.

SOILS

Existing Conditions: The soils located in the project area are largely the result of glacial outwash and alluvium. Below this cover lies the Mancos Shale, along with some sandstone and shale outcroppings of the Dakota formation. Generally, the primary concern with soils in this area is erosion, as there is a layer of rocky soils near a network of rims and slopes with an underlying clay loam. There is a potential for water to wash over the clay loam, carrying the upper levels of rocky soils with it. High winds are also causes for erosion.

Biological soil crusts are essentially absent from the area, as the annual precipitation the area receives isn't conducive to the growth of these crusts. In the few areas where crusts were observed, they were found to be in a low level of development.

Under the No Action Alternative:

The area is currently open to public use throughout the year. Under the no action alternative, there would be no change in soil conditions. Street legal vehicles (i.e. cars, trucks, suvs) would have access to existing designated park roads throughout the year, and unauthorized user-created trails may appear in the project area. Off road vehicles are prohibited.

Proposed Action:

Tread width has been found to be the most significant factor in determining soil erosion by use category. A study on soil loss showed decreasing levels of degradation from horse only trails, hiking only trails, and bicycle only trails. The most important factor contributing to soil erosion regardless of use was trail grade and water control (BLM 2012).

The proposed action involves constructing five miles of single-track trails for recreational purposes. The proposed trail use would not include equestrian use, so erosion by use would be limited to hiking and biking. The trails will be structured to facilitate water runoff, which would help limit the amount of erosion occurring.

Option:

The seasonal closure to public access and use of the park area east of Highway 550 is also predicted to have no effect on the areas soil. In general, the soil would benefit from decreased disturbances.

AIR QUALITY

Existing Conditions: The most recent Colorado Air Quality Commission's Report to the Public (CDPHE 2012) states that the existing area is in compliance with federal air quality standards. Air pollution sources for the area include motor vehicles, windblown dust, prescribed and wild fires, and sand and gravel operations.

Under the No Action Alternative:

The area is currently open to public use throughout the year. Designated park roads in the area are unpaved and contribute to increased particulate matter pollution. Under the no action alternative, there would be no change in air quality conditions. Street legal vehicles (i.e. cars, trucks, suvs) would continue to have access to the designated park roads year-round. Off road vehicles are prohibited.

Proposed Action:

Increases in particulate matter and vehicle emissions associated with trail construction are expected to be highly localized and short-lived.

Option:

The seasonal closure to public access and use of the park area east of Highway 550 will not permit motor vehicles into the area during the winter closure, which will have a minor reduction in motor vehicle pollution sources.

INDIAN TRUST ASSETS & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Indian trust assets (ITAs) are legal interests in property held by the United States for Indian Tribes or individuals. Reclamation and other Federal agencies share the responsibility to protect these assets. There are no potentially affected ITA's in the Project area and therefore no impacts are projected.

Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice provides that Federal agencies analyze programs to assure that they do not disproportionately adversely affect minority or low income populations or Indian Tribes. There are no potentially affected minorities or low income populations or Indian Tribes affected by the Project; therefore no impacts are predicted under alternatives.

SOCIO-ECONOMICS

Existing Conditions: Between 2000 and 2010, the population of Ouray County grew 18.5%, which is slightly higher than the state growth of 17%. The population is expected to increase by a similar amount over the next ten years. In 2010, the average household income in the area was \$58,393, which is slightly higher than the state average of \$56,456. The percentage of people below the poverty level in Ouray County was 8.2%, which is lower than the state average of 12.2%. (BLM, 2012)

According to the *Longwoods International Colorado Travel Year 2011* report, 28.9 million people visit Colorado on overnight trips each year. Colorado visitors cite wilderness areas, mountains, rivers, and lakes among the most important aspects of their vacation, which attests to the importance of the outdoors and accessible public lands to the visitors. Tourism has grown steadily in southwestern Colorado since 2000. (BLM, 2012)

Under the No Action Alternative:

The status-quo would be maintained.

Proposed Action and Option:

The proposed action and option would create 5 miles of hiking and biking recreational trails in Ouray County, adding to the variety of recreational opportunities which draws tourism to the County. While the presence of the trails may produce economic benefits due to a potential increase in tourism, the proposed action and option would likely have no major effect on population, income, or employment.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Existing Conditions: A cultural resource assessment was done on the project area and documented in the “Old Dallas Historical Archaeological Program” report (Buckles et al. 1986). The report presents a synthesis of prehistoric and historic life-ways of the area’s past inhabitants. There are no sites recorded within the planned location of the trails. In 2012, CPW contracted with Alpine Archaeology, Inc. to survey the proposed trail alignments.

Under the No Action Alternative:

No effects predicted.

Proposed Action and Option:

Alpine prepared a report entitled “Intensive Cultural Resource Inventory of Additional Trails for the Planned Ridgway Trails System Ouray County, Colorado,” dated June 2012, which identified one site within the project area. The site was recommended as “not eligible”. BLM consulted with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the proposed action determined to have no effect on cultural resources. Reclamation has concurred with this determination. Contract specifications will require halting work if unidentified cultural/archeological resources are discovered during construction until the resource can be evaluated under the National Historic Preservation Act and the terms of the National Register of Historic Places eligibility criteria in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND PROJECT LAND HEALTH

Cumulative impacts are impacts on the environment, which result from the incremental impact of the action, when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. Overall, the construction of the proposed trail system should not have significant adverse cumulative impacts. Under the preferred alternative combined with proposed trails on BLM land, there will be a cumulative increase in trail availability for recreation use in the area

SUMMARY AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

In summary, the primary effect of the proposed action would be to construct trails on the east side on Highway 550 across from Ridgway Reservoir. In the long-term, residents and visitors to Ouray County and Ridgway State Park will benefit from the quality recreation opportunity presented in this project.

Environmental Commitments

The following measures will be implemented and followed by CPW and Reclamation.

- Reclamation must approve final designs prior to any trail or other construction.
- Construction equipment and supply staging areas will be located within existing disturbed areas.
- Erosion-control Best Management Practices for drainage and sediment control will be implemented to prevent or reduce nonpoint source pollution during construction of the proposed trail system.
- Dust control will be undertaken in all areas disturbed by construction.
- No required Clean Water Act permits or notifications are anticipated. However, CPW or its contractor is responsible for obtaining any required permits under the Clean Water Act (Section 402 or 404 permits) or any other federal, state or local permits, as necessary.
- In the event of discovery of evidence of possible cultural or paleontological resources, the contractor shall immediately cease all ground-disturbing activities in the vicinity of the discovery and notify CPW and Reclamation. Work shall not be resumed until approved by Reclamation.
- Any land disturbed by trail construction will be smoothed, treated for erosion, and reseeded with a seed mixture approved by Reclamation.
- The new trails will be closed to public use on a yearly basis from December 1 to April 30. This closure will help protect the area's ability to sustain populations of wintering deer and elk.

- If selected, Reclamation and CPW will implement a seasonal public access and use closure of Ridgway State Park lands east of Highway 550, including adequate notice and posting. A 30 day advance notice for the closure will be provided in the local newspapers, signs will be posted at each entry point (gate) in the deer fence and other locations as deemed necessary, the entry point gates may be locked during the time period the closure is in effect, and the area closed to public use and access will be monitored and patrolled by Park Rangers and staff.
- A second graveled parking area and vault toilet may be required by Reclamation in the future depending on the use of the new trail system.
- In the event of a change in location of any portion of the trail, construction will cease while Reclamation completes any necessary NEPA documentation regarding the change.

CHAPTER 4 -- CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

GENERAL

Planning for this project was coordinated with Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management and local trail groups. Consultation and coordination was conducted with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and with the Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act.

DISTRIBUTION LIST

News Releases announced the availability of the draft EA, and the EA has been placed on Reclamation's website at: www.usbr.gov/uc/ under environmental documents. The draft EA was distributed to the following list and was also distributed electronically.

Colorado State Representatives Coram, and McLachlan
Colorado State Senators King and Roberts
Congressman Scott Tipton, Grand Junction, CO
Senator Michael Bennet, Grand Junction, CO
Senator Mark Udall, Grand Junction, CO
Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, Montrose, Ridgway, Durango, CO
Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer, Denver, CO
Tri County Water Conservancy District, Montrose, CO
San Miguel Power Association, Ridgway, CO
Ouray County Commission, Ouray, CO
Town of Ridgway, Ridgway, CO
Ouray County Land Use Department, Ridgway, CO
City of Delta, Delta, CO
Montrose Daily Press, Montrose, CO
Telluride Watch, Telluride, CO
Ouray Plain Dealer, Ouray, CO
Daily Sentinel, Grand Junction, CO
Friends of Ridgway State Park, Ridgway, CO

Fish and Wildlife Service, Grand Junction, CO
Bureau of Land Management, Montrose, CO

COMMENTS RECEIVED

Comments on the draft EA were requested to be submitted to Reclamation by July 12, 2013. Reclamation received three written comments letters. Presented below is a summary of comments received and Reclamation's responses.

Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association, Inc. Chapter: Ridgway Area Trails Group

Comment 1: The proposed action allows no equestrian use, while the BLM TMP allows extensive equestrian use. This could create the potential for equestrian entry into the subject property, with resulting potential for conflict between the agencies.

Response 1: This difference in area use is currently taking place. Equestrian use will still be allowed on the east side of Highway 550 within Ridgway State Park as currently allowed on the existing interior park road that connects to BLM land to the south. Equestrian use will be limited to the roadway, and the area will continue to be managed with this limitation in mind.

Comment 2: There was confusion between the Proposed Action and the Option Alternative. It was believed the seasonal closure was restricted to the Option Alternative.

Response 2: Both the Proposed Action and the Option Alternative proposed a seasonal closure from December 1 through April 30. The Proposed Action limited this closure to the new trail system, while the Option Alternative would close the entire area to all use, including roads.

Comment 3: The RAT/COPMOBA volunteers with fully competent crew leaders, and are fully prepared and equipped to assist with all phases of trail construction and maintenance.

Response 3: This is noted and appreciated.

Ouray County Board of County Commissioners

Comment 1: The Ouray County Board of County Commissioners (Board) has gone on record with the opinion that seasonal closures that did not go beyond April 1 would provide wildlife benefits in protecting wintering game, allow for trails to dry out from winter moisture prior to heavy public use, but would also allow for earlier access to the County's gravel pit on BLM land. The Board indicates that the 30 day period from April 1 to April 30 is critical to their Road and Bridge Department for the scheduling of routine road maintenance.

Response 1: This proposed change in closure dates is acceptable to Reclamation, as long as the BLM also concurs in relation to their trail system.

Comment 2: Section 9 of the Ouray County Land Use Code designates a visual impact corridor, being within 1.5 miles of the centerline of Highway 550. The Board requests that any facilities consider and comply with this Code to minimize visual impacts and protect visual resources.

Response 2: Reclamation has been supportive of measures to reduce visual impacts in the past. In this case, we would utilize appropriate color schemes for the vault restroom so it will blend into the surroundings. The roof line does not break the skyline and will be hidden by the hilly background. The parking area will be limited in size to accommodate 6-8 vehicles. Visual impacts will be considered as requested and, where possible, remedies will be implemented.

Tri-County Water Conservation District

Comment 1: The trail system is located on property which has been identified as Priority 2 and Priority 3 as a source for seismic repair material. Tri-County's main concern is that the trail system be designed to avoid potential usage areas, or recognition that a future need of the materials might dictate a change in the trail system.

Response 1: The first priority site for borrow material for potential dam repair is the site below the dam. The possibility of using the 2nd and 3rd priority borrow sites for dam repair material is remote. However, the sites may be used for general borrow materials by TCWCD and the park for O&M purposes. Reclamation does not believe the proposed 3 foot wide trail near these two areas poses any problems or difficulties should borrow materials be needed.

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