
Lower Dolores Working Group

Write Up of Small
Group Exercises, by
Reach & 11/16/09
General Questions

Date: 12/14/09

Reaches 1 and 2 -- Management Questions
Small Groups Exercise – Combined Answers by Question
8/21/09

Overall Management Goals & Objectives

- Upgrade on-the-ground conditions for management
- Roundtail Chub is a prime example of conditions that may have changed
- Does timing of fish surveys affect results?
- Having a way of assessing how management goals are being implemented – are they successful?
- Use other resources like non-profits, etc. to help fund management – find other partnership
- Use outside resources to fund research
- We think many are ok, but perhaps need more specific action steps – don't need to start over for plan
- But, we felt that we need to get this stuff in advance so we can think about it and have it in front of us – can we revisit in a future meeting?

Reach 1: (diverse thoughts that do not represent consensus)

- Underutilized by recreation users
- Perception that it is a poor fishery.
- Could bring more water.
- Allow wildland fire.
- Pursue acquisition of private lands, provided willing buyer and willing seller.
- Actively manage elk winter range for wildlife:
 - Manage fields for wildlife feed
 - Use water rights to manage for wildlife
 - Currently nothing to keep elk there.
 - Cost share with farmers to plant elk food crops.
- Manage as a sustainable wildlife corridor.

Reach 2: (consensus)

- Actively manage fire in Ponderosa:
 - Control doghair ponderosa
 - Use prescribed fire
 - Prevent catastrophic fire
 - Use cattle as a tool to control fine fuels.

I. What should be the role of wildland fire within the river corridor?

- **Thorny issue – need more data**
- **What is current management for ORV?**
- Reach 1: range land fire is a good tool for regeneration – use where it makes sense as a management tool
- Reach 2: controlled burns or other mitigation to benefit the ponderosa, which needs fire to reproduce
- Reach 1: protect structures, otherwise let it burn
- Reach 2: prescribe fire, avoid catastrophic burn
- **Protect Structures in Reach 1 (consensus).**

2. How should the ponderosa pine be managed within the river corridor?

- If ponderosa's burn, is it still scenic?
- If they do prescribed burn, is it still wild?
- Managed to maintain this feature
- Make sure target shooting is not happening down there
- Use fire in some way to help them regenerate without burning them down
- Ensure periodic burn; weed management

Reach 1:

- Controlled burn
- Managed fire
- Protect recreational values
- Protect scenic values
- To enhance wildlife habitat
- Protect private property
- Protect archeology
- Protect cottonwoods

Reach 2:

- Use fire to control danger of catastrophic fire due to dog hair ponderosa and sustain and enhance the unusual/relic populations of ponderosa.
- Let it burn under the right conditions.
- Consider burning after mechanical treatment (thinning)
- Protect Archeology.

3. Should there be any additional recreation opportunities in any of the existing sites?

- Longer season for Ferris & Cabin recreation sites (after Labor Day through the end of hunting season)
- None needed
- Bradfield: maintain presence during boating & hunting seasons; education over enforcement; public play area at bridge (CDOW site); put-in at Metaskas site to accommodate day trippers
- Reach 2: appears adequate; designate campsites/capacities; some active management (poison ivy control)
- Reach 2: designated sites; voluntary sign-ups; specific reaches (Coyote Wash, Slick Rock WSA)
- Some suggested: yes, as public use demands, i.e. let usage dictate
- Some in the group would prefer to see single, dispersed campsites available, but with regulation Emphasize common sense.
- Agreement that these sites actually get little use.

4. Should the Bradfield launch site be permitted?

- Very difficult to permit due to uncertainties associated with flows
- Permitting could help pay for rescue
- In general, no good reason
- Hard to do – timing is an issue
- Over saturation is a reason to do – many people monitor it themselves
- Probably doesn't make sense, but education is important – encouraging people to sign in and note where they plan to camp
- No – concentration DS or Coyote Wash

- Agreement that the rafting industry needs to be consulted.
- Agreement that not until demand dictates
- Agreement that the fact that it is not permitted represents one of the outstanding values of the Dolores.

5. Do we have the appropriate mix of outfitter and guides to meet public needs?

- Yes – consensus
- Yes – no need for more, no need to promote more commercial to come in
- Yes – concentration DS or Coyote Wash

Various views:

- Yes.
- Do as the market dictates.
- Might need to limit use in order to protect campsites.

6. Should there be reserved campsites on the river during rafting season?

- Have a few campsites for commercial use that are or can be reserved – or maybe are designated for commercial use
- How to do this without permits - first come, first serve
- Encourage small groups not to take large sites
- Education is important – have a place to sign in and write what camp site they will try for
- Include a map that shows sites and size
- Reach 1: No
- Reach 2: Yes (see #4 comment) applies to Coyote Wash & Slick Rock WSA
- Could do – perhaps only sites for commercial groups. Agreement: Reserved campsites are needed for commercial groups.
- Employ signage for large campsites: e.g. “if nobody is here by X o’clock its yours, otherwise you must give it up.”
- Depend on honor system
- Will need enforcement.

7. Is there a threshold for use that, if we approach or exceed, we would need to implement further restrictions for use? What threshold and restrictions?

- Degradation of the natural environment is threshold
- Trashy camps
- Saturation per BLM management guides for assessing campsites
- If campsites exceed a certain level of saturation, then a permitting system might be needed
- Use is short in a year and not always every year, so hard to figure out a way to change management
- Threshold has no predictability – hard to pin down
- Archeology and litter should be considered when thinking about thresholds
- 10 groups per day plus use days
- 20% of use season or number of launches per day
- If exceeded: potentially restrict permit, designate camps; voluntary sign-ups; no small groups at large sites
- Monitor and evaluate – baby steps
- Use biology to determine. Indicators could be:
 - Reach 1: Salient values (fishery and cottonwoods)

- Reach 2: Ponderosa, scenary, ecological baseline.
- Weekend permits only.
- There was lots of conversation regarding the fact that climate change may cause the volume of water to decrease while population pressures are causing demand to increase.

8. Are there management activities we need to implement to support a cold water fishery in these two reaches?

- Get the water – through basins – augment minimum in-stream flow
- Nutrient problems – study to determine cause and solutions
- Support Dolores River Dialogue and incorporate these findings into ID team
- Think about temperatures from releases at different levels of the dam, but don't let invasions out of the reservoir
- Put more emphasis on Reach 1 as cold water fishing
- Consider more fish habitat improvements
- Cooperative management – re-visit objectives
- Add big pile of H2O
- Temp/Nutr/D.O. work
- Habitat (sediment)

Reach 1 (ideas, not consensus):

- Get more water
- Implement flushing flows
- Create real pools.
- Reduce nutrients/algal growth.
- Roundtail Chub should not be an ORV in reaches 1 and 2 (too cold)
- Agreement: Keep Reach 2 : “No Motor vehicles”

9. How do we cooperatively fund invasive species inventory and treatment?

- Use other groups
- Use outside means
- Be more flexible in management
- Be more flexible in budgeting
- Incorporate other people's work: graduate students; Tamarisk Coalition; Walton Family Foundation; unlikely partnerships
- Coordinated effort already underway, but emphasis on land agencies working with DOW and others
- BLM needs to try to acquire more funding
- Tamarisk Coalition, DOL Tamarisk Action Group, other volunteers (Fort Lewis): inventory, abatement, leverage other efforts
- Engage Counties, but the canyon is not a high priority for them
- Work with CDOW
- Force bureaucracy to manage \$ and opportunities better: an example was cited of bureaucratic procedure/rules interfering with ability to spend funds on control of invasives.

Overall, what protection tools might be recommended in these reaches?

- Leasing water for cold water fishery
- Support augmenting the minimum in-stream flow
- Budget money for monitoring

- Legislate conservation area that would preclude Wild & Scenic and Federal Reserve water right
- Opinions that the above would never fly in Montezuma & Dolores counties
- 1990 plan is doing a decent job
- Concern that designation is not a protection tool
- Concern that without designation it will not be well protected
- Need for special management designation to get long term protection
- Don't want to see people lose the rights to be on public lands
- Tools should be put in place now before population increase puts too much pressure
- Balance – protect what's there without losing it
- Reach 1: DOW management for wildlife is a good protective tool – continue to manage for recreation
 - Reach 2: some thought Wild & Scenic appropriate here, but others thought that it self protects due to topography Comment: CDOW is doing too much trapping of mountain lions.
 - Archeology: (concensus)
 - Fund better and staff better
 - Use "Volunteer Stewards"
 - Roundtail Chub (various views)
 - Shouldn't be ORV for these 2 reaches
 - Transition zone
 - Allow unlimited take of Brown trout
 - Some legislative protection

Reaches 3 and 4 -- Management Questions
Small Groups Exercise – Combined Answers by Question
October 19, 2009

REACH 3:

I. How should the Dolores Overlook site be managed?

- Keep if open – maintain current management
- Bathrooms need maintenance (Al thinks bears tear down the fence)
- If there are concerns about cattle, fencing could be modified
- Interpretive sign would be fine - of river resources
- Maintain site as it currently is
- Consensus that it is well managed
- A geologic interpretation would be nice – could be used by school groups for service projects such as minor cleanup, etc.
- 6 out of 9 group members have visited this site
- Not very visited
- Signage to overlook through the County Roads is not very good or clear - needs to be improved
- Might need restrooms, once you are out there
- Interpretation would be good
- Same as it is now – open to off road vehicles, hunting, recreation – a few signs – people picnic there
- Nasty road when wet
- Consensus: no concern to change management

2. How should the Box Elder Campground site be managed?

- Concern about an old music event being shut down – due to a fee and number of people
- Fees and management should not preclude local historic community gatherings
- Is local government a filter group to help with appropriate use?
- Still needs to be some framework of numbers, but we aren't sure how to frame it
- See problem with enforcement
- Negligible fees, especially for non-profit events/organizations
- Doesn't make sense to have a boat launch there
- It is well used
- No fee is good
- Bathrooms are good
- A lower use site
- Used a lot seasonally (bluegrass festival in July)
- Good site: not very impacted
- Nice composting toilets - they are a definite improvement
- Pretty clean
- Good self-policing by users
- There was a campsite begun to be developed some time ago downstream- what is the status of that site?
- Group did not feel that the Box Elder Campground reached full capacity very often
- Consensus: signage to get there is good
- Consensus: fees not appropriate now, but donation box could be placed
- Some suggested that special designation could bring additional management dollars - some disagree, having observed fees being implemented as a result of special designations in Arizona
- Improved parking through area – at campground and put-in
- Access problems so under-used
- Starting point for 4x4's and rafters, and mobility in the area is difficult

3. How should the 4x4 road/trail along the river from the Pump Station to Slickrock be managed?

- From the pumps to the county line is Dolores County road and they don't intend to close
- Confusion about portion in San Miguel County – is it officially abandoned or is it just not maintained?
- Ernie thinks that beyond the closure should be open to 4x4, but doesn't need to be maintained
- Concern about how the motorized use will impact the sheep lambing period and concern that users are not complying with the closure as is
- Question about the time of the closure – is that the right time – why do sheep need the closure – would through the 15th of April be enough?
- Use of road, especially if it is maintained for full size vehicle use, may be detrimental to river corridor
- Road is a piece of infrastructure that should be kept – OHV community likes to use this road
- Seasonal closure – no change
- Great fall color drive that can't be accessed by boaters
- Might need to monitor current level of use to see if damage is occurring – close road if ecological damage is occurring – science first
- Maintain road along river as it is now
- Dolores County maintains to 1 mile below Snaggletooth
- San Miguel does not maintain
- Dolores County would like the road to be maintained all the way through

- Crosses river 3-4 times
- Getting really bad in some places
- Some people ride horses down there and Al Heaton brings guests down
- Lots of mountain bike riding
- Consensus: seasonal closure is a positive thing - used to be controversial with locals, but they have settled into it
- Road represents some economic potential for Dove Creek
- Concern about closing to motorized
- Non-motorized has more opposition than motorized
- Should be some motorized
- Consensus: keep motorized to point it is today - do not improve the road
- Some suggested that it could be shut down by Scenic Eligibility classification if San Miguel doesn't want the road
- Others pointed out and felt that it is not incompatible with rafting and the scenic values in the reach, as you cannot see it from the river
- Partly County Road until you get to San Miguel Road
- Closure past Snaggletooth seasonally – no maintenance at all in S.M County – abandoned
- Section in Dolores County – do they maintain it?
- If it's recommended closed seasonally it should be safeguarded by signage and/or surveillance, especially if the reason for closure is lambing – also should be closed to camping
- Point made about if the road should be able to be used for river emergency
- Counterpoint – road is not needed for rafters
- Low disturbance because of rafters in recent drought, but vehicle access could still be causing disturbance to lambing
- Signage and enforce current closure and add camping
- We can't make a rule we can't enforce
- Rafters need that camping?
- Most rafters do this section in one day
- Summary: seasonal closure split between views; A. all closure for camping, biking, vehicles; B. all motorized traffic

4. How should camp sites along Reaches 3 & 4 be managed?

- Pack out what's packed in
- Rafters are very clean and respectful in general – implement stricter rules about trash, waste, etc. – most rafters are pretty good about it already
- Boaters feel self-policed
- No need to designate camp sites in these segments
- Be respectful of private property (Reach 4) – do owners want coordination with BLM for signage? – boaters should know where boundaries are – maybe BLM can help
- Signage at put-in for river etiquette
- Not that much control over how people camp
- Signs at campsites are not good – ranger/BLM gives out better information
- Continue to manage as primitive campsites
- Manage as demanded by use - when level of use justifies, when conditions warrant a change, adjust management
- Watch for thresholds laid out in the 1990 plan
- Manage the people, rather than closing the land off with Wild and Scenic
- Some feel that Wild and Scenic will bring in so many people that you will then need a permit system

- One member observed that the number of campers at Bradfield Bridge increased hugely after the last round of Wild and Scenic hearings
- Need to find middle ground in order to maintain values
- Permit system would make it locals only, because of lack of predictability of flows
- Is designation a good way to go - doesn't it suggest that BLM is not doing a good enough job at managing - it would be better to stay off the radar screen as long as possible
- Currently, the only thing protecting archeological sites is the lack of visitors to those sites (member cited the Grand Canyon analogy)
- Put more people on the river to help patrol (more support for Ranger Rick, who is just 1 person)
- Cross train staff to do their jobs AND patrol the river when they are out there
- Continue current management

REACH 4:

1. How should BLM/FS interact with private land owners to manage the Slickrock boat launch?

- Semi's and oil trucks are a bigger problem than rafters, but they sell water to trucks
- Responsibility for BLM to address private land owner's concerns – maybe money to manage
- Maybe BLM pays for signage
- Accommodate land owner concerns, but try to keep it open
- Many people think it's a "rest area" and think that CDOT owns it – maybe they need to be involved as well
- Put launch site on BLM land, either upstream or downstream
- Purchase land or land swap
- Launch at boat ramp, but move parking somewhere to BLM
- Restraint area could be an alternative launch – different land owner
- Landowners are threatening to shut down - they are "sick and tired" of managing it
- BLM should actively look at leasing or buying the put-in site
- BLM should offer fair market price
- Acquire at fair market value - could include language to this effect in any legislation for special designation
- Impacts to the site are coming from motorists - maybe CDOT should manage the site
- BLM should investigate a joint lease with CDOT
- Consensus: BLM should actively pursue a permanent access point with willing landowner or on BLM land - BLM should help ensure that waste, etc. is managed appropriately
- One member recalled that the 1990 Plan specified that BLM (or BOR) should acquire the site
- Doesn't seem like a concern if the private owners close it
- Encourage BLM to set aside money to compensate land owners, possibility of leasing to BLM (example of similar situation: Access Fund)
- Also idea of moving put-in/take-out to BLM land
- Problem remains if BLM leases or something that if it's not fenced then BLM could encounter some non-rafting season impacts

2. How should BLM/FS interact with private land owners to protect private property values?

- All private property rights should be respected
- BLM should rule with land owners regarding rafting
- Concern that W & S can take away rights of private property owners – condemnation clause, property value
- Al has concern that mining and resource values should be managed some way other than W & S – he doesn't think that Reach 4 to the first private land is eligible – but if not W & S then what? – long term protection is important

- Ernie – if we don't come up with our own plan then we will be handed a plan
- Ernie – Reach 4 managed for recreation
- We don't have agreement
- If W & S is not the tool then what is? – need to have a tool that still protects ORVs
- Don suggested a spectrum of tools along the whole river
- Amber concerned that management should be consistent
- Legislation specifically crafted for the river could be palatable to the group – look to current management plan – if something was put in place that was similar, then not a bad idea
- We see a need to specifically tailor special legislation to this area
- Access – private property owners should have access to their property, however, access is a travel management plan issue
- BLM should have authority to enforce rules to prevent impacts such as human waste management
- More information at boat launches about where private land is – stay on river through private land
- Cole Crocker Bedford, who is a private landowner along the river below Slickrock, presented the group with a list of suggestions in response to this question. The group then began to discuss Cole's concerns and written suggestions:
- Coles first and second written suggestions were that BLM should:
 - Include a standard and guideline in the corridor management plan and in the RMP to allow vehicle access to private lands over historical routes. Grant an easement if landowner agrees to improve the access when and if that improvement is needed for residential access; and
 - Include a standard and guideline in the corridor management plan and in the RMP that promises that they will not assert that a bridge across the river will affect the Outstanding Remarkable Values on the river.
- Cole feels that road access restrictions are a problem because they affect the value of private property. He asserts that for the BLM, topography is not accounted for when it comes to granting "reasonable access".
- Some agreed that BLM should provide reasonable access in a manner that minimizes impacts to ORV's and the landscape. Others noted that they would like to hear from BLM why they wanted otherwise.
- Feds should acquire lands at fair market value. Coles 3 and 4th written suggestions were:
 - Include a standard and guideline in the management plan and RMP that promises not to condemn trail access or scenic easements and promises to consider the value of privacy to the private property owner
 - Corridor Management Plan and RMP should encourage BLM to acquire riverfront lands from willing sellers via trade or direct payment and value these lands as if historical access routes were legal access easements.
- One member pointed out that if legislation is sought, you can address these specific issues within the legislation, e.g., you can put "no condemnation" in the legislation.
- Cole pointed out that, if the language is not incorporated into the local BLM plans, the chances of such language staying in any legislation through the "sausage making" process is very low. Other members acknowledged this point.
- Cole suggests inclusion of "from willing sellers only" language into the Dolores Management Plan, whether or not there is any legislation.
- David pointed out that BLM only makes the plans. It does not draft or dictate legislation.
- Consensus: Group comfortable with language in 1990 plan: "acquire only from willing sellers"

- Cole asserted that a 1976 BLM plan (Wild and Scenic Recommendation) suggested that BLM seek county zoning to protect the river. His 5th and 6th written suggestions were:
 - Include a standard and guideline that federal appraisals will assume county zoning and ordinances as of 2004 – prior to the most recent W&S Eligibility Assessment.
 - BLM/USFS should not take action that encourages the County or State to zone against development along the river.
- Discussion began on this point, but the group ran out of time for further discussion of Cole’s 2 remaining proposed ideas in answer to this management question.
- Why should this reach be considered W & S? – because of private property
- This section is deemed recreational
- Proposed that the private land be left out completely of W & S designation
- We want to see what impacts of W & S on public land would have on adjacent private landowners
- Can the language of the designation be customized to protect private land values?

Overall, what protection tools might be recommended in these reaches?

- Maintain current levels of protection at least
- Some support for improvement of current ecosystem
- Keep travel management in travel management
- Don’t mess with private property
- Consensus: better management of flows to improve ecological system
- Permanent protection of river
- Consensus: Tamarisk removal is getting positive results – continue efforts
- This is the opportunity for local people to craft a plan for the best management of the river
- Big Gyp BLM put-in should be kept viable to function as is, but the closure of Slickrock could put a lot of stress on the area
- Sustain the no surface occupancy for mining
- Designate the BLM Little Glen Canyon land as Wilderness River miles 52-55
- Leave private land out of designation – also research how adjacent property will be affected
- Physical protection during seasonal closure (gate) to prohibit motor access and camping
- Recommend that the S.M. County road that has been abandoned and now managed by BLM be closed permanently to all motorized

Reach 5 Management Questions
Small Groups Exercise – Combined Answers by Question
9/21/09

A. Similar to all reaches, should the outfitter and guide permits have reserved campsites?

- First come, first served, or designate one camp in each for commercial trips (no consensus)
- Is this a non-issue? Not much guiding and outfitting
- Very limited campsites
- How can we enforce?
- First come, first served most practical
- Yes, might help organize and address issues
- Since they have to have permits (to launch) anyway
- How can you enforce?
- Educate private parties with signage
- But a lot more bureaucracy – enforcement is a challenge
- How about “preferred campsites” versus assigned? (use signage to indicate)

- Wait until it's a bigger problem and solve it then

B. Should we withdraw lands in the Dolores River Wilderness Study Area from mineral entry?

- No, surface occupancy stipulation should be enough
- Range – need oil – NSO working
- Stick with NSO and BMP's because we need the energy (some agreement)
- Others: prefer withdrawal, but NSO good as long as stipulation cannot be waived
 - Volume of gas is small
 - Focus on energy alternatives
- Geology restricts anyway - don't really know what volume/value is there - don't trash the place

C. Should the Big Gypsum recreation site be maintained as is, improved, or decommissioned?

- Need sanitary facilities, otherwise no improvements – also, better management of weeds in recreation site
- Decommissioned is unrealistic
- Better maintenance – trash issues
- Improvement – better maintained
- Don't decommission
- Don't know much about site
- Best access to river in area
- No strong need for improvements – don't improve because detracts from values
- Is it not meeting demand?
- The actual put-in ramp is very small - consider adding another put-in

D. How should the Dolores office coordinate river management with the downstream offices?

- Should coordinate management plan so management doesn't change when management boundaries are crossed
- What does "coordination" mean between district?
- Already coordinated – needs more private land owner input
- By telephone
- Makes sense to change management at end of WSA (not in the middle)

E. If tamarisk is removed from the main Dolores and associated tributaries, how active should the subsequent restoration efforts be?

- Should be passive because it's in WSA, but water could be an active restoration tool to release floods to improve habitat for cottonwoods and willows
- Knapweed control and seed sowing
- Not many weeds upstream of Coyote Wash
- Passive – grasses and willow and cottonwood will come back
- Should be active, at least to restore grasses and prevent invasion by knapweed and tamarisk (general agreement)
- Be realistic: don't get overambitious – it's extremely challenging to manage plants
- Make an honest effort
- What do you do if the bugs get there first?

F. How should the illegal OHV access into the Dolores Wilderness Study Area be managed?

- Permanent posted signs big enough to see – most people may not know – are there multiple entry points? – physical barrier might help in Bull Canyon and Silvey’s Pocket
- Physical barrier won’t work or will block Suckla’s
- Enforcement nearly impossible
- What is damage?
- “Actively discourage” illegal use – a few motorcycles already signed
- Education - don’t let up
- Signage (although some have heard that signs routinely get removed)
- Start slow, don’t get too heavy handed
- Figure out where they are coming from, although others added: this is obvious, they are using the existing old road

G. How should the cultural sites currently being impacted from rafters be protected?

- Recommend that Shoman Cave be day-use only – signage at major sites – visitation ethics posted at launch sites and registered – closing some social trails
- Remote sensing?
- Wild & Scenic – more damage, more people
- Spill – more people
- Education/signage/peer pressure
- Small fence or barrier
- Brochure with outfitters and guidebook information
- Education
- Close camping @ archeological sites
- 1% of the people cause the problem
- Use low fence around sites to remind people to keep a distance
- Plant poison ivy, etc.

H. Should there be additional interpretation at Indian Henry’s Cabin located in Bull Canyon?

- Need sign and history of cabin
- None of us have been there
- Yes, should protect and in favor of education about history of cabin

I. How should water managers balance both rafting with flushing flows for management of other resources?

- DRD science recommendation for habitat restoration should be implemented on “big water years” over consistent 800 cfs for boaters
- Time with spawning better
- 800 cfs steady siltation is problematic
- 2000 max? Natification needed downstream
- Need to understand flushing better – what is the needed Q
- This is the basic issue that DRD struggles with
- Rafting is the priority (question raised: isn’t management for fishery also a stated priority?)
- Keep science driving process
- Keep DRD effort focusing on this question
- Could re-operate under EIS if science supports
- BLM management plan is the wrong document to address this question
- General agreement: management focus should be changed to address not just rafting but also ecology - comment: this is just the reality

J. If you were granted one wish for the Dolores River, what would it be?

- Management plan is now good, with a few exceptions – would like to see plan more permanent – would like to keep 1990 plan (not everyone wished)
- Leave alone, limit advertising
- Manage spills for ecological benefits
- Rafting remain informal
- BLM retain and improve management
- Keep it a secret
- Long-term protection
- Keep it as it is and has been
- Not so many tourists
- Provide access to most of the river – provides important recreation area for low income folks

Overall, what protection tools might be recommended in this reach?

- Existing plan covers a lot
- Can have too many rules
- Wild & Scenic interpretation would help (Roy Smith)
- *Use good scientific information
- WSA should be designated as Wilderness
 - already pre-scripted as WSA
 - recommended for designation
 - language w/o federal reserved water right
- Water rights are contentious in Wilderness issue, so look a different direction
- General Agreement: the WSA/Reach 5 is worth protecting
- Current Goal = “Not more than 3 group encounters per day between users”
- Is it realistic to be that specific?
- Raising the profile brings more people
- If we don’t act, the area might get overrun with people in the future
 - Better to be proactive than to have to react to protect the resource
 - There are 2 sides to wilderness issue: impacts by use/impacts for people
- Limit use, but don’t need Wilderness: Wilderness = an advertisement (like the Monument)
- Personal observation: Monument did not increase use of Sand Canyon, etc.
- Personal observation: Monument did increase use on north end, around Pleasant View
- Question: are we currently under the 1990 plan? Yes, although not all of it is implemented/enforced
- Is there a plan that can be enforced?
- W&S water language even less tractable than Wilderness
- Proposal: remove Suitability in Reach 5 and just focus on Wilderness designation; solve the water rights language to meet approval of water community and wilderness community - general agreement of group.
- Agree as long as something happens to protect for the future
- Group member strongly supports the idea, would be pretty much the same management as currently exists - Concerns:
 - Prior and existing rights must be protected and honored
 - Grazing must continue
- Could live with suitability if knew it wouldn’t get designated as W&S (because of Federal Reserve Water Right)

Lower Dolores Plan Working Group

Small Groups Exercise

11/16/09 – General Issues

This section captures information from the small groups conducted at the November 16th, 2009 meeting. In some cases a question was covered in previous meetings but covered again. In other cases, the questions are new ones.

1. What is your input on the 1990 Plan management goals and objectives? Are there goals or management objectives missing from the current list?

- Add a goal that addresses the respect of/protection of private property rights (land & water).
- Don said if ORVs are focused on in reach by reach method then there will be other tools appropriate other than W&S because the W&S designation has baggage, and if land managers recognized the baggage they could be pushed to look at other options. Chris has heard about the baggage but doesn't know what it is. Don said federal rescue water rights. Chris said a panel would be good.
- We realized that there is a #14 and there is some disagreement about this goal. The recommendation from the Working Group is to replace #14 – that's what we're here to talk about. BLM should maintain suitability until an alternative to W&S is actualized.
- Goal #7: The fish pool in McPhee is a large right and should be acknowledged. Don doesn't like the word "maximize" – should focus on utilizing what's there or maximizing the already available water to help protect ORVs.
- Ernie said recreation shouldn't be on the top of the priority list – prioritize needs, i.e., maybe do flush & flow.
- Chester said there's no water for Roundtail Chub.
- Don – management of spill and base flow spill – use these charts for other purposes as well
- Amber – worthwhile to explore other options such as leasing if willing seller and as allowable under Colorado water law
- Look back to intent of DRD (respecting private rights)
- Roundtail Chub – unknown if they need more water or if we can use existing pools to manage them - Chester thought this should be addressed in goals, but lots of unknowns so we're not sure
- Sometimes the goals and management objectives are written with broad strokes and need to be implemented using common sense – being too specific with management objectives may prove onerous
- Consensus by group: reaffirm BLM's support for the inclusion of the Dolores River into the W&S river system – change language to say "protect the Outstandingly Remarkable Values" and remove "Wild and Scenic River System" language
- Energy development and increased recreation – adequately protect private property in the face of increasing recreation and energy development

- On Objective #8 reword to say “BLM shall provide recreational opportunities year-round”
- Regionalized context (#6) – why is this here?
- Pike Minnow River Plan – ESA recovery driving/determining releases out of McPhee Reservoir, which would be bad – threat to how dam is operated
- #6 is also an opportunity to maximize or leverage outcomes in coordination with regional efforts
- consider what others are doing, but can’t make planning too cumbersome by keeping all information and issues coordinated
- disseminate DR plan with other downstream offices (Uncompahgre & GJ) – prefer to disseminate rather than be controlled
- Shauna – 10 team direction to compare ORVs on the Dolores River - must be compared to regional rivers
- Water being moved out of Upper Colorado River Basin and diverted to Front Range out of Green River – water out of Green River will put pressure on Pike Minnow and affect the Dolores River for recovery plan – basin roundtable/interbasin compact commission is where these issues are handled (Eric M. proposal)
- #7 – maximize availability of “managed” water rather than “impounded” water
- #14 – W&S 1976 report – can’t support or not support until after DRWG is done – can reaffirm support of ORVs and variety of other values
- don’t jeopardize private land owner water rights or OHVs that are not included as ORVs – these other values can be left out or “lose them” because they are not ORVs
- #7 suggested wording: “Maximize recreation and ecological benefits from fish pool and managed spills”
- Need to add fishing as a recreational ORV or value
- BS: More info should have been put out about the 1990 Plan – increase awareness
- DV: Comfortable with goals and objectives, but can’t assess how well they’ve been accomplished.
- #6: Sounds interesting and forward thinking. What does it mean?
- #4: CDOW would say that BLM does not coordinate with them.
- Doug: So the basic reasoning for this process is to address #14 when you get past all the smoke and mirrors.
- DV: Seems like the consensus is to protect, but “how” is the problem.
- The suitability standards will stay if we don’t generate [ideas].
- Doug: If BLM has been following the 1990 plan up until now, and the quality of the river today is still high, and the W&S status has been protected through management, seems like the WSA, the rivers topography, and the 1990 Plan have been effective in protecting the W&S values.
- DV: Yes, but the W&S suitability standards were already in place in 1990. How can we continue that protection?
- BS: This plan addresses varying uses in each zone: not the same management the whole way through. Need something that is flexible. Does Wild and Scenic have to be the whole way?
- DV: No, doesn’t need to be the same. WSA was inventoried in the 1980s.
- BS: Can you have some kind of river designation with gaps in it?

- DV: Yes, in other rivers I'm familiar with (New Mexico, Oregon) Wild and Scenic with different standards, and some reaches without W&S, but still with a management plan.
- The only thing you gain with legislation is consistency over time in the priorities guiding management.

2. Are there any additional thoughts or recommendations your group would like everyone to consider related to property owners and property rights?

- Public Plan shouldn't negatively impact values of private property
- Private property rights should be respected
- Concerning mineral leases, wildfires should be controlled to protect mineral lease property values
- Consensus by group: valid existing rights should be honored, preserved and protected – and this should be stated specifically in document /legislation
- If W&S is designated, take out provision in W&S Act prohibiting changes in use on private land, subject to applicable Colorado land use regs (clarify these land use regs)
- What restrictions does the W&S Act place on current or future uses of private land in each category?
- Sept. 12 Slick Rock field tour notes are complete
- Not that hard to resolve these issues
- Access should consider what is proper for environment, not just ownership boundaries
- Consideration of any future protections should not jeopardize access that currently services private land owner or private property rights
- Slick Rock launch site: BLM should consider defacto management lease for private land used publicly and should divert recreationists to another location away from private land
- Priority lease or diversion should consider minimizing environmental impacts
- BLM should help/support honoring private property rights – Slick Rock has “private property” sign, not “no trespassing”
- BLM should respect autonomy of local government planning and zoning – should not encourage zoning against development on river as included in the 1976 Corridor Plan
- BLM/USFS and county should enter into a MOU with each individual land owner on future management and zoning (at the initiative of the land owner)
- It could be easier to negotiate a better situation and reduce development on the river through individual land owner wishes – especially important in counties with limited or no zoning for long term protection
- Appropriation setup considered for conservation easements on private lands for willing land owners/sellers to protect conservation values
- CM: Dad sold 600 acres to CDOW when the dam came in – he kept 20 acres. I'm concerned that the USFS's VRM Class II will lower my property value: if you can't build because you need to protect peoples view...
- Group discussed and concluded that USFS could not dictate what Carol can do on her own private property. Situation with respect to valuation different than Cole's property, because of Cole's issue around access through BLM land.
- CM: land might be beneficial to sell or exchange to public lands. Also has a water right.

3. Are there any additional thoughts or recommendations your group would like everyone to consider around water issues?

- Water rights around the Roundtail Chub should be considered - ESA listing should be avoided (see question #6) – explore ways to utilize existing pools to address those needs and explore leasing from willing rights owners in accordance with Colorado water law
- Some said to consider base flow management, spill management, and leasing from willing rights owners in accordance with Colorado water law
- Prioritize downstream needs as there isn't always enough water to make them all happen, i.e., rafting/recreation shouldn't necessarily be the priority every year – prioritize through a public process
- Concern that if rafting times are shortened then may need to limit number of rafters
- Protect valid existing water rights
- Doing a fair job of water management'
- Management of water could be balanced between releases for rafting and releases for fish/ecology
- Consensus by group: ecology should take precedence over rafting
- Need a spring flush for aquatic and riparian health, and for beating? flows as far as possible when hydrology allows
- We need to have some spill every year, no matter how small
- Water issues need to be addressed within the framework of Colorado water law and adjudicated water rights – allocation out of Dolores Project
- Concern that federal reserve water rights would be “senior” to conditional water rights holder that would be potentially harmed by W&S designation
- Lease of water should be considered from both DWCD and MVIC or other water rights holders that are willing sellers – lease a solution for meeting federal reserve water right requirement of W&S
- Improve fish habitat for lower downstream flows – specifically the lower river is lacking large woody debris – toss the debris that is caught by dam into the lower river
- JD: Montezuma County is very concerned to protect private property as long as federal water rights are not a part of it, there's lots to talk about.
- BS: Water is polarizing. A bit of a sticking point.
- DV: What tool could be as good as a Federal Reserved Water Right?
- BS: Well, there are already two water protections in place: the Fish Pool and the CWCB in-stream flow right.
- CM: Dam improves river by keeping base flows in the river. It's in better shape now.
- BS: Pre MVIC diversions you would have probably had a little less water than what you see @ Dolores.
- DV: Have you all seen the water rights language in the Dominguez Wilderness Bill? What amount of water is necessary for ecological values – protect it through some other tool?
- JD: This is an important point. If we leave the quantity to be determined by the feds, that is a problem. Need to address the ecology; there will not be much support from Montezuma County if it's just focused on flows for boating.
- DV: How do we sustain what we have now?
- Doug: Fish Pool shares shortages?
- BS Yes.

- DV: Is it enough water? I hear that it is not.
- BS: DRD is focusing on this question/issue.
- JD: Which fish?
- BS: too much water may propagate non-natives.
- Doug: when set up dam was it set up for a fishery?
- BS: Yes, it was designed for fishery.
- AO: Designed for trout fishery.
- Doug: Should manage water to benefit the largest # of people. Would like to see trout fishery expanded.
- DV: Be careful, because the “largest number of people” may be national.
- BS: If there is a shortage where do you get that water?
- DV: Rafters can ride bikes, but fish suffer in a shortage. Sounds like we still lack the foundation for a consensus. In 5 -20 years alfalfa may not be that big a crop in this area.
- CM: Yes, maybe we’ll be growing houses instead.
- AO: I’m taking my facilitator hat off. The challenge seems to be: in the face of potential ESA listing somewhere down the line for the Roundtail, and in the face of W&S suitability, what are the proactive local solutions to protect the roundtail?
- Doug: Build a bigger dam.
- BS: Plateau Creek, but very expensive.
- CM: What are the problems facing the roundtail?
- AO: Best available information says: flows (could be amount, could be timing), and non-native predators.

4. What are your group’s specific thoughts on how oil and gas should be managed in the Lower Dolores River Corridor?

- Ernie - it’s different for each reach of the river: 1) Dam to bridge at Slickrock – no drilling in the corridor, but I don’t see a problem with drilling above the rim with directional drilling, and 2) Slickrock to downstream – set a buffer from the river a half mile or so
- Chris – if you can directionally drill for long distances then you should be further away from the rim
- Amber – you should not be able to see rigs/wells on the rim from the river – visual impacts should be avoided
- Consensus: NSO stipulations should be maintained ¼ mile!
- Need some clarification on the definition of corridor for the purpose of NSO stipulations
- Amber suggested mineral withdrawal in the corridor while honoring existing lease rights
- Ernie is concerned about the track record of BLM on this, and there was concern about the future ability to get resources
- Aside from no drilling in the corridor, there should be no exploratory activities taking place there either
- Ernie supports oil & gas as important income to the county, but doesn’t want to see exploration and development in the corridor
- Uranium impacts/opportunities should be managed as well
- Buffer zone around corridor to protect ORVs from oil and gas or minerals – minimum of 500 feet set back from rim (exclude private land) – it’s currently managed in 40 acre segments and there is currently a setback for scenic values – what is it?

- No new roads in corridor
- Some mineral withdrawal
- Some no mineral withdrawal
- Legislated NSO
- NSO stipulations – should be a buffer around river depending on ecological, visual, environmental conditions
- Slick Rock area NSO is well done
- Hydrologic connection to springs – need to be careful of fracturing and drilling disturbance to ground water
- Doug: Manage just like now: NSO. As managed now, directional drilling allowed.
- DV: Would prefer legislation to permanently withdraw, so can't be changed in the future.
- CM: What about uranium?
- Doug: Yes, potential. Could legislation do both? Legislate NSO (allow to access directionally), but withdraw surface?
- BS: But I'm not sure, because we don't know what minerals will be viable in the future.
- Doug: Yes, like potash. Could be really important in the future.
- DV: There is more than 1 potash deposit, but there is only 1 Dolores. In most cases wilderness (or legislation) does require mineral withdrawal. But the Wilderness act allows entry in extreme emergencies.
- Doug: Propose that mineral extraction only be allowed in extreme situations, with no surface occupancy.
- DV: Could probably craft something legislatively.

5. Does your group have any input on grazing issues or management?

- Generally support grazing as it is occurring, particularly grazing management strategy is important to consider
- Grazing should not be detrimental to riparian community – Al Heaton's grazing on Crocker-Bedford's place is a good example of how to do this
- Leave it to range specialists and grazing lease holders – encourage best management practices
- Grazing management on river corridor has been managed fairly well
- Maintain proper functioning conditions
- Continue grazing rights within sound range management practices
- Emphasize winter grazing rotation in lower river – reach 4 & 5
- JD: Montezuma County considers cows to be an ORV.
- All: Some livestock managers are better than others (consensus).
- All: Maintain grazing (consensus) as long as adhering to standards.
- All: Keep for "Western heritage".
- JD: Would like to see BLM include language guaranteeing that grazing will continue (no permanent removal via grass bank, as in the Monument of the Ancients).
- JD: language in proclamation for Escalante might work.
- DV: not much use actually.
- Doug: used to be winter grazing.
- JD: important to community and culture.

- DV: Yes, include statement in “preamble” reaffirming grazing.
- BS: USFS demanding higher standards for range.
- DV: some adapt better than others.

6. Are there any other protection tools related to the ORVs and the corridor in general that your group would like the Working Group to think about as we move into the final stages of this process?

- Ernie thinks we should use management tools specific to different reaches of the river: 1) trail management – some places have access and some don’t, 2) protect existing users – protect from being shut down and also from being over developed
- Amber agrees with above, but thinks there should be a big picture tool that holds it together – special management around NCA
- Almost agreement, but concern that this could get out of our hands or hijacked by the outside world
- But in theory, a legislated community-based plan seems like the solution
- The group is interested in a community-based legislated plan for the Dolores – there are concerns and caveats, but a very productive discussion
- Fear that process could be hijacked by forces outside of here – would need to be local control
- Interest in maintaining a say in an alternative as it would fuel actualization
- Critical question is “What are we trying to protect against – what are the threats?”
- We have to remember that we’re here because of W&S process and we need to make sure that the ORV’s weigh into our discussions
- Remember that some ORVs are not directly dependent on federal reserve water right, so look to other tools
- Special management area – rethink ORVs in relationship to segments – manage each reach a little more specifically – use legislation
- Need more science to determine how much water is needed to support ORVs
- Need to review existing science on water as necessary
- Final analysis & consensus on Dolores River Corridor Special Management Area – use this SMA to remove Dolores River from W&S river suitability
- Look into special federal legislation besides W&S to protect ORVs. Where are there examples of this? Rio Grande? Cuchara?
- W&S concerns because of federal control – want to be educated on other possibilities
- Need long-term protection
- W&S: consider Wilderness study area, don’t change current management of existing W&S, avoid private land, consider converting W&S to Wilderness area, but concern over federal reserve water right must be considered
- National Conservation Area (NCA): landscape scale management – different from W&S – does not include federal reserve water right and condemnation
- NCA language – tailored to each area, enabling legislation unique for each area
- Funding can be better for NCA – managed by National Park Service
- Local government/county ordinances work with private land owners to create interface for protecting ORVs and other values (OHV, private rights)
- Chester: source water protection plan – watershed planning effort

- Source water protection plan driving water sources – filed with CDPHE – five grants currently being used to create plan from Rico to Dove Creek
- Long term tool: use Theme Level management suite - Theme 2, appropriate emphasis on leave like it is/minimum human impact/natural focus
- DV: W&S protects against power lines and corridors and pipelines, so we would need to incorporate such protections into any alternative legislation.
- BS: SWCO is the recipient of many utility corridors. The reality is that saying “none” is probably impossible. Good sentiment to guard against it, but probably not realistic.
- DV: Legislation could protect against utility corridors.
- BS: We probably will need more. Many already known.
- CM: transmission lines are worse than pipelines.
- DV: Probably could look at certain places that are more appropriate than others.
- Doug: Exactly what Bruce said: you need flexibility based on past or current use, instead of 1 general management for all. For example: the WSA can stay as WSA (not go to Wilderness because of water rights issues). Make Bradfield to Pumps a WSA (protect Al Heaton’s right to trail cattle). Keep above Bradfield as Multiple Use.
- DV: Leave the river as suitable? If so, will have to rehash every few years. Like with WSA, only congress can remove WSA status. Only congress can remove suitability.
- The way suitability works: either Legislate to transfer to Wild and Scenic designation (a few rivers have removed the Federal Reserved Water Right) –or take other action to protect ORVs . Could be Special Management Area by legislation, where you list the things you want to protect/maintain but it never becomes W&S (removes suitability).
- BS: Could you use SMA plan through RMP? Enact protection specific to uses?
- DV: the way I see it the Dolores is an outstanding part of the West. A 10-yr management plan is too impermanent, too subject to politics for long term protection. In my opinion, the only way to protect values is through legislation, with a management plan.
- CM: Enough protection to protect, but leave flexibility.

7. Are there any other issues or concerns that have not been addressed in the discussions to date that your group would like to discuss?

- Not ready to reaffirm W&S until versed on other federal protection options
- We are missing many values because we are focusing on “official” ORVs – we are missing recreational fishing, OHV, private land owners, and hiking in other canyons. This could skew management to not protect these important values – could add these in Opportunities and Concerns. 1990 Plan does not focus on ORVs exclusively.
- Recreational facilities from dam to Bradfield Bridge - no boat launch at dam – decommissioned campground should be reopened
- Hiking trails, ATV or horse trails – do we need more?
- Travel Management Plan – what is the current plan for travel management? Right amount of trails now.
- Traditional Ute management practices need to be considered in management
- Introduction of condors
- Keep grizzlies out
- No wolves either