

COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
River Corridor Working Group Meeting Minutes
March 26, 2002

Attendees:

Greg Gnesios	Shaun Deeney	Tom Kleinschnitz
Russ Walker	Walter Fees	Paul Merluzzi
Travis Baier	Ted Howell	Jerry Nolan
Ed Chamberlin	Denny Huffman	Jane Ross
Lowell Clark		

Greetings and Introductions

Group Leader Russ Walker called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. All attendees received a package of materials containing the agenda, proposed guidelines for the group, a list of issues and topics for discussion, draft brochure "River Runner's Etiquette and Responsibilities," minutes from the March 12 meeting, and e-mail comments received concerning management of the River Corridor (see attached).

Working Group Discussions

Russ requested an additional agenda item be added, which is discussing a possible field trip for the Working Group.

Russ discussed the overall process he envisions for the Working Group:

- This group will report recommendations to the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA) Advisory Council at its monthly meetings.
- The Advisory Council will have the opportunity for further deliberation, but the council is expected to accept the group's recommendations.
- The group should consider a range of recommended management actions to facilitate in developing management alternatives.
- The group will strive for consensus on issues.

The list of issues and topics provided to the group was reviewed, and two additions to the list were requested. Items added were 1) the ownership of the Loma boat launch, and whether the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) should try to acquire the land or leave it with the Division of Wildlife (DOW), and 2) visual resource management along the river corridor.

The first discussion centered on topics 1 and 2, river ethics and education (on both the river and wildlife). The draft brochure, "River Runner's Etiquette and Responsibilities," was reviewed. Suggestions for improvement include:

- Make it specific to Ruby Canyon.
- Add pictures for clarification on required equipment, such as fire pans and solid human waste removal systems (groovers).
- Develop a map, or brochure, that incorporates wildlife education on nesting areas, bird watching, etc.

The Working Group was asked to assist the BLM in establishing a CCNCA photo album by sharing pictures.

It was decided that the topic of education could be revisited after some other issues were resolved, in order to incorporate the resolutions into the education process. Tom Kleinschnitz will be the contact for brochure revisions. Dissemination of the brochure and other information was brought up. The website will be a valuable source for information about the entire CCNCA, but the site needs work. Group members should review the site at <http://www.co.blm.gov/colocanyons/index.htm> and offer suggestions for improvement at the next meeting.

One consensus point in the group was that any on-site interpretation signage should be limited to the launch site.

There was some discussion about private property issues along the river. The BLM will provide its realty specialist, at the next meeting, to talk about the current status of private land and possibilities for future land acquisitions.

The last topic discussed concerned human waste management and fire pan requirements. The group reached consensus on requiring all river users, not just those planning on camping, to carry with them solid human waste disposal systems. Rationale behind this recommendation is that human waste already poses a problem along the river, as well as in the other zones of the CCNCA. The issue will only get worse with increased use, and it is unrealistic to believe that only overnight users contribute to this problem.

In addition, the Working Group recommends that fire pans be required for all river users, between the months of November and April. Rationale behind this recommendation is that unexpected circumstances in colder months often result in unprepared river users having no fire pans but needing to build fires.

Open items:

The Working Group needs to be informed about wildlife issues, and it was requested that both the BLM and DOW provide the group with an information sheet specific to wildlife concerns. This information will help the group in developing management alternatives.

A field trip is scheduled for April 12, 2002. Attendance must be finalized no later than Monday, April 8, 2002. Tom can accommodate most of the group, but arrangements must be made if more transportation is needed.

The River Corridor Working Group contact is Russ Walker, telephone (970) 242-0966, or e-mail rwalker@mesastate.edu. The BLM contact is Jane Ross, CCNCA Planning and Environmental Coordinator, telephone (970) 244-3027, or e-mail jane_ross@co.blm.gov.

The next Working Group meeting will be on April 9, 2002, at 5:00 p.m., in the BLM conference room. Campsites, permits and group sizes (topics 6, 7, and 8) are on the agenda. Tonight's meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Meeting Agenda

River Zone Working Group

Colorado Canyons NCA

BLM Conference Room

Tuesday, 3/26/02

5:00 - 7:00

Agenda*

Introduction of new members (5 min.)

A brief statement about "the overall process" (Russ) (5 min.)v

Discuss / adopt operating guidelines (attached) (5 min.)

Identify issues and concerns (15 min.)

Review the summary provided by Jerry Nolan (attached)

Discuss, add to, or modify as necessary

Prioritize issues and concerns (15 min.)

Identify issues that are most important or most contentious

Determine order in which issues will be discussed

First issue for discussion (30 min.)

Clarify the question to ensure that we're all talking about the same thing

Identify any constraints on recommendations that the group can make

Identify "open questions" and any additional information needed

Create a few options for addressing the issue

Discuss options

Goal: Develop a consensus as to which option the group prefers

Second issue for discussion, etc. (30 min.)

Review / agree on assignments for the next meeting (10 min.)

*Times are intended to suggest appropriate weight to be given to each agenda item.

Proposed Guidelines for Operations of the River Zone Working Group

Each participant is committed to seeking consensus.

Consensus is reached when the participants agree on a solution to the issue. The participants may not agree with *all* aspects of the solution, but they do not disagree enough to warrant opposition to the overall solution. Consensus is something that all participants can "live with."

Each participant:

- Can disagree with any proposal, but assumes the responsibility for providing a constructive alternative that seeks to accommodate the interests of all participants.
- Will actively participate in discussions and be willing to express their interests and values.
- Will share the information that is the basis for their arguments.
- Will stay focused on the specific topic under discussion and not digress. Opportunities will be provided to introduce new thoughts not closely related to the topic under discussion.
- Will keep their constituents informed, and report constituent concerns back to the Working Group.

List of Issues and Topics for Group Discussion

Loma/Westwater Topics

1. Education/river ethics.
2. Education—perhaps an interpretive brochure for important wildlife sites along the river?
3. Recognize and promote both consumptive and non-consumption uses of wildlife, including hunting, fishing, bird watching, photography, etc.
4. Fire pans and human waste.
5. Noxious weed control and what we can recommend about this problem. Identify critical habitat areas for nesting birds, sensitive species, and other wildlife, i.e., eagle, falcon, heron nesting sites; desert bighorn sheep lambing areas, etc., and discuss what measures can be taken to minimize disturbance in those areas.
6. Campsite overcrowding, especially Black Rocks management.
7. Permits—perhaps when use reaches a threshold level. Perhaps that threshold level is current campsite capacity.
8. Group size.
9. Motorized travel; threshold level on noise. What about hover craft or high-powered boats without mufflers? Can a maximum noise level be set? Has this been done anywhere else?
10. Personal watercraft.
11. How can rules be enforced?
12. Fees?

River Runner's Etiquette and Responsibilities

Know Before You Go . . .

- Read the river guidebooks, agency publications and topographical maps before running an unfamiliar section of river. Ask experienced friends, outfitter employees, agency rangers and local law enforcement agencies about unfamiliar runs before you go.
- Know the boundaries of the public lands, managed by federal, state and local agencies, and understand that not all publicly owned lands have unlimited access – check with the managing agency for any restrictions.
- Understand that private land is accessible with permission only and all landowner restrictions must be respected. It is the RESPONSIBILITY of the river runner to know where private land is.
- Commercial river guides must understand that criminal trespass subjects the responsible outfitter to the loss of their Colorado River Outfitting License.

Respect Others

- Respect other river runners' and private owners' space, privacy and solitude while on the river, in camp, on hikes and at boat ramps.
- Group your boats and equipment, leaving room for others at put-ins, take-outs and attraction sites. Expect another party to arrive.
- Avoid lunches at attraction sites or at least move off to the side of the trailhead or boat ramp.
- Yield on the river where appropriate. If other parties are going faster, allow their boats to pass. If you are going faster than the party in front of you, be sure your boats are grouped together before passing. Avoid extensive, unnecessary contacts with other parties while floating.
- Abstain from water fights with other parties.
- Radios, tapes and CD's should be turned off within earshot of other river parties and landowners. Using headsets is appropriate in sections of river that have extensive contact with others.
- Noise and loud partying is inconsiderate within earshot of another group.
- Explosives and fireworks ruin the solitude of a river trip and present a fire hazard. Firearms are not needed or appreciated outside hunting seasons.
- When encountering other parties on the same schedule communicate regarding planned lunch, attraction and camp stops.
- If your party is small consider smaller camps, leaving larger, more impacted camps for large groups when the canyon is busy.

Resource Protection

- River runners agree that Colorado River corridors contain extraordinary archaeological, scenic and biological values. River runners tread lightly when

traveling Colorado rivers and endeavor to “leave no trace” of their river journey.

- All garbage is hauled out. All food scraps are removed to avoid skunks, flies, ants, mice and other pests from congregating. Cigarette butts, twist ties, strings off fabrics, dental floss, candy wrappers and other small traces are to be meticulously disposed of.
- Liquid waste such as leftover beer, pop, juices, coffee and so on should be deposited in the river current.
- Solids from dishwater, soups, coffee and so on should be strained and hauled out. Grease from cooking should be hauled out.
- All fires should be contained in a fire pan. When practical, fires should be built near the river, away from vegetation. The use of driftwood, charcoal and wood brought from home is appropriate; the use of standing timber is unacceptable. When breaking camp there should be no trace of the fire, all charcoal is hauled out, excess firewood is scattered and unnatural wood (milled, sawed, etc.) is removed. In very arid time frames fires may be restricted or banned altogether, check with local land agencies or the county Sheriff’s Department before planning a campfire on a river journey.
- River runners carry and use toilet systems. All solid human waste is removed from river corridors. There are only two places to urinate in the river canyons. One is in the river; the other is far away from any camp or tent site. Urinating in gravels and sands are best, then organic soils. Urinating on hot rocks, compacted soils and in concentrated places cause odors. Urinating in wet sand, silt or shallow water with no current, after the river has peaked and receded, causes algae to flourish.
- Tread lightly on land by using low impact hiking; stay on main trails and avoid fragile soils. Be sensitive to trampling native plants and grasses and refrain from picking wildflowers. Pets should be restrained around other groups.
- Respect for wildlife includes no feeding, harassing, killing or displacing of animals. When encountering wildlife, maintain your distance and remain quiet. Pets should be restrained around wildlife.
- Treat archeological sites with respect. They are sacred places to Native Americans. Petroglyphs and pictographs are not to be touched. Ruins should not be entered, sat on or touched. Potsherds and arrowheads are to remain in place. Report violations to authorities. Historic structures, such as cabins and other buildings should be entered with care and all tools and artifacts are to remain in place.
- Leave natural objects where they are found. Leaving fossils and petrified wood for future generations is the right thing to do.
- In some areas river runners must follow specific rules designed to protect natural and cultural resource values. Ask agency offices and visitor centers if any special rules apply to the river you plan to run.

Equipment

Every trip:

- Must have a solid human waste carryout system for overnight trips. This system must be adequate for the size of the party and length of trip.
- Must have a fire pan for overnight trips and a charcoal carry out system.
- Must have adequate storage for carrying out garbage and trash.
- Must have first-aid supplies adequate for the size of the party.
- Must have repair materials to repair the types of boats on the trip.
- Must comply with all federal, state and local boating regulations that apply to the river segment.

UNDERSTAND YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND MAINTAIN RIVER ETIQUETTE, IT PROTECTS YOUR RIGHT TO RUN A RIVER!

E-mail Comments (as received by the BLM)

I'd like to weigh in on the issues and concerns.

1. To me, the highest priority issue is how recreational use in the river corridor will be managed or not by the BLM. How long can the use continue to be one that is subject to the merest of regulations as currently exist? Ethical river runners (most) always use groovers and fire pans, so the imposition of these regs should not have a detrimental effect on their river experience. Of concern is the number of people vying for a finite number of campsites, and the introduction of such large numbers by commercial outfitters and large private groups. During the formulation of the "Ruby" plan, there was a lot of discussion about the need not to impose too many regs as to designated camping sites, etc., so that people could have as great of a "wilderness" experience as they wanted, unfettered by gov't intrusion. Now, the sheer numbers of use dictate that some intervention is necessary now or in the future. Is there a way to create some regulations to implement now that do not have a chilling effect on the use of the river? In my mind, there is a tension between commercial users and private users. see greg's comments about comm'l groups muscling in. Do we designate campgrounds for large groups only so that these large commercial groups can be accommodated? While I sense that we are on the verge of having campsites designated (which is not a totally unreasonable idea from a resource protection standpoint), is there a mechanism available for assignment of sites that is more reliable than we have now, but less intrusive and demanding than a permit system?
2. On the issue of motorized use, personal watercraft should be banned in their entirety in the entire river zone we have jurisdiction over. The use of motors should be limited by horsepower, and to uses such as trolling, fishing, motorized rafts and canoes. Jet boats should be eliminated, or prohibited from certain stretches deep in both canyons, or at a minimum be seasonably restricted.
3. More consideration of wildlife values, such as prohibition of motorized use in critical nesting areas. Are there not nesting peregrine falcons, eagles and herons in this corridor, just to mention the larger more identifiable species? I agree with Shaun's concerns.
4. I don't disagree with (the) suggestion (adoption) of a river etiquette guide or protocol generally, but do object to the tone of some of the items in the code of ethics. While applicable to private and commercial river runners, some of the code is geared to preservation of the commercial aspect. I disagree that a private boater, even if one boat, should have to yield to larger commercial groups at certain campsites. Knowles Canyon has only one site: why should I have to limit my experience just to benefit a commercial outfitter.
5. I don't understand (the) comment "2) If group sizes are curtailed beyond these traditional numbers a launch limitation will need to be imposed."
6. River access to the Wilderness from the river is not an issue to me, unless there is a concern with the group size.

I echo (this individual's) concerns. I think the priority issue is protecting the riparian habitat and wilderness-related values of the river, which means ensuring that use doesn't impact these. I am concerned about group size, and believe we should look at imposing some more reasonable limitations. While I understand the commercial outfitters need to do their thing, the value of Ruby/Horsetheif is that it's a great river for private groups to float with families, etc. and commercial use shouldn't diminish that ability. So giving comm. use a priority in certain campsites, etc. seems a wrong way to go. The priority use should be private boaters.

I also think we need to look at limiting motors on this stretch of river. At the least, I will advocate for a ban on "jet skis" (personal water craft) and jet boats. I think a horsepower limitation is appropriate. No motor zones where

wildlife values exist is also reasonable. Protection of the resource should be the priority, continued use by private boaters second.

Finally, I think in terms of formulating alternatives, we should propose several that address our concerns. one might ban motors altogether, further limit group size, etc. another might just impose the limitations I suggested. The idea is to give BLM a range of options to address our concerns, not get locked into any single scenario we all agree on, that would inevitably (I fear) be too watered-down.

National environmental groups will be advocating for a motor ban, so it seems incumbent to me that we address the issue and propose alternatives that recognize the need to manage motorized use in this corridor.