

**COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
Rabbit Valley Working Group Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2002**

Attendees:

Art Donoho	David Dunsmoor	Dave Farny	Jane Ross
Bob Silbernagel	Arleta Carr	N. J. Fulmer	Lovell Sasser
Gene Arnesen	Kathy Click	Pete Jouflas	Troy Schnurr
Marian Atkins	Mike Click	Neal McKinstry	Julie Stotler
Sue Benjamin	Joe Dyk	John Potter	Charlie Sweet
		Steve Renstrom	Paul Toft

Greetings and Introductions

The meeting was held March 18 at the Fruita Civic Center, with 22 people attending.

Art Donoho and Bob Silbernagel, members of the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA) Citizens Advisory Council, called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. A third representative of the Advisory Council was unable to attend.

Working Group Discussions

Jane Ross, CCNCA Planning and Environmental Coordinator for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), presented a brief history and explanation of the National Conservation Area (NCA), the Advisory Council, the creation of four zones within the NCA, and the responsibilities of the zones' Working Groups.

Requests were made for an individual other than members of the NCA Advisory Council to act as a chairman of this Working Group. A rancher, Dave Farny, agreed to serve as chairman, and there were no objections or other nominations.

Bob Silbernagel agreed to keep a record of the Working Group meetings.

Troy Schnurr, NCA Recreation Ranger, said that BLM Utah hopes to manage, in close conjunction with Rabbit Valley, the area south of Interstate 70, from the Colorado border west to the Westwater road. Whatever the Rabbit Valley Working Group and Advisory Council recommend will have a direct impact on Utah as well.

Troy informed the group that the area is currently managed under the 10-year old Rabbit Valley Management Plan, which preceded the Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge Integrated Resource Management Plan. It is the only area in this region of BLM lands that has a designated trail system. Jane will have copies of the Rabbit Valley plan available for the Working Group members at their next meeting.

Troy outlined a number of issues he deals with on a day-to-day basis in Rabbit Valley. Those issues include:

1. Educating all users about rules and protection of resources.
2. Group use areas; there are increasing requests for group cookouts, camping, events, etc.
3. Dispersed parking is an issue, as well as the need to split parking/loading areas for horses, motorcycles, and all-terrain vehicles (ATV).
4. Keeping hikers and horseback riders on designated trails, when cows create new trails in non-motorized areas.
5. People are upset that there are already too many signs in the area.
6. Ongoing maintenance of heavily used trails in a desert environment, whether those are pedestrian, equestrian, or motorized trails.
7. Problems with small designated camp areas and increasing dispersed camping.
8. There is a need to control target shooting in order to protect other users.
9. Conflicts exist between recreational users and private landowners within the Rabbit Valley zone, along with the possibility of the BLM acquiring those lands.

Specifically addressing Item 9, landowner Pete Joufflas, a member of the Working Group, said his family has been trying for years to work out a purchase or exchange agreement with the BLM for his property, but so far, without success.

Art Donoho stated that the motor sports community has money available to work with landowners in acquiring lands, or easements, as a way to keep trails open for motorized vehicles. This would also allow protection and/or conservation of other resources. Art and Pete plan to discuss this option further.

Dave Farny suggested the possibility of moving the fence along U.S. Highway 6 & 50, at the north boundary of the NCA. By moving the fence closer to the pavement, the size of the stock driveway along the highway is reduced. BLM officials said they would investigate the legal ramifications of such a move.

Dave continued by asking the Working Group to meet again at 5:30 p.m., Monday, on March 25, at the Fruita Civic Center. He requested that Working Group members think of other planning issues in Rabbit Valley prior to that meeting, along with possible solutions. A field trip to Rabbit Valley will be scheduled during this meeting, as well.

The Working Group adjourned at 8:15 p.m.