

COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
Rabbit Valley Working Group Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2002

Attendees:

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|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Bob Silbernagel | Steve Cohn | Eric Rechel |
| Gene Arnesen | Jim Cooper | Lynae Rogers |
| Sue Benjamin | Dave Dunsmoor | Jane Ross |
| Nadja Brozina | Kate Ellis | Lovell Sasser |
| Arleta Carr | Dave Farny | Julie Stotler |
| Kathy Click | N. J. Fulmer | Charlie Sweet |
| Mike Click | Neal McKinstry | Paul Toft |
| | John Potter | |

Greetings and Introductions

Chairman Dave Farny called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Working Group Discussions

The Working Group watched the video sent from Congressman Scott McInnis for viewing at the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA) Advisory Council meeting on April 11, 2002. In the video, Congressman McInnis discussed the intent of the CCNCA enabling legislation and some of the history leading to the National Conservation Area (NCA) designation. Congressman McInnis clarified his intent on recreational management of the river by reiterating that the river is not a part of the NCA, and the current planning process is not to include the river's recreational management. At the same time, the legislation does not affect or change the authority of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Grand Junction field office (GJFO) to manage river recreation.

The group discussed the trail system, especially related to Harley Dome. No decisions have yet been made on trails. GJFO representatives visited the BLM Moab field office to discuss that office's planning effort on Utah Rims. The Utah Rims management plan began as a student project and is in final draft. Management of the Utah Rims is not a high priority for the Moab field office, because its resources limit management to areas closer to Moab, an area that receives a much larger magnitude of visitors. The Working Group may want to consider this and recommend to the CCNCA Advisory Council that the entire area be managed as an ecosystem. It was also suggested that an agreement be executed specifying the management of and vision for the two areas—Rabbit Valley and Utah Rims. The trails in Utah will impact the trails in Rabbit Valley, and vice-versa.

The potential for managing private land held by Chris Joufflas was discussed. The Working Group would like to see the area used for a campground, and this recommendation should be presented to the CCNCA Advisory Council as well.

The off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail concept developed by Jim Cooper, BLM Transportation Planner, is popular among most in the group. Some concern remains about building new trails without closing existing trails. Fewer but better trails are good for fragile ecosystems. The concept of multiple uses should not be limited to human use but rather land use as well, respecting wildlife habitat. The group can still develop alternatives based on the overall concept. Actual trail approval is contingent upon archaeological, paleontological, and cultural clearances.

The next issues discussed were options for measuring carrying capacity and imposing limits. Alternatives need to be developed with flexibility in mind. The concept of Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) can be used when management actions increase as an area is impacted beyond what the plan deems acceptable. Increased management can include permits, fees, and trail closures. No decisions were made, but comments included the use of volunteers to patrol, clean up, and provide a presence on the ground. Some believe that charging fees would be welcome if the camping areas were nicely done. It was pointed out that the fee demonstration program for the BLM allows the sponsoring field office to retain 80 percent of those fees collected.

The group decided to have one or two more meetings, allowing time to reach consensus on other issues, including trails and campgrounds.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 3, 2002, in the Fruita City Council Chambers, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was adjourned.