

COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
Wilderness Working Group Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2002

Attendees:

Doralyn Genova	Shaun Deeney	Wade Johnson	Jane Ross
Warren Gore	Terry Gray	Celeste Marsh	Bill Schapley
Joe Keys	Bill Hamman	Bryan Moore	Bob Sherrill
Belle Chesnick	David Hawks	Dave Price	Harold Snyder

Greetings and Introductions

The meeting was called to order. Bill Schapley introduced himself and others followed suit.

Working Group Discussions

It was mentioned that the Working Group should look at the Advisory Council guidelines provided and try to recap from last week what was important. The Working Group's primary mission is to identify in more detail the priorities for the Wilderness and surrounding area south of the Colorado River, and then put those priorities into some kind of logical sequence. The Working Group will develop another agenda.

Someone inquired about the time frame for this group in the process of discussing the next meeting, and the response was that meetings might continue into September. The objective is to provide recommendations for the Wilderness zone, defined as the portions of the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA) located south of the Colorado River. The group's recommendations will assist the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in drafting the resource management plan (RMP) for the CCNCA. Working Group housekeeping matters were addressed. A representative from the group is needed to meet with the Advisory Council during their monthly meetings (April 11 is the next meeting). The Advisory Council has specified that it does not necessarily want someone from the council itself steering this Working Group. A representative from the Working Group will report to the monthly Advisory Council meetings.

The next Working Group meeting is scheduled for April 2, with all group members strongly urged to attend, as it will be an important meeting. The BLM plans to make presentations regarding the background on Wilderness management regulations, as well as BLM's own perspectives. A BLM Wilderness expert from the State Office is planning to attend, and it is critical to read the regulations and literature provided—paying special attention to the specific language. Group members are encouraged to call the BLM with any questions.

It is important for the Working Group to conduct field trips to observe the areas that will be addressed in the RMP. Participants can meet at the BLM office, then convoy to the areas. The BLM will provide transportation. The group can expect at least two field trips during the planning process.

Someone asked about touring the Pollock Bench area, and general discussion ensued regarding where to go, weather's impact, timetable, etc. Wade Johnson, BLM Interpretive Specialist, suggested first prioritizing the issues, and by doing so, making it easier to focus on which areas to visit. Some areas cannot be seen without a horse, or hiking, but some areas would accommodate a "windshield tour" with some walking.

Wade questioned whether the group wanted to limit itself to a windshield tour. Some driving tours are sufficient for seeing key trailheads and other sites, especially for the Pollock Canyon Estates area. This particular area involves private-land issues, as well as the Division of Wildlife (DOW) land issues. A comment was made that the group could go in 3 or 4 miles, but it was questioned whether that was necessarily advantageous. Instead, it was suggested that getting a view from above for seeing the area would be more beneficial.

The first field trip is scheduled for the morning of April 13 and will encompass the Wilderness Front Country. A full-day tour of the Wilderness backcountry is scheduled for April 20.

Returning to the planning process, the group was encouraged to reach consensus on all issues. The Advisory Council has the authority to make recommendations on any items that the group cannot agree on. Members' personal knowledge of the Wilderness area, as well as BLM's expertise, are good resources for making informed decisions.

The level of development within the Wilderness area is an issue needing discussion. The group talked about what is and is not currently allowed in several areas. Overnight versus day-use camping, and the extent to which facilities are provided, i.e., tables, fire rings, toilets, etc., are just a few of the issues. Someone pointed out that you can park and camp anywhere off BS road. It was wondered if some kind of a camping, or staging, area is needed for Mee Canyon, and whether an alternate parking area should be provided when the gate is locked—this is a real issue to keep in mind. Another member stressed that the level of development is a matter impacting each trailhead in the Wilderness, not just off BS road. A general discussion followed about Dinosaur Hill and the BLM facilities offered there. The parking area accommodates 50 vehicles, and an interpretive kiosk is located at the trailhead. The Working Group may want to check this area out, too. Jane Ross, CCNCA Planning Team Leader, stressed that Dinosaur Hill is an example only, and not necessarily where the BLM wants this group's recommendations to go—the group needs to come up with their own.

Devils Canyon has problems with both parking and human waste, and designating the area as day use only was discussed. It is a problem now, with lots of backpackers

taking off from the Devils Canyon Trailhead. The group agreed with the need to stress to the Advisory Council that a real problem exists now.

It is more important to focus on planning for both current- and future-use issues and to avoid concerns over funding for carrying out the group recommendations. With the increasing popularity of, and draw to, the area, user impact will continue to grow. The group is not expected to solve all of the problems, but rather identify them for planning purposes. Equally as important is providing recommendations on how the newly acquired properties (Gore and Aubert) will be managed. Maintenance of existing facilities is an issue.

Bill Schapley began reviewing the list of issues (see attached). Problems exist with illegal all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use, impacting both the BLM and private-land owners. The ATV issues are not limited to hunting season, and in many cases, ATVs are not following designated routes. It was suggested that ATVs, along with parking and human waste issues, be listed as a high priorities to the Advisory Council.

The group discussed the hot topic of "admin" use, but agreed to hold off on making any decisions until a BLM presentation is made on that topic. A BLM range expert is presenting a summary of grazing status at the next Working Group meeting. Administrative use entails motorized access into the Wilderness for necessary reasons to support grazing, search and rescue, and agency requirements. The Advisory Council may require BLM staff to clarify these various uses given some conflict.

Another issue is Colorado River boaters accessing Wilderness trails from the river. Copies of the *Wilderness Act and Management Policies* were provided to the group for reading prior to the next meeting.

There is also some concern over the level of commercial outfitting in the Wilderness. While the current activity may be fine, future activity should be planned for.

It was noted that no representative for the mountain biking community was present at tonight's meeting, probably because bikes are not allowed in the Wilderness area. Some mountain bikers may have utilized a road along the Wilderness boundary, but riders will not leave their bikes in the parking lot; they are carrying them into the Wilderness and hiding them. Mountain bikes are not allowed in the Wilderness, whether they are being ridden or not. Someone suggested one entire meeting dedicated to this issue, or perhaps grouping mountain bike and ATV issues together for the sake of speeding up the planning process.

The conflict between horseback riders and hikers was broached. It was felt that, while it is not so much of a problem now, it might be in the future. This situation could be addressed with interpretive and educational activities. A brochure published by a group from Crested Butte was cited as a good informational piece on trail etiquette. Some trails may have to be designated for hiking only, but a representative of the backcountry equestrian community urged the user groups to work together.

A member asked whether commercial use and grazing were current issues, and the general consensus was no, at least not at this time, and not unless a camping area is established near a stock pond. People do leave gates open, which is always a problem. Grazing permittees have agreed with the BLM that cattle will not be using the canyon bottoms.

Discussions turned to target shooting, which was pointed out as being different than hunting. Someone expressed concern that common sense cannot be legislated, and people must be relied upon to act responsibly. Both target shooting and hunting are allowed; it is not a national park. There is a long history of hunting in that country, especially for deer. Visitors and non-locals might not know when the hunting seasons are open, and this may be an educational issue for people unaware and coming off I-70. The group was not sure whether the Visitors' Bureau provided informational brochures on this subject, but consensus was reached in that the group does not want signs displayed in the National Conservation Area (NCA) as a way of warning people.

In order to help group members visualize and focus on the issues at hand, a white board was used. There are overlapping issues, as well as a need to evaluate changing either the requirements or infrastructure. It is part of the Working Group's mission to develop some rational approach in sorting all of this out. Group members were encouraged to develop their list of issues for the next meeting, keeping in mind that it is not meant to be a final list. Wait to make any decisions until after seeing what the BLM has to say.

Water issues were added to the growing list—water rights and creating physical water developments, and existing reservoirs versus new dams. This last item is likely to be incompatible with the Wilderness Act, according to the BLM. Discussion continued regarding solar structures and helping wildlife with such things as guzzlers for providing water. While these guzzlers would be within the NCA, they would not be inside the Wilderness area. The local fire department wants to know where the guzzlers will be located.

The Working Group must plan for resource protection, ensuring that users have a quality experience in the Wilderness, yet protecting precious resources at the same time. It is up to the group to explain how these things are interrelated in the Wilderness area.

The group was warned that not everything would match. It may help the group through the planning process to focus on the types of uses, and the reasons for those uses, in the Wilderness.

The BLM discussed resolving issues. Instituting new regulations is not practical, and therefore, not recommended for the Working Group to waste its time and energy on. Focusing on recommendations and long-term guidance, with practical approaches to the issues at hand for the CCNCA Wilderness zone, are the most important things for

the Working Group to consider. The Internet may provide access to some existing interpretations worth looking at. It would be beneficial for the group to see a good plan document for comparison, especially an executive summary of that plan and its Record of Decision. Bill Schapley volunteered to conduct this search for developing the group's list.

Group members were asked to bring specific questions to the next meeting. The tentative agenda provides for about 1.5 hours of discussion, and the remainder of the meeting is open to questions. After listening to an explanation of expectations for presenting the Working Group's report to the Advisory Council on April 11, Bill Hamman volunteered. The group's representative does not have to attend the entire meeting, and their part can last from 2 or 3 minutes to 15 minutes. The group was advised not to get into individual issues, but rather focus on the entire planning process. Group processes were then discussed, and as the group comes to each issue, it was asked whether someone would step forward to write up the issue, especially the recommendation and the reasons for that recommendation. After group discussion on that issue, and the person most engaged in a particular issue will write it up. Also, after the minutes are drafted, perhaps each person could initial, or identify their issue. Providing e-mail addresses will be helpful too.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

LIST OF ISSUES

Camping (porta johns and fire pans)

- Near the trail
- More development of facilities
- Trails on south when addressing the BS road (Jones and Knowles)
- Mee Canyon camping is allowed; however, cherry-stem and Rattlesnake are day use only and possible need for facilities
- Also can camp along the BS road and access roads
- If take camping off the roads, need somewhere else people can camp

Level of development at each trailhead

- South and north
- Parking and camping

Newly acquired properties, how will be managed

Illegal ATV use on BS road

- Hunting season
- Recreation
- All ATV use needs to be on designated route

Administrative use in Wilderness by government agencies

- Jim D. will go over grazing specifics at next meeting

Interface with river corridor

- Group size (raft and Wilderness, needs to be discussed with the river group)

Commercial use in western side

- Additional permits
- Level of use (hunting included and rock climbing)

Mountain bikes and ATV use on access roads and BS roads

- Potential enforcement issue

Conflicts between users

- Etiquette
- Maybe need separate designations
- Commercial use conflict

Resource Protection

Wildlife

Range

Water

Visitor Exp./quality

Private/Commercial/Interests

Hunting

Outfitting

Grazing

Private property

Types/Reasons for Users

Admin

ATV

SAR

Vehicles

Bikes

River

Horse

Cultural/arch resources
Conflicting uses
Wildfire

Foot
Rec-hunting

How to Address Issues

New Reqs
Adapt to existing reqs
Law enforcement
Education/interp
Infrastructure

Bill Hamonn will report to the Council on April 11th.