

## Meeting notes from ACEC Relevance and Importance Thursday, July 14, 2005

### DRAFT MATERIAL – DO NOT DISTRIBUTE

Team members present: Tim Novotny, Andrea Minor, Rob Schmitzer, Fred Conrath, John Husband, Jeremy Casterson; BLM. Jim May, Melanie Martin, Jean Tate & Jeff Ward; BAH

#### Potential ACECs:

Nominations by Center for Native Ecosystems (CNE)- Submitted all sites listed on the Colorado Natural Heritage Program database, totaling nearly 100 sites, most of less than 1000 acres. The majority of the areas include rare plant species and plant associations. There were a few T&E and sensitive wildlife and fish species included in the nominations. The BLM tentatively decided that all species ranked as G-1 or G-2 would meet the relevance and importance criteria. The decision was made to begin sorting out all “G-1” species and then at “G-2” species. Jean Tate (BAH) organized a table that organized sites based on global and state rank.

The first two areas that were looked at included Sterling Place (5,584 acres) and Spitzie Draw (8,172 acres) (site names). Both of these sites contain “G1” species the *Penstemon gibbensii* (Gibben’s Beardtongue). Sites with “G2” species were identified on the map to also be considered. These sites included- Bassett Springs, Browns Draw, Chicken Springs, No-Name Springs, Pot Creek, West Boone Draw, Whiskey Springs East, Willow Spring @ Cold Spring Mountain, and Zenobia Peak East. All of these sites are ranked “G2” for the *Oenothera acutissima* (Narrow-leaf evening Primrose). The decision was made to not look at any sites listed as “G3” or higher (lower ranking, such as G3, G4, G5) based on the concept of not meeting importance criteria. Also, 5 “G2” plant communities were listed in 11 occurrences. Therefore, BLM may consider a total of 22 sites for inclusion in Alternative D as ACECs: 11 for rare plants and 11 for rare plant communities. BLM State Director’s sensitive species list to verify that all the proposed species were addressed and identified, which they were. Plant communities are contained in Table **YYZ** (Table created by Jean Tate).

BLM is currently running this strategy by the State Office staff. BLM will notify NWCOS as soon as we hear anything for State Office.

Potential ACEC (carrying through at least one alt): **?? To Be Determined**

“The Real West” or “The Real Working West” ACEC - Proposed by the T. Wright Dickinson (Vermillion Ranch, Limited Partnership) (Proposal dated 07/08/2005)  
The BLM is still working on the relevance and importance of this proposal. We will notify NWCOS as soon as we have made a determination.

Cross Mountain ACEC - Colorado Wilderness Network, et al. (Proposal dated 07/08/2005)

**Overall Values:** ACEC includes the current Cross Mountain ACEC (650 acres), Cross Mountain WSA (14,081 acres) and CWP area that surrounds the WSA (3,976 acres), (18,057 total acres).

**Values sited in proposal:**

- Naturalness: Not relevance criteria
- Outstanding opportunities for solitude: Not relevance criteria
- Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation: Not relevance criteria
- General wildlife habitat (Pike minnow, sage grouse, big game habitat, etc.): Threatened and endangered species habitat is only present in the Yampa River, and its 100-year floodplain (located within current Cross Mountain ACEC boundary). Other wildlife species do not meet relevance criteria.
- Unique ecosystems and rare species: Yampa Beardtongue, Ownbey Thistle are located within the current Cross Mountain ACEC boundary.
- Unique geology: Unique geologic values located within the current Cross Mountain ACEC boundary.
- Cultural resources: Cultural resources cited in proposal are similar to those found throughout the Field Office.
- Other values: Not relevance criteria

**R&I Values-**

**Relevance-** #1 and #2 are only met within the boundary of the current Cross Mountain ACEC.

**Importance-** 1- meets regional/national significance for scenic; 2- T&E species for Colorado Pikeminnow, sensitive plant species; 3- T&E and boating (scenic); 4- Can be very hazardous for floatboating. However, all of these values are within the boundary of the current Cross Mountain ACEC.

**Special Management attention-** N/A

**Summary of findings:** Identified values that meet relevance and importance criteria are located only within the boundary of the current ACEC, which is

being carried through the alternatives analysis process. For that reason, the larger proposed area is being rejected.

**Diamond Breaks ACEC**- Colorado Wilderness Network, et al. (Proposal dated 07/08/2005)

**Overall Values:** ACEC includes the Diamond Breaks WSA (31,480 acres) and CWP area that surrounds the WSA (1,520 acres) (33,000 total acres).

**Values sited in proposal:**

- Naturalness: Not relevance criteria
- Outstanding opportunities for solitude: Not relevance criteria
- Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation: Not relevance criteria
- General wildlife habitat (Bald Eagle, Sage Grouse, Peregrine Falcons, big game habitat, etc.): Threatened and endangered species listed, or their habitats, are not present in proposed area.
- Unique ecosystems and rare species: Relevant values not present in proposed area.
- Unique geology: Relevant values not present in proposed area.
- Cultural resources: Cultural resources cited in proposal are similar to those found throughout the Field Office.
- Other values: Not relevance criteria
- Scenic values: Scenic values cited in proposal are no more significant than other areas found throughout the Field Office.

**R&I Values-**

**Relevance-** The proposed area does not meet relevance criteria; i.e., do not contain unique values to the region.

**Importance-** N/A

**Special Management attention-** N/A

**Summary of Findings:**

Will not be carried forward as ACEC in any alternative because it does not meet relevance criteria.

**Pinyon Ridge Special Management Area**- Colorado Wilderness Network, et al. (Proposal dated 07/08/2005)

This proposal was submitted as a nomination for a special management area, not an ACEC. BLM's preliminary wilderness character determination was that the area within the LSFO does not contain wilderness characteristics or other values that would warrant special management.

**R&I Values-**

**Relevance-** N/A

**Importance-** N/A

**Special Management attention-** N/A

**Vermillion Basin ACEC**– Colorado Wilderness Network, et al. (Proposal dated 07/08/2005)

**Overall Values:** The proposed area encompasses approximately 90,000 acres.

**Values sited in proposal:**

- Naturalness: Not relevance criteria
- Outstanding opportunities for solitude: Not relevance criteria
- Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation: Not relevance criteria
- General wildlife habitat (Bald Eagle, Sage Grouse, Peregrine Falcons, big game and habitat, etc.): Threatened and endangered species listed, or their habitats, are not present in proposed area.
- Unique ecosystems and rare species (rare plant species): Relevant values not present in proposed area.
- Unique geology: Unique geologic values located within the Vermillion Basin area, and within the current Irish Canyon ACEC and Lookout Mountain ACEC boundaries.
- Cultural resources: Unique cultural values located only within the current Irish Canyon ACEC boundary and on State Land.
- Fragile soils: Not relevance criteria
- Scenic values: Unique scenic values located within the Vermillion Basin area (due to badland terrain), and within the current Irish Canyon ACEC and Lookout Mountain ACEC boundaries.
- Other values: Not relevance criteria

**R&I Values-**

**Relevance-** #1- Significant scenic values are located in the Vermillion Basin area due to Badland topography. #3- Rare geologic features are located only within the current Irish Canyon ACEC.

**Importance-** Scenic and geologic values are more than locally significant within the current Irish Canyon ACEC. However, these values are not more than locally significant outside the current Irish Canyon ACEC area.

**Special Management attention-** N/A

**Summary of Findings:**

Values inside the current Irish Canyon ACEC meet relevance and importance criteria; however, values outside the current Irish Canyon ACEC meet relevance

criteria, but not importance criteria for identified scenic and geologic values. For that reason, the larger proposed area is being rejected.

**Existing ACECs:**

**Cross Mountain Canyon-** (Current ACEC; ~3,000 acres)

**Values:** Threatened and endangered species, Colorado BLM sensitive plant species, scenic quality.

**Special Management (based on current RMP):** Management for VRM Class I objectives; no coal leasing; no surface occupancy for new oil and gas leases; no mineral material sales; recommendation for withdrawal from mineral entry; closed to OHV use, except for permitted uses; no woodcutting; all other uses/actions allowed, if compatible with ACEC.

**Options for RMP-** No special protection in alternative B and C (drop ACEC); rely on standard approach for permitted surface disturbing activities; what else has been done or being done that could influence the management/protection of ID'ed special values. Will be carried through as ACEC in Alternative D.

**R&I Values-**

**Relevance-**Has significant scenic value; has T&E species for fish (Colorado Pikeminnow); natural process (Yampa River canyon); and can be Natural hazard (steep cliff).

**Importance-** 1- meets regional/national significance for scenic; 2- T&E species for Colorado Pikeminnow; 3- T&E and boating (scenic); 4-Can be very hazardous for floatboating

**Special Management attention-** To be determined

**Summary of Findings:**

Will be carried forward as ACEC in Alternatives D for analysis.

**Irish Canyon-** (Current ACEC; ~11,680 acres)- Including the Ink Springs area

**Values:** Remnant plant associations, Colorado BLM sensitive plant species, geologic values, cultural values, and scenic quality.

**Special Management (based on current RMP):** Avoidance stip for seismic activity and existing oil and gas leases; no coal leasing; no use of vehicles off designated roads and trails; no woodcutting; no ROW for transmission, pipeline, or powerline corridors; all other uses allowed, if compatible with ACEC.

**Options for RMP-** No special protection in alternative B (drop ACEC); rely on standard approach for permitted surface disturbing activities; what else has been done or being done that could influence the management/protection of ID'ed special values. Will be carried through as ACEC in Alternative C and D.

**R&I Values-**

**Relevance-** 1- significant in cultural and scenic values.

**Importance-** 1- more than locally significant cultural and geologic values; 3- culturally national significance

**Special Management attention-** To be determined

**Summary of Findings:**

Will be carried forward as ACEC in Alternatives C and D for analysis.

**Limestone Ridge-** (Current ACEC/RNA; ~1,359 acres)

**Values:** Remnant plant associations, Colorado BLM sensitive plant species, scenic quality.

**Special Management (based on current RMP):** Avoidance stips for seismic activity and existing oil and gas leases; no coal leasing; no ROW, unless associated w/valid and existing rights; no mineral material sales; no range, wildlife, or watershed projects; Off-road vehicle use limited to permitted uses (closed); all other uses allowed, if compatible with RNA.

**Options for RMP-** No special protection in alternative B (drop ACEC); rely on standard approach for permitted surface disturbing activities; what else has been done or being done that could influence the management/protection of ID'ed special values. Alternative C and D will provide current management prescriptions, without ACEC designation.

**R&I Values-**

**Relevance-** sensitive plant species and scenic values do not meet relevance criteria.

**Importance-** N/A

**Special Management attention-** N/A

**Summary of Findings:**

Will not be carried forward as ACEC in any alternative because it does not meet relevance criteria.

**Lookout Mountain-** (Current ACEC; ~6,500 acres)

**Values:** Colorado BLM sensitive plant species, scenic quality.

**Special Management (based on current RMP):** Avoidance stips for seismic activity and existing oil and gas leases; no coal leasing; OHV use limited to designated roads and trails, except for permitted uses; all other uses allowed, if compatible with ACEC.

**Options for RMP-** No special protection in alternative B (drop ACEC); rely on standard approach for permitted surface disturbing activities; what else has been done or being done that could influence the management/protection of ID'ed special values. Alternative C and D will provide current management prescriptions, without ACEC designation.

**R&I Values-**

**Relevance-** 1- significant in scenic values;

**Importance-** N/A

**Special Management attention-** N/A

**Summary of Findings:**

Will not be carried forward as ACEC in any alternative because it does not meet relevance criteria.