

**NWCOS COMMENT FORM FOR
JULY 17 DRAFT ALTERNATIVES**

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I. We have a concern with the following section:

Topic: Transportation and Recreation _____

Page number: 88-103 _____

II. Our concern is: There isn't a concise proposal for Vermillion Basin in the form of a Transportation Management Plan. There also isn't much information regarding primitive recreation.

III. Our recommendation for improvement is: Allow discussion for the Sandwash Proposal that Rick and I are currently working on.

Comments are due to Jeremy Casterson (jeremy_casterson@blm.gov or fax: (970) 826-5002) and Helen Littrell (hlittrell@keystone.org or fax: (970) 262-0152) by no later than 4:00 p.m. MDT on Monday, July 18, 2005. If you are unsure of whether your idea is an RMP-level suggestion, please call Jeremy Casterson at 970-826-5071.

Travel Management

The Little Snake Resource Area (LSRA) has shown itself to be an important destination for off-highway vehicle (OHV) advocates, especially the Sandwash Basin area. However, there are also a great number of primitive and backcountry recreationists that enjoy the LSRA for a multitude of values and places. The following two lists detail areas outlined by Steve Bonowski of the Colorado Mountain Club as known backcountry destinations, and areas that are much lesser known, but are possible “diamonds in the rough.”

Places

List 1: Known areas compiled from hiking guidebooks.

- Limestone Ridge
- Cold Spring Mountain CWP
- Cross Mountain CWP
- Diamond Breaks CWP
- Dinosaur Additions CWP
- Little Yampa Canyon CWP
- Pinyon Ridge CWP
- Vermillion Basin CWP

List 2: Lesser-known areas that could be possible backcountry recreation areas

- The Yampa Trail
- Cedar Mountain
- Four Mile Creek/Serviceberry Mountain
- Pole, Thornburgh, and Dry Gulch’s
- Various draws and gulches in the Powderwash and Sandwash basin areas
- Douglas Mountain
- Conway Draw
- Middle Mountain
- Diamond Peak

Management

List 1: Areas where special values exist beyond backcountry recreation, i.e. wilderness characteristics.

Goals:

- Maintain opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation non-motorized recreation by restricting motorized and mechanized use to designated roads.
- Preserve scenic vistas
- Direct and limit river recreational opportunities
- Protect Class I characteristics on the Visual Resources Management spectrum
- Maintain backcountry big game and upland bird hunting opportunities, helping preserve the primitive hunting experience
- Protect the inherent naturalness of the area by encouraging the natural processes of revegetation of disturbed areas and establishing and enforcing closures of unused ways to future motor use.
- Withdrawing the area from future mineral entry and energy development
- Restrict activities that may potentially harm rare plants, important wildlife habitat, and extraordinary visual features
- Educate non-motorized recreationists about the opportunities in these areas through webpages, maps, and partnerships with organizations.
- Develop an interpretive plan for the area that emphasizes educating visitors about the cultural, botanical, and ecological resources in the area, as well as the need to care for public lands.
- Restrict all use to horse and foot travel
- Define the recreational settings, opportunities, character, and experiences in the area. Utilize this knowledge and maintain these values when making management decisions such as energy development or fuels reduction.

Special Management Actions

- Limit vehicle use to designated roads bordering the proposal
- Exclude authorizations for new ROW's
- Close to material sales or activities
- Close to fluid mineral leasing
- Withdraw from locatable mineral entry
- Employ Standards for Rangeland Health, including monitoring and assessment programs, to determine if the management objectives for this proposal are being met. If monitoring reveals that the objectives and standards are not being met, adjustments to in permitted grazing levels and season of use will be made to the extent they are determined to be contributing factors.
- Manage for VRM Class I
- Manage for ROS primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized classes
- Establish easy to find trailheads
- Develop a map to be available on the internet, BLM offices, and local stores, which details the non-motorized recreational opportunities in the LSRA.
- Develop a recreational monitoring plan that established evaluative measures that will be used to assess whether the intended recreational experiences, characters, settings, and opportunities are maintained.
- Develop a series of trails that provide unique interpretive opportunities, and/or provide a high quality on-trail recreational experience.

List 2: Non-motorized recreational areas that do not contain special values such as wilderness character.

Goals:

- Maintain opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation non-motorized recreation by restricting motorized use to designated roads.
- Maintain natural quiet and broad vistas that make these areas unique.
- Protect visual resource values
- Maintain backcountry big game and upland bird hunting opportunities, helping preserve the primitive hunting experience
- Protect the inherent naturalness of the area by encouraging the natural processes of revegetation of disturbed areas and establishing and enforcing closures of unused ways to future motor use.
- Educate non-motorized recreationists about the opportunities in these areas.
- Develop an interpretive plan for the area that emphasizes educating visitors about the cultural, botanical, and ecological resources in the area, as well as the need to care for public lands.
- Define recreational settings, opportunities, character, and experiences in the area, and maintain them when making management decisions such as energy development or fuels reduction.

Special Management Actions

- Limit vehicle use to designated system roads in ROD until comprehensive travel management planning can take place in the larger area. Such management should focus attention on establishing areas identified as non-motorized recreation areas.
- Manage for VRM Class I and II
- Manage for ROS primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized classes
- Establish restrictions on energy development in the area in order to preserve the highest quality non-motorized recreational experiences. This includes: consolidating well pads and facilities out of sight, hearing, and smell of recreational facilities and trails; requiring directional drilling to minimize impacts to natural quiet, scenic vistas, and recreational settings and experiences; relocating surface facilities out of key wildlife or watershed areas to minimize impacts on hunting and fishing.
- Establish easy to find trailheads, with locator signs.
- Develop a map to be available on the internet, BLM offices, and local stores, which details the non-motorized recreational opportunities in the LSRA.
- Develop a recreational monitoring plan that established evaluative measures that will be used to assess whether the intended recreational experiences, characters, settings, and opportunities are maintained.
- Develop a series of trails that provide unique interpretive opportunities, and/or provide a high quality on-trail recreational experience.

Sandwash Basin

- For Sandwash Basin and throughout the resource area, BLM should move towards a designated trail system. At a minimum, all areas that are currently managed for OHV's as limited to existing roads and trails should become limited to designated roads and trails, or closed. This includes the limited to existing areas within Sandwash Basin.
- At the very least, BLM must go to existing trails throughout Sandwash Basin as only an interim solution prior to completing a travel management plan for the area that designated all roads and trails.
- BLM should examine its current road and trail system data and create a detailed system map. This map should be utilized for all future designation.
- All duplicate, spur, and unused trails should be immediately closed pending the travel management plan.
- BLM should provide an interpretive and educational for motorized users. This should include signage to inform users of trail locations and route closures throughout the basin.
- A Travel Management Plan for the Sandwash Basin area should be completed no later than early 2008.
- All motorized travel should be closed from the Vermillion Basin proposed wilderness area. All trails west of CR 46, with the exception of Dry Mountain access road should be closed, due to conflicts with wilderness character and private property owners and permittees.
- We oppose open areas, and do so within Sandwash Basin. Maintaining large open areas, such as the ones that have been proposed, is detrimental to the lands outside these areas, and prevents BLM from managing the land with the proper tools. However, if an open area is to even be entertained, it should have a well defined boundary and clear directions that open use is restricted to a small area and all other use must be on designated trails marked open on the map.
- BLM should look for and analyze any impacts that occur between OHVs, oil and gas development, wild horse herds, and wildlife and mitigate any conflicts.