

COHVCO's On the Ground Comments & Conflicts Collected for DeGette Wilderness Proposal 03-06-10

These *On the Ground Comments* were received from motorized enthusiasts with specific knowledge pertaining to a sampling of the proposed wilderness areas as per DeGette's website:

http://degette.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=844&Itemid=189

Browns Canyon

Rd 184 leaves the town of Turret to the north and goes about 3 miles into the proposed area to where it meets the WSA boundary (BLM). This road is open now. There are private property (mining claims) access issues. Eastern boundary will be hard to enforce due to private prop boundaries.

Table Mountain

There are several Jeep trails and roads that would be closed: Echo Canyon, Devils Hole, Table Mountain, Spike Buck, Little Hole, to name a few. There is a non-system road that goes into the area at the Parkdale Gaging Station for about 1/2 mile

The Texas Creek Gulch trail and an off-shoot to the NE appear to skirt the western edge of the area but the exact boundaries are unclear, so they may not pass into the area. However, the Texas Creek area will not be able to open any new trails to the east. The buffer areas for roads that travel into the proposed wilderness areas are inadequate for sustained management, dispersed camping, and road maintenance.

Bangs Canyon:

The Granite Creek map does not show ANY of the roads that are in the area. The local BLM office just produced a map showing all of the routes in that area as well as routes we GPS'd in the area. As for Bangs, the Tabeguache Trail, which is a motorized route is shown going through their map boundaries. It is supposed to stay open and is the only route in that area that is open.

When you open this up scroll down to the green lines, That area is Granite Creek and those green lines are all our GPS routes while riding in that area. As you can see there is a route that drops down into the canyon and of course the enviros never show it.

Also as you can see---a portion is in Utah. We access it through Glade Park, in and out of Utah and Colorado, into Granite Creek and sometimes on to Gateway.

By the way the blue/purple lines are routes that BLM GPS'd.

For detailed maps of inventoried routes in the Grand Junction Field Office see:

http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo/rmp/Travel_Management/Travel_Management_Maps.html.

Complete route inventories Maps of the area are divided by zones. Please refer to the zone maps as noted for of each proposal.

Bangs Canyon: Map Zone P

The descriptions on the DeGette web site are inaccurate.

Northeast Creek carves a scenic canyon lined with cottonwoods and pools along state highway 141 on the unit's eastern side. North East Creek is mostly on private land. North East Creek terminates where it converges with East Creek near highway 141. It does not parallel the highway.

Designation of Bangs Canyon as wilderness will preserve important primitive recreation opportunities on the edge of western Colorado's largest urban area. The future value of such recreation is incalculable. The area includes habitat for desert bighorn sheep, and its streams and pools support healthy populations of rainbow trout, an unexpected treat in an otherwise arid environment.

The Desert Big Horn sheep are on the other side of highway 141. The area is presently withdrawn from mineral extraction, has no year round water supplies, The present management scenario provides the same management prescription as designated Wilderness in planning area 5. This is similar to the proposed wilderness boundaries. Designation would curtail the most popular and practical recreation opportunities in the area, motorized touring. Bangs has no water and is located in a high desert environment. It is not suited to extensive hiking or equestrian travel.

Bangs Canyon has been inventoried for wilderness values twice by BLM. Both inventories concluded that no part of the Bangs Canyon management area (58,000 acres) meets the suitability requirements for wilderness. Bangs does not have any congressionally designated WSA.

If the wilderness proposal was designated, the Tabeguache trail would be unavailable for motorized travel. The trail was first identified by the Government Land Office in 1895. It was the first route connecting Grand Junction to Montrose and the southern parts of Colorado. The history and significance of the trail is highly touted in the Wilderness description on the web. The route would be destroyed by the designation of the proposed Wilderness.

The map that is shown on the web site is incomplete and inaccurate. It does not identify private in holdings and does not show existing roads and trails.

The Bangs Canyon Implementation EA (2006) identifies area 6 as the location of 43 miles of new single track trails for motorcycles and mountain biking. Due to resource issues this proposal has been dropped. In its place BLM is considering construction of single track trails in the northern portion of the proposed wilderness area. Designation of the proposed wilderness would kill this project.

The DeGette wilderness web site makes no compelling argument to include this proposal in the federal wilderness system. No irretrievable resources are at risk. The terrain is not unique. The proposed wilderness is inaccessible except by OHV or mountain bike. Both of these means of transportation would be banned if the designation were successful.

Unawweep: Map Zone V

Much of this proposal is on the Uncompaghre National Forest. If designated it would close to motorized use the following trails:

405.4a, 405.2a, 405.2c, 607, 416, 612, 666, 417, 408, 403.2a, 638, 656, 556, 637, 608.

Several of these trails are high value single track motorcycle trails used for the Snowshoe Enduro. They include Snowshoe, Ute Creek, Big Creek, along with at least 50 miles of jeep roads and bicycle trails. If this designation were to come true it would kill any potential for looped motorized trails in the north Uncompaghre.

Due to the rugged terrain there is no threat of commercial development in the proposal area. The primary activity is ATV and motorcycle recreation, except during big game hunting season. Then the area is dominated by ATV traffic.

The area is impacted by many roads, has been logged at least twice in the past century and does not represent any resources at risk. Simply because it has great vistas and is accessible by foot and horses is not a reason to designate the area as wilderness.

Granite Creek: Map Zone Q

The map of Granite Creek on DeGette's web site is inaccurate and incomplete. BLM Grand Junction has published very good maps on the web site as part of the RMP and travel management process. Access to the proposed wilderness is available only by a long ride on an OHV. It is 30 to 40 miles on primitive roads from any location to reach the proposed wilderness. Granite Creek is the only route other than state highways between Gateway and Glade Park. The wilderness write up fails to identify any resources at risk, or any unique features that deserve protection. Many of the routes are county roads in Grand County Utah and Mesa County Colorado. It is an excellent dual sport opportunity.

Little Bookcliffs: Map zone M

The description of this proposed wilderness is so flawed that time prohibits a through dissection of the poor staff work. Main Canyon was closed to vehicles in 2006. The entrance to the canyon trespasses on railroad land. Several high skill motorcycle trails exist in the proposed wilderness. Coal Canyon, Cottonwood Canyon and several trails branching off of Q Rd. may be used by motorcyclists. Most of the motorized recreation is by trials enthusiasts. Cross country travel by motorcycle is not practical, but short day use by equestrians is common. The wilderness write up makes no claim of unique landscape or qualities. No mention of resources at risk or any other quality that would qualify the area as having wilderness qualities.

Demaree: Map Zone B

This proposal has no impact on OHV recreation

Delores River: Uncompahgre Field Office- see SW corner of this map at Utah state line

http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/co/information/nepa/uncompahgre_field/ufo_nepa_documents0.Par.82411.File.dat/08-64_Field_Office_Wide_TMP_Route_Map.pdf

This region needs no additional protection. The only non motorized recreation is rafting on the river. This takes place for 6 to 8 weeks per year. The rest of the year the river flows are too low for rafting. The claims of wild and scenic eligibility are inconsistent with the eligibility requirements as flows are regulated by an upstream dam. The region sees little use at present. Hundreds of miles of constructed primitive roads exist in the proposed wilderness. This makes the site ineligible for designation under the guidelines of the 1964 Wilderness Act.

The area has world class potential as a motorized recreation destination. The Uncompahgre Field Office has just issued a RMP amendment that designates all the routes in the area and bans cross country travel. The Motorcycle Trail Riding Assoc. Has recommended this area as a dispersed motorized recreation area in the RMP currently in the planning stage.

Sewemup Mesa: map zone W

The proposal greatly expands the present WSA. The WSA is truly roadless. A congressionally designated wilderness with the same boundaries as the WSA is acceptable. The greatly enlarged proposal would hinder access to a lake and some excellent hunting opportunities between the valley and John Brown Rd. Several roads and power lines old mine sites, vegetation type conversions and water developments for livestock inhibit the wilderness character of the added acreage. The effect on OHV recreation is minimal.

South Shale Ridge: map zone F

The proposed wilderness on South Shale Ridge is nothing more than an attempt to stall energy development. The area is already heavily roaded, and has many operating gas wells. The scenery is not unique to the region. The cited rare plants are also cited in every other wilderness proposal in the region. The stalling of domestic energy production is contrary to the national strategy and US foreign policy. The designation of a wilderness would have little effect on OHV recreation.

The Palisade: Map Zone U

The present WSA has little OHV value. It is well suited for Wilderness designation. The west flank of the WSA is the road to Sheep Creek. It is the only trough route to Granite Creek and portions of Utah. The designation would have no effect on OHV recreation.

Redcloud & Handies Peak:

The only single track motorized trails left now include Pole Creek trail, West Lost Trail Creek trail, Lost Trail Creek Lost Trail (Also ATV designated). Hunting access via Pole Creek.

Carson road is open to allow the commercial Colorado trail guides. Access to drive the people up to the top of Carson and let them get out and walk the CT to the Stony Creek Pass road and get picked back up by 4WD vans. This is an excellent single track experience area!

Flat Tops Addition & Deep Creek:

Flat Tops Addition

- Forest Rd 613 is the northern border of the proposed wilderness area
- The west boundary is the existing Flat Tops wilderness
- The south is the Sweetwater.
- East is BLM land extending out to the CO River

- This proposal closes these F/S roads FR 611 & FR 616
- These 2 trails a very important because they are the only access trails in that area. This is a premium hunting area and without these access roads it would make it to great of a distance to

walk in or even ride horses for day in and out hunting. These trails also connect with the northern boundary FR613. I can't tell from the map but FR613 is the only road that would be remaining to access the Flat Tops Wilderness area from the CO River. If FR613 was closed it would make it to great of a distance for hikers and even equestrian riders to get to Flat Tops wilderness area in a day. All of these trails are excess trails and needed to make the Flat tops wilderness obtainable for all users.

- It also closes these BLM trails
 - All of these trails are access roads that get you closer to the Flat Tops Wilderness area just north of Sweetwater
 - It also closes Hack creek trail
 - It also closes Sheep east fork trail
 - It also closes Sheep west fork trail

Summary

This proposal is expanding the existing boundaries of the Flat Tops Wilderness area. This expansion only makes it almost impossible to enjoy the Flat Tops Wilderness on day trips. This proposal is bad for everyone.

Everyone will be upset but especially the locals will be the most upset because they will not be able to take a leisurely ride on these 4WD roads to enjoy the wildlife or beauty of their back yard. The population of this country is getting older and to think everyone should be able to hike 10 miles a day is unreasonable.

Deep Creek

The proposed map shows everything East of Coffee Pot Road to Deep Creek Canyon would be closed.

Trails that would be closed FR620

Trails that would be closed FR621

These 2 trails are connecting access roads that allow you get near Deep Creek Canyon.

There are several dead end FR roads (1 or 2 miles long) that would be closed that currently allow excellent camping sites.

Coffee Pot Road or FR600 is the access road to that area

On the east side of Deep Creek

You would loss a 4WD trail 1D that takes you to the lower part of the north end of the canyon

You would lose FR 619 another trail that parallels the east side of Deep Creek, it also offers camp sites and access views to the canyon

Summary;

This proposal clearly stops all motorized access that allows users to enjoy Deep Creek canyon. It takes most of a day to ride these easy 4WD drive roads around the perimeter of Deep Creek. If this proposal was allowed it would make the distances too far to hike. It would infuriate the hunters that have used these trails and camp sites for ever. This area is known for its many secluded areas to camp and get way for the weekend. This would crowd more people into a smaller area for no good reason.

Thompson Creek:

Thompson Ridge Trail and road system (this is only one currently open to motorized use)

This area has not been open for decades. The exception is the North part which is on BLM land. (About 25 miles of existing trails)

On the South side of Thompson creek in the proposed area there isn't much authorized motorized travel now. The north side of Thompson, an area known as **Holgate Mesa**, there are a number of 4 wheel and ATV roads wind around on the mesa, and with permission from adjacent landholders you can actually complete going clear to the crystal river....last I knew those were still open, and used a fair amount. I don't see any of those on the map attached.

Roubideau:

The DeGette wilderness Bill will completely stop the ride we went on thru the Potter Basin & Criswell Creek area when COHVCO had their meeting in delta last year.

It would also cut off all the connecting trails we have on the Forest Service land on the Uncompahgre in the 7N Mesa, Criswell Creek, Potter Basin, and Monitor Basin.

Includes Parallel Trail proposed Trail Grant that connects most of these trails.

If the Roubideau portion of her bill comes to pass, as I mentioned previously that will kill the Criswell Creek trail that substantial grant funds have been spent on. It will kill the new Criswell creek trail that we worked on getting through the Forest Service process. The Criswell Creek trail was authorized in the FS 2002 Record of Decision.

She said that the 4x4 road in the potter creek basin is not used which is incorrect. The full size roadway is used extensively.

There is no abandoned jeep trail in the area the proposed wilderness is in. The Jeep trail is used a lot. The reason that the road is not used coming out of the bottom of the Roubideau creek is because it is in the OLD proposed WSA.

Boundary Issues

Citizens propose one major addition to the boundary of BLM's Wilderness Study Area that takes in Potter Creek, including Potter Basin on adjacent Uncompahgre National Forest lands. An abandoned jeep trail separated this area from the WSA when BLM drew the original WSA Boundary, but since that time BLM has closed the heavily deteriorated jeep trail to motorized vehicles, so the Potter Creek drainage now constitutes a contiguous roadless addition to the WSA.