

AGENDA AND MAP INPUT FROM APRIL 25, 2002, MEETING OF THE UNCOMPAHGRE WORKING GROUP, HIGH SCHOOL CAFETORIUM, DELTA, COLORADO, 6:30 PM TO 9:30 PM, CO-HOSTED BY UP AND GMUG

[Facilitator: Kathy Bond; Facilitation Assistants: Carmine Lockwood, Daniela Howell, and Rick Sherman]

Agenda [the following agenda was distributed as a handout]

- 6:15–6:45 Registration/Introductory Mapping Activity
- 6:45–7:00 Welcome/Introductions; Review of Last Meeting; Review of Tonight's Agenda; Review of Meeting Objectives; Review of general framework for meetings
- 7:00–7:10 Questions/clarification of UP/FS efforts
- 7:10–7:20 Review of issue category identification
- 7:20–7:30 Break
- 7:30–7:40 Review geographic map activity
- 7:40–8:40 Small group mapping/discussion
- 8:40–9:00 Reporting back to large group
- 9:00–9:10 Wrap up
- 9:10 Evaluation/Adjourn

Next Meeting [a suggested date and time for the next meeting were distributed as part of the agenda handout but the group wanted to meet on a different day of the week so a another date will be announced on the GMUG web page and in newspapers.]

#### Group Input Onto Maps

[Participants were encouraged to sit with other participants who had the same number(from 1 to 8) on their name label.. Sample Topic Pairings for Discussion (such as water quality and road maintenance) were distributed as a way of getting conversation started. Some groups used these sample pairings and other found their own topics. All tables used sticky notes to place their concerns on their map of the Uncompahgre Plateau. A recorder also captured some of the participants' comments and these are merged below with the comments from the sticky notes. After the meeting, Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team Members identified geographic landmarks for comments that were site-specific or provided

issue clarification (in italics) for groups they participated in. If no location name is cited below, the comment is assumed to apply to the Uncompahgre Plateau as a whole. References to red relate to things participants think are not working or negative and green to things they think are working or good.]

## GROUP 1

Little G, Upper Dominguez, Blue Creek: Quiet use

Plateau-wide fragmentation / decommissioning of roads

[Big Dominguez / Cottonwood Creek to Highway 50]: Need to improve access to popular areas

Common sense determination of wilderness designations

Continue historic motorized access. Allow for joint agreed use.

Recreation and travel access are compatible; travel access and wildlife habitat is contentious. Emphasis has been on motorized and Wilderness, but mechanized, non-motorized should be considered. Importance of well-defined road system.

Timber harvest healthy practice; timber harvest can and should be practiced so compatible with wildlife and other uses

[Kelso Mesa - Love Mesa/Escalante Cabin Bench Vicinity]: Poor Forest Service grazing management

[Cottonwood Road Area]: Ponderosa pine thinned, looks good

[Roubideau, Potter Basin, Criswell Basin Area]: Poor Forest Service grazing management.

[BLM lands, Transfer Road - Highway 90]: Over grazed, poor grazing management

[BLM pinyon-juniper lands on east side of Uncompahgre Uplift]: Needs controlled burns

Habitat fragmentation by timber roads. Timber management by prescription. Strategy for planning.

Controlled and natural burns to improve wildlife and grazing (livestock) habitat on both BLM and Forest Service

Maintain ranchers in business to keep open space intact; need better grazing education on BLM and Forest Service; overgrazing of winter range: [better management throughout the year will improve the situation].

[Highway 90 South Area]: OHV maintained access; joint use

Upper Uncompahgre River, Ouray to Montrose: inter-agency cooperation to manage this riparian and recreational resource with goal of providing access and preservation of interest groups.

Re-establish riparian health on primary drainages: tamarisk and other noxious weeds impact water availability and limit habitat

Agreement that local involvement early on in planning process is good.  
Consider alternating days [Tuesday and Thursday] for planning meetings.

## GROUP 2

Trail 601, Unaweep: close to motorized traffic

Please keep [Trail]601 open for single track motorized

[BLM Dominguez Wilderness Study Area (WSA)]: Permanent wilderness status wanted on other side of bridge

Study, protect wildlife habitat (including rehabilitation) Concern with deer – not enough new feed for them – lack of improved habitat.

Restart grass in pinyon–juniper in lower margins of Uncompahgre Forest [Naturita Division Forest Service lands]: Norwood W.S.; protect watershed for domestic water supply

Bridgeport Bridge (BLM) needs rebuilt

Protect watersheds for municipal water supply.

Polar [views] on more wilderness and keeping existing trails open.

Control ATVs to designated routes and during hunting season.

There needs to be better management of the timber. Some of the old growth needs to be removed for better forest health (stress “Forest Health”) Concern is lack of ability to log and replant. Very few areas are open – available for logging. Manage older growth areas for logging. Clear cutting is not a good answer. Manage old growth areas, not just protect them.

## GROUP 3

Fire suppression, especially in pinyon–juniper, needs to use fire to break up old pinyon–juniper stands

North of Highway 90: Grazing good; South of Highway 90: grazing not so good

[Lockhart Area]: Noxious weeds, oxeye daisy

[Roubideau Area–Forest Service, Camelback WSA–BLM]: Russian knapweed

[Upper Tabeguache Basin]: Drier sites than historically; loss of water and riparian

Habitat fragmentation and silviculture: what data has been collected re: species occurrence? We can map the habitat but are the animals there? 300 vertebrate species, 17 management indicator species, 12 with population data. Habitat fragmentation due to grazing cattle. Fighting fire in pinyon–juniper. Nothing grows underneath. We are too anxious to put out fires, especially in protecting structures. Need good fires in pinyon–juniper. Using fire as a tool is difficult.

Wildlife and grazing: cattle can graze some areas and not affect veg because of variety of species. Cattle can be kept on the move and minimize impact. In 1996 Uncompahgre Plateau grazing reduced about 9%. Grazing plans keep the cattle moving on FS [land] north of Highway 90, max 30–40 days in any one pasture. Drought years can cause a problem. 25 Mesa allotment improves in condition even during last year, a drought plan. From Highway 90 south grazing conditions are not as good because plans have not been completed. Surveys are done – now working on analysis. Elk numbers have increased and affects grazing. Water management/production and ecosystem health and diversity: Tamarisk control—need to allow fire to reduce pinyon–juniper – brush, etc. – replace with grass. There are too many areas needing treatment to use mechanical means. Need fire. Fires needed for wildlife as well as water production. Fire produces mosaic and seral stages. What is the record of aboriginal burning?

Affect of roads on water quality. Everything is tied together, i.e., livestock grazing in riparian and water quality/quantity also relates to [Sample Topic Pairings for Discussion] #5 Fire as a tool.

Noxious weeds and multiple land uses. Multiple uses can introduce noxious weeds. There is a direct tie. Noxious weeds are a big problem in the intermountain west, forcing out natives. Use [aerial?] spraying for some control.

Water quality and road maintenance. Seasonal restrictions. hunting season is especially hard on roads. Enforcement is difficult.

#### Group 4

[Pine Mountain, north end of Plateau]: Green dot for hunting and photography,

[Area where group identified resource conditions and opportunities were looking good]: Pine Mountain, area south of 7–N Mesa: better grazing management

[Kelso Mesa]: Large roadless area

Change in allotments Æ took time to adjust (water, fences, range)

[BLM–Cabin Bench to Delta–Nucla Road]: Roubideau noxious weeds, oxeye daisy escaped ornamental. Native understory crowded out.

Field trip – experimental grazing 7N Mesa (see noxious weeds)

[25 Mesa–Private land and surrounding]: Toadflax. [Area where group identified that they have concerns]: Roubideau and 25 Mesa Guard

Station: noxious weed control; increase public education/awareness.

25 Mesa Guard Station relates to multiple uses

Pinyon–juniper not enough understory; winter grazing (both red and green); can always be improved

Livestock limited in grazing (time period)

Pinyon–juniper Æ area of concern; lots of issues. Does pinyon–juniper need thinning? What is affecting it? [Area group identified as presenting the biggest challenges]: Pinyon–juniper areas as a whole – identify, decrease wildlife habitat, fire potential and management. “Urban” development in these areas.

Deer populations are down; competition for territory; are fluctuations just cyclical? Need management from DOW; limits of licenses. Decrease elk to improve deer population.

Ponderosa pine: thinning and fire are tools

[Dave Wood Road, Hanks Valley Road corridor] and Divide Road: Water quality and road maintenance. Use of MgCl [magnesium chloride] on roads and impact on health of pinyon–juniper immediate to roads. Water quality (MgCl); dead trees a result of MgCl or something else? Pinyon–juniper affected.

Private and public lands and fire management. Concerned with fire management. Economically need to be rid of small diameter trees, “small wood.” Timber sales of small diameter wood as pellets (for pellet stoves), additive for asphalt and as additive for gasoline. Concern if thinning is healthy for forest. How much to thin? May be valuable in “urban interface” areas and find market for product to keep economically sound. Thin pine forests to keep healthy forests – ongoing FS project. Do take small diameter trees predominately (<10”–12”). This favors larger diameter trees as “used to be.” Fuel load mitigation Æ smaller diameter wood, potential opportunity

Wildlife and grazing. Is compatible mostly. But increase in elk population is increasing competition for livestock. DOW needs to manage elk population more than present.

Additionally, does there need to be more management of grazing permits to assist with “elk versus. livestock” management?” Can manage cattle but not elk

Noxious weeds and multiple land uses. Increasing concern re: noxious weeds. Weeds occur in spots and then spread. With public education, civilian could help with management of noxious weeds. These weeds decrease grazing land. Cattle will eat OK grasses first. So weeds then have chance to increase growth. so overgrazing promotes increase of weeds. Don’t get to weeds because have to leave certain amount of forage. Need time to let cows eat weeds, too.

[BLM—starting at Big Dominguez Campground and going into Dominguez Canyon Wilderness Study Area]: ATV trails out in Wilderness Study Area, designated for foot travel only.

Really would like more Wilderness Area designations, especially in cross-hatched (wilderness study areas)

[There are] no noise restrictions on any of the USFS lands. Noise can come from certain types of travel, recreation, manufacturing, pipelines, etc. [Would like to have a No-Noise] restriction on the Uncompahgre Plateau.

Water management. Would like to envision water management to preserve the agriculture use of water flowing out of the USFS areas. Don't let water go downstream [primary use of water should be for agriculture].

Wildlife: More and more roads, , more clear cuts, more noise due to people, migration patterns are being disrupted, people are living higher and are driving faster on better roads. Starter ranchettes and deer winter range are the same. Increase in noisy recreation, animals can't migrate; fragmentation of forest by roads and clear cuts.

Grazing reduces grass and increases fire; catastrophic

Hydroax perimeter of private, more set back from private lands, poor notification by BLM before work. Plan on burning after hydroax? Do not understand "why" for mechanized treatment versus burning next to private land. While they do only mechanical treatment deeper in.

Fire threat – generic concern. Built up fuel because of no burn policy for a number of years. This is not the year for controlled burn. Grazing in Ponderosa retarded grass growth and encouraged brush which caused lack of flash fuel versus brush fuels. Promote small diameter logging to reduce fire threat. Does logging of large diameter trees diminish the fire threat? Forest management? Is it relevant to the Uncompahgre. Are we using the National Fire Plan to cut more timber? Fire threats in this drought era.

Timber and fuels projects are different departments in the Forest Service. Separate monies and for separate types of forest cutting.

In 2050 I dread/fear that there will be a freeway between Nucla (population 50,000) and Montrose (population 500,000). Can we imagine this!

[BLM/private land interface off Dave Wood Road]: Hydro ax and burning by BLM without adequate notice next to private land [right up to the property line] while did mechanical treatment deeper in BLM land.

[Area where group identified resource conditions and opportunities were looking good]: The whole Uncompahgre – private, BLM, USFS

[Area where group identified that they have concerns]. Private land interface, Wilderness, Fire, Noise, Logging, Water

[Area group identified as presenting the biggest challenges]: Could not choose but more time was spent on fire.

[Non-Uncompahgre Plateau Issue]: Coal, methane, may have 600 wells on

#### Group 6

Multiple use; more users; may have to segregate

Able to ride horses

[Highway 90; Dave Wood Road]: Multiple use / designated routes; primary roads, secondary roads, Dave Wood vs. Colo. 90; [concern over proposed paving of Highway 90 and Dave Wood Road]

[North end of Plateau; West side of Plateau from south of Tabeguache Area to Craig Point; Sims Mesa]: Bear issue. [Frequency of people-bear encounters. North end has some of the best bear habitat in state.]

550 Corridor: Wildlife habitat fragmentation concern; vehicle loss;

[Spring Creek drainage]: Range management: roads closed; cannot move sheep camps. Grazers (range management) and loggers (forest management) as restoration tools. How can we work with them. Sheep vs. cattle. [Viability of sheep industry as potential too for managing.]

[Delta, Montrose, Ridgway, Norwood, Nucla, Gateway]: Economic community ties all towns; private land vs. public lands. [Recognize the economic impacts.]

[BLM-Roubideau Creak-Escalante Creek]: Keep existing roads and access Water; rank areas for priority / concern; amount of water available , plants and animals; watershed - control of noxious weeds, cheat grass along transportation routes

Forest vegetation / ecosystem health; landscape approach (favored by all); big picture important; all agencies, interest group working together (good thing)

Travel management: maintain existing roads / damage done; causes noxious weed problem.

#### Group 7

[North Divide Road, between Divide Forks and Carson Hole; Cottonwood Basin; Divide Road, Spruce Mountain to Houser Road]: Fire suppression and ecosystem health and water quality - bugs - pine beetle on south end - may be related to fire suppression (increased stand densities). Overly dense tree stands affect water quality / quantity (keep snow from hitting ground; evaporation). Spruce bud worm emerging problems in dense SF (reduction in growth; mortality in long term infestations).

[Campbell Point, Copper King, Glenco, Craig Point]: Ecosystem health - "everybody's for it;" Indians burned - where's the natural ecosystem;

thinning and under burning in Ponderosa pine – Tabeguache area and Craig Point

Water quality and aquatic resource (fish habitat) concerns over cumulative effect from land management (road maintenance, grazing); lack of baseline data is a concern; water is the big issue of the future (already is); water quality affects quantity. Potential for cutthroat trout reintroduction (Chris shared Colorado River Cutthroat Trout possible sites – rehab is often cost prohibitive)

[Beaver Dam Creek]: Protection of existing populations of threatened and endangered species.

Recreation access to water sources and quality of habitat.

[Uncompahgre and San Miguel Rivers]: Water quality, access to water.

Headwaters / tributaries with permanent water (fish habitat) need to be identified or existing data need to be inventoried to learn where more data/evaluations are needed. Aquatic Resources: all perennial streams need at least a modest evaluation (habitat), especially in the higher elevations where headwaters tributaries may be refugia for trout. Healthy Riparian Habitat: important for protection of aquatic resources; fish as well as base of food web and diurnal temperature moderation.

Recreation and travel access. Would like to see more roads left open.

Need designated travel routes. Management concerns – big game habitat, threatened and endangered species habitat.

[This group considered several of their own topic pairings for possible discussion: Silvicultural and Ecosystem Health; Fire Suppression and Ecosystem Health (Forest Health); and Protection of Existing Populations of Threatened and Endangered Species (Colorado River Cutthroat Trout {CRCT})]

## Group 8

[Highway 90, a variety of viewpoints]: Access between Nucla and Montrose: road listed in Montrose County Master Plan; widening main portions of Divide; West End residents are locked into the area; good solid gravel road to be maintained year around. There are ways to get from Nucla to Montrose without putting in an all-season road. Need travel plan so there is not unlimited travel; need safe travel (well maintained but no upgrades). Volume of people [using road] has increased: either design it to be safe or enforce/limit access. Population base is increasing making it difficult to maintain roads.

Keep pavement out of Plateau; will keep masses of people out; lower number of people;

[Highway 90, Houser Road]: Access is a major potential for urban-forest interface; but may become more of a residential commuter route; winter

maintenance on both ends but not the middle; Don't upgrade roads, keep landscape primitive

Entire landscape: mule deer recover project; lower population due to many factors; there are few large landscapes in US that are intact. Plateau is not developed; it needs to stay primitive. (There still needs to be wild land for wild people.)

[Pinyon-juniper transition zone between Delta-Nucla Road and Dave Wood Road]: Wildlife and habitat fragmentation; pressure at this point on wildlife because recreation is focused here.

Private land Dave Wood Road and Horsefly Road (?): There are different ways to develop: some that blend in, some that stand out; concern about. Seasonal control - arterial control, area-wide; importance to protect road investment and winter range; need to increase awareness of alternate routes. Should we manage this heavily or let nature take its [way]?— response (1) has to be managed, (2) manage, people over endangered species. Give counties control over 35 acre tract development. The situations can be improved upon like we have with the Gunnison tunnel in the desert. proper management of forest through logging to prevent fires such as Yellowstone.

[Black Point, Kelso Mesa, Tabeguache, Roubideau Inventoried Roadless Areas]: Large roadless areas - keep these intact

Dave Wood - Divide Junction: control residential flavor of area

Fund real science on fire and other issues

Area-wide: seasonal vehicle closures (access gates)

The whole Plateau: leave it alone

Headwater Springs: Fence an area around Headwater Springs to keep them clean and giardia proof: at least at the head [?]

Places that have been clear cut are much different than those that have burned. It's better to have fires than clear cuts. Need to learn more about the fire regime and the native ecosystem. There hasn't been enough fire. Management is going well now, there are more eagles, mule deer, lion, elk, improved water.

Good Areas: entire Plateau has improved; there are many opportunities. Better than they used to be, but good management needs to continue. Opportunities are good throughout the Plateau. upper Plateau has great rangeland conditions.

Areas of Concern: (1) Dave Wood Road (focal point of development, (2) recreation concerns on Montrose and Nucla, (3) Road connecting Nucla to Montrose, (4) population base increasing, making it more difficult to manage, (5) noxious weeds throughout the Plateau.

Ecosystem Health and Travel Access, Wildlife Populations & Development; loss of herbaceous plant community beneath the pinyon-juniper forests

Information gaps: information on prescribed burning, how it relates to pollution and global warming