



UNCOMPAHGRE PLATEAU PROJECT (UP) PLAN

*A Collaborative Approach to Restore and Maintain the Ecosystem
Health of the Uncompahgre Plateau in Western Colorado*

UP PARTNERS

**Bureau of Land Management
Colorado Division of Wildlife
Public Lands Partnership
U.S. Forest Service**

August 2003

Submitted by:

The UP Partners

PLP • BLM • USFS • CDOW

LAND • STEWARDSHIP • RESOURCES • COMMUNITY

UNCOMPAHGRE PLATEAU PROJECT PLAN

The purpose of the Uncompahgre Plateau Project Plan (UP) is to provide goals, information and direction for the development of a community-based partnership for restoring and sustaining the ecological, social, cultural and economic values of the Uncompahgre Plateau, Colorado. This document provides a framework for cooperation and coordination among UP Project partners. Participation in the project is voluntary and is comprised of an association of responsible agencies and community-based interests, e.g., stakeholders, who care about the health and unique features of the Uncompahgre Plateau. The plan presents relevant information and a historical view of the Plateau. It describes the purpose, rationale and history of the project. Roles, responsibilities and working relationships among the partners are detailed. The plan discusses community education, information, the community involvement process and the need for better information to manage landscapes. In addition, funding, existing management plans, research projects, regulatory compliance requirements, physical and biological baseline data, and information needs are discussed. Pertinent maps are included. The plan builds a foundation of guidelines and recommendations for complimenting, expanding and augmenting the public resource management agencies in their efforts to implement restoration and management programs. It also provides the format for the Public Lands Partnership (PLP) to actively participate in the facilitation of community input and collaboration in the management of the Plateau. This plan is a flexible document. As new knowledge about the Plateau's ecosystem is derived from scientific research, applied science, practical knowledge and restoration monitoring, it will be coupled with community input through an adaptive management process to put new information to work.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Uncompahgre Plateau Project (UP) was formalized in a 2001 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Cooperative Agreement (CA) by the Public Lands Partnership (PLP), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS). These organizations formed a partnership to restore and sustain the ecological, social, cultural and economic values of the Uncompahgre Plateau. The UP area, located in southwest Colorado, comprises over 1.5 million acres of private, state and federal lands. Approximately 75% of the area is public land.

Federal and state natural resource managers speculate that historic grazing practices, fire suppression, and noxious weed invasion have led to declines in diversity, productivity, and forage yields of some native plant communities on the Uncompahgre Plateau. A number of agency management plans and studies document these concerns. Research is underway to better understand the historic range of variability of native plant communities on the Plateau and the extent of changes that might have occurred due to human-related activities. Efforts are also underway to develop a native seed program to produce seed from local ecotypes for re-vegetation projects. UP is assisting in the coordination of these activities across jurisdictional boundaries.

The overarching goal of the project is to improve the ecosystem health and natural functions of the landscape across the Uncompahgre Plateau through active restoration projects. The primary role of UP is to help coordinate and facilitate restoration activities on the Plateau. UP does not supercede management authority on any federal, state, or private lands.

In addition to funding and facilitating restoration projects, anticipated products from UP include:

- Coordinated watershed restoration plans developed across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Interagency coordination of the National Fire Plan.
- Development of a common GIS database with USFS, BLM, CDOW, and NRCS information.
- A comprehensive, cost effective restoration monitoring program at site-specific and landscape scales.
- Development of scientific information necessary to guide effective restoration (e.g., Landscape Assessment, Landscape Dynamics Model, Vegetative Range of Variability Studies, Native Plant Restoration Opportunities and Constraints Study and a Fire History Study).
- Development of a native seed production program and re-vegetation plans for restoration activities.

UP will function in a collaborative approach among the partners, community and interested stakeholders. Public meetings will be held throughout the year as a forum for community participation and communication. Field trips, information programs, demonstrations, newsletters, a web-site, special information sheets and other tools will be used for education and outreach. An annual status report will be produced.

UP is committed to restoration efforts backed by best available science, community input and adaptive management. Efforts to identify information needs through community-input, scientific research, and agency management assessments are underway.

Restoration tools and methods (e.g., prescribed fire, prescribed grazing, utilization of native plants, mechanical treatments, and chemical treatments) will conform to management goals, site conditions, efficacy, and cost effectiveness. Test plots may be established within treated and untreated areas to improve the science used for management and as monitoring controls.

Criteria for restoration project selection, funding and implementation will be based on land health objectives, fiscal considerations, scientific information and community-based values. Funding will come from the agencies, PLP, and outside grants. A Technical Committee representing the four partners will review projects for meeting UP objectives and for funding. Projects funded through UP will follow guidelines for design, implementation, monitoring, and post-project management.

Through May 2003, UP has received over \$2,800,000 in funding for a variety of restoration activities and studies. Funds are administered by the agencies and Unc/Com, Inc., a non-profit organization established by PLP. Funding sources include several federal and state agencies, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Ford Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Colorado Mule Deer Association, Western Area Power Administration, Tri-State Generation and Transmission, Inc., Colorado and Colorado State Universities and Univ. of Wyoming,

TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNCOMPAHGRE PLATEAU PROJECT PLAN.....	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	1
THE UNCOMPAHGRE PLATEAU PROJECT AREA	2
LOCATION	2
DESCRIPTION	2
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	6
ECOLOGICAL CONDITION AND THE NEED	11
FOR RESTORATION.....	11
CURRENT MANAGEMENT	19
THE UNCOMPAHGRE PLATEAU PROJECT	20
BEGINNING OF THE UP PARTNERSHIP	20
THE UP PARTNERS.....	20
THE ROLE OF UP.....	22
THE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH.....	22
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	23
CURRENT INFORMATION, RESEARCH AND PROJECTS	24
PROGRAMS UNDER DEVELOPMENT	31
IDENTIFICATION OF CRITICAL INFORMATION GAPS.....	32
TOOLS AND METHODS	33
GOALS OF UP.....	37
ANTICIPATED PRODUCTS OF UP.....	38
INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT	39
RESTORATION PROJECT FUNDING, SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION CRITERIA.....	43
BUDGET AND SCHEDULING	48
SUMMARY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	51
LITERATURE CITED.....	52
APPENDICES.....	53
APPENDIX 1 – GIS MAPS	54
APPENDIX 2 – SPECIES OF CONCERN	68
APPENDIX 3 – HISTORY OF THE UNCOMPAHGRE PLATEAU	70
APPENDIX 4 – MANAGEMENT PLANS	70
APPENDIX 5 – LOCAL, STATE & FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS.....	72
APPENDIX 6 – THE UP PARTNERS: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	74
APPENDIX 7 – COMMUNITY INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH GOALS & TOOLS	76
APPENDIX 8 – ADDITIONAL REFERENCES FOR THE UNCOMPAHGRE PLATEAU.....	81
APPENDIX 9 – CURRENT GIS MATRIX	85
APPENDIX 10 – UP PROJECT FUNDING APPLICATION.....	88
APPENDIX 11 – RESTORATION PROJECT SELECTION CHECKLIST	91
APPENDIX 12 – PRE-PROJECT ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES.....	92
APPENDIX 13 – RESTORATION PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES.....	94
APPENDIX 14 – POST PROJECT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES	96
SIGNATURE PAGE	98