

LOWER DOLORES WORKING GROUP FACT SHEET**Meeting #1****December 15, 2008****Getting started****Orientation to the Working Group****Presenter: Marsha Porter-Norton****Group facilitator**

The Working Group's purpose is to assist the San Juan Public Lands Center in updating the current management plan for the Lower Dolores River. The Working Group was created by the Dolores River Dialogue ("DRD") and is made up of approximately 40 people chosen by the DRD.

Key laws and documents affecting management of the Lower Dolores River**Presenter: Steve Beverlin****Manager, Dolores Public Lands Office**

- **The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968).** This national act provides for the preservation and protection of "certain selected rivers" that possess "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values. . ."

- **Dolores River Wild and Scenic River Study Report (1976).** This evaluated the river's main stem from McPhee to Bedrock (105 miles). Certain segments were found either "eligible" or "suitable" for WSR designation.

- **BLM San Juan/San Miguel Resource Management Plan (1985).** The plan identified a multiple-use emphasis for the Dolores River corridor. It designated 28,539 acres as the Dolores River Wilderness Study Area. It specified that the Dolores River should be managed as a special Recreation Management Area and should have a management plan, which became the Dolores River Corridor Management Plan.

- **The Dolores River Corridor Management Plan (1990).** This is the plan the Working Group is to help update.

- **The San Juan Public Lands Draft Revised Resource Management Plan ("RMP") (2007).** As part of preparing the revised RMP, which should be finalized and adopted in 2010, officials with the San Juan Public Lands Center conducted a federally mandated WSR analysis to determine which streams were "eligible" for WSR consideration. The agency also decided to go one step further and determine which streams are "suitable", meaning potentially manageable as

*Dolores Public Lands Office***The Lower Dolores River Canyon**

A stream is "eligible" for WSR consideration when:

- **It is free-flowing AND**
- **It possesses one or more Outstandingly Remarkable Values.**

WSRs. Officials found 109 miles of the Lower Dolores and some tributaries from McPhee to Bedrock to be preliminarily "suitable". However, the draft RMP also provides that the recommendations of the Lower Dolores Working Group may be used "to supplement or replace this finding of suitability". Ultimately, Congress designates (or chooses not to designate) a WSR, based on local recommendations.

WSR designation may or may not be the right tool for the Lower Dolores. The door is open for the Lower Dolores Working Group to recommend whatever it finds appropriate.

Lower Dolores
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NEPA process

Presenter:

Shauna Jensen

Hydrologist, Dolores Public Lands Office

Shauna presented a PowerPoint explaining the NEPA process the Dolores Public Lands Office will follow after the Working Group completes its recommendations. NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act, is the law that requires the federal government to analyze potential environmental impacts of proposed actions. Updating the Dolores River management plan must comply with NEPA. The process will include a Plan-to-Project Period (December 2008 – October 2009) during which the Working Group considers how best to protect the values of the Lower Dolores. The remainder of the process involves primarily the Dolores Public Lands Office and includes “scoping” through news releases, public meetings and letters to interested parties; a NEPA analysis by the agency; preparation of a preliminary environmental assessment (EA); a public comment period; a final decision signed by the district manager; and an appeal period.

Dolores River Dialogue history and role in Lower Dolores River Management Plan update

Presenter:

Mike Preston

Manager, Dolores Water Conservancy District

The Dolores River Dialogue is a collaborative group involved in finding management opportunities for McPhee Reservoir. It has been meeting since 2004. The DRD learned about the possibility of the Dolores River being listed as a WSR and was concerned about the potential ramifications, especially because a WSR designation would likely carry a federal reserved water right. Steve Beverlin informed the DRD that there was a management plan already in existence for the Lower Dolores and suggested the plan-revision process as a formal way to evaluate alternative protection for the river. In February 2008, the DRD decided to form a separate group to help update the management plan, and selected members for that group. The Working Group now has the opportunity to flesh out management options for the Dolores River in an open and transparent fashion. The group will try to come up with a proposed action that most people can support. The Dolores Working Group is set to conclude its work in Fall 2009.

The Lower Dolores Management Plan Working Group is working to provide recommendations for updating the Dolores Public Lands Office (Forest Service/BLM) 1990 Dolores River Corridor Management Plan. The Working Group includes diverse stakeholders with many perspectives and interests in the Lower Dolores River Valley. Its goals are to gather information, identify values worthy of protection in the planning area, formulate ideas for protection of the values, and make recommendations to the Dolores Public Lands Office. The Working Group will meet until Fall 2009.

NO decisions or recommendations were made at this meeting.

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LOWER DOLORES WORKING GROUP FACT SHEET

Meeting #2
January 19, 2009

Science, recreation and spill management

Science efforts of the Dolores River Dialogue

Presenter: Jim Siscoe

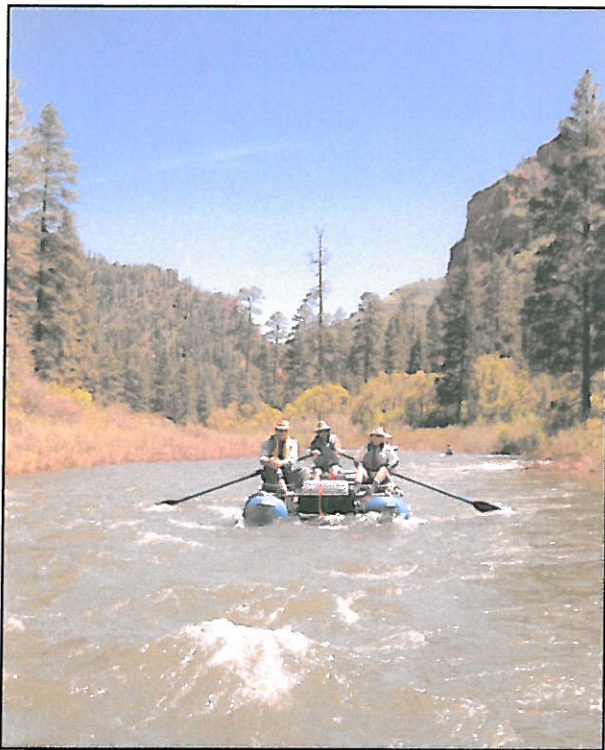
Co-coordinator of the Dolores River Dialogue (DRD)

Science Committee

The philosophy of the DRD science team is to ensure that the science efforts they conduct are completely transparent, free of hidden agendas, and as devoid of politics as possible.

Major topics of discussion for the DRD science team have been:

- Geomorphology (primarily sediment transport)
- Coldwater fisheries (in particular, how to manage for a recreational fishery from McPhee Dam to Bradfield Bridge while also supporting native fish)
- Riparian ecology
- Special species of concern (native fish)



Marsha Porter-Norton

Rafting on the Lower Dolores

Fact

Scientists have divided the Dolores River from McPhee to the confluence with the Colorado into eight reaches, all with unique characteristics in regard to gradient, riparian ecology, geology and more.

Challenge: In the past, the Dolores River saw greater fluctuations than it does now. During the 120 years prior to construction of McPhee Dam, the river periodically experienced big flushing flows. Then it would go dry, or nearly dry, from mid-June through July from the area where the dam is now, down to the pump station. There was no trout fishery, but there were deep pools of water filled with native fish. The river bottom was churned up, making it ideal for fish to lay eggs. It was a healthier environment. Today, the maximum amount of spill that is released from the dam is 5,000 cubic feet per second. The energy from the big flushing flows has been lost. And where the Dolores was once sometimes dry, it is now a perennial river. The DRD science team is seeking ways to create healthier conditions. However, the team recognizes there are limitations to what can be done because of the many needs of downstream users.

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Recreation

Presenter: Rick Ryan

River manager, San Juan Public Lands Center

Recreational uses in the 97-mile corridor from Bradfield Bridge to Bedrock (the portion managed by the center) include motorized travel along the Snaggletooth trail from the Dove Creek pump station to Slick Rock; horseback riding; camping; hiking; fishing; hunting; biking and more. Although rafting is just one activity, it is a major factor in deciding flows. Launch-site information from 2008 shows that Bradfield Bridge is the most popular boat launch site; May is the busiest rafting month; and the vast majority of boaters on the Dolores are from Colorado.

Fact

The Dolores is not a "permitted" river. Private boaters do not now need permits to float it.

Managing spills

Presenter: Mike Preston

Manager, Dolores Water Conservancy District

Mike discussed the logistics of managing spills from McPhee. The 2008 early winter spill forecast turned out to be too optimistic, but there was still enough water for 85 days of rafting spills. Last year the reservoir stayed full until the end of June. However, projections surrounding climate change indicate more rain but less snowfall and earlier snowmelt in the Southwest, which could mean a 30 percent reduction in reservoir water in the next 100 years. Water managers will keep a close eye on when the snowpack is melting and will plan different management if necessary. So far, the time of peak snowmelt seems steady, around the third week in May.

Working Group discussions and thoughts

- The Working Group largely expressed **support for continuation of recreation and expansion of recreational opportunities**. Suggestions included keeping open the road that runs along the river corridor across public lands in Dolores County and into San Miguel County; revitalizing the coldwater fishery below the dam to Bradfield; and providing better flow management to create steady flows so boaters can take several raft trips in a single season if spills are good. Under the existing contract, the Dolores Water Conservancy District and Bureau of Reclamation must manage the dam for irrigation and to "maximize rafting days"; however, this is not defined. Flows of 1,000 to 1,200 cubic feet per second are ideal for rafters, but smaller craft are able to raft the river at lower cfs, so there may be opportunities to increase boating of this type.
- On the other hand, some **concern was expressed about the carrying capacity of the river and river corridor**. Rick Ryan said that one day at Coyote Wash there were seven groups camping, all in sight and sound of one another. There have been complaints about loud parties and drinking, fireworks, and dogs running loose. Careless OHV use is destroying pools and vegetation in the Coyote Wash area as well. One group member asked whether we really want to promote the area and attract more users when this could prove detrimental to the resource.

NO decisions or recommendations were made at this meeting.

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LOWER DOLORES WORKING GROUP FACT SHEET

Meeting #3

Feb. 17, 2009

Fish, ecology and wildlife in the river corridor

Wildlife

Presenter: Dave Harper
Colorado Division of Wildlife

Species of note:

- Desert bighorn sheep (reintroduced)
- River otters (reintroduced)
- Townsend's big-eared and other bats



Division of Wildlife
Bighorn sheep

Other wildlife:

Deer, elk, black bears, ring-tailed cats, mountain lions, bobcats, wild turkeys, peregrine falcons, prairie falcons, bald eagles and golden eagles, unique reptile species and amphibians.

Fact

Over 90 percent of wildlife species in Colorado depend to some extent on riparian habitat.

Vegetation and riparian ecology

Presenter: Ann Oliver
Dolores River Dialogue Science Committee and The Nature Conservancy

Rare plants:

- **Eastwood monkeyflower**

Found only in the Four Corners region, in the Gunnison, Dolores and San Juan river corridors. There are 24 known sites in Colorado, Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico.

- **Kachina daisy**

First identified near Kachina Natural Bridge, Utah. Very rare; there are only about 7500 individual plants in the world, all in 15 sites in Utah and Colorado — including the Dolores River corridor.



B. Jennings ©1999

Eastwood monkeyflower

Unusual plant communities:

- **Strapleaf willow and coyote willow found together**
- **Narrowleaf cottonwood-boxelder/red-osier dogwood.**

This is a multi-level plant community.

- **Large stands of skunkbrush and of New Mexico wild privet**

The New Mexico privet communities occur only in Utah and Colorado, and in Colorado they are found only in the Dolores River basin.

Exotic invader of concern:

Tamarisk

Loves lower elevations, perennial water and salt; thus, the Lower Dolores is "heaven" for this species.

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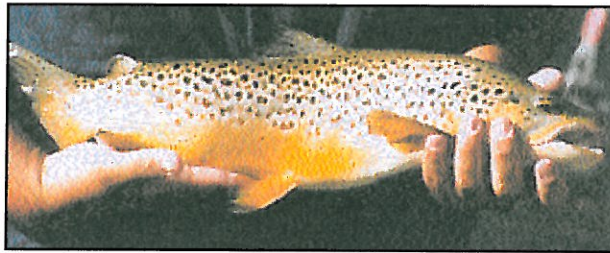
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Fisheries

Presenter: Jim White
Colorado Division of Wildlife



Brown trout

Trout species present in the cold-water reach (McPhee Dam to Bradfield Bridge):

- Browns (hardy, self-sustaining)
- Rainbows (stocked)
- Cutthroats (stocked)
- Also present: Paiute sculpin (Dolores River native species; abundant)

Status of trout species: General trend is downward for numbers in the Dolores. Management goal is 32 pounds per surface acre of trout.

Native warmwater species present in the Lower Dolores:

- Roundtail chub
- Bluehead sucker
- Flannelmouth sucker

Status: Roundtail chub populations are relatively stable; bluehead and flannelmouth populations are declining. A rangewide conservation plan involving six states and multiple agencies is in place to keep these three species off the federal endangered and threatened list. Primary threats range-wide are habitat loss, non-native fish interaction and hybridization with other fish.



Roundtail chub

Native warmwater species no longer present in the Lower Dolores:

- Pikeminnow
- Razorback sucker

Status: These species were historically present in the Dolores River and are now thought to be extirpated. Both species are federally listed as endangered.

Non-native fish species found downstream:

Smallmouth bass, green sunfish, channel catfish, black bullheads, fathead minnows, carp, brown trout and rainbow trout.

Management objectives for the Dolores River fisheries:

- Ensure adequate base flows, which are critical to bluehead suckers and flannelmouth suckers and also beneficial to trout.
- Stock whirling-disease-resistant rainbows to increase biomass.
- Remove non-native fish that threaten natives.
- Release flows from the bottom outlet of the dam to prevent white suckers from making it into the river.
- Mimic natural spring hydrograph when reservoir conditions allow and ensure adequate base flows.

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LOWER DOLORES WORKING GROUP FACT SHEET

Meeting #3

Feb. 17, 2009

Working Group discussions and thoughts relating to fish, ecology and wildlife

- Working Group members were in general agreement that **recreation** (rafting, camping, hiking, four-wheeling, and so on) **has a definite impact on wildlife**. All users have an impact, and more recreational use causes more disturbance.
- It was asked whether it is possible to accomplish the **many conflicting goals** involved in management of the Dolores River (restoring native fish, improving the sport fishery, restoring cottonwoods, providing irrigation water, etc.). Which goal has priority? What does the public want?
- A common theme was the need to **continue to allow historic uses while providing protection** for the resources.
- Some members expressed the sentiment that there is **not a need for major changes** in management, such as listing the Dolores River as a Wild and Scenic River. They believe management so far has been fairly successful; wildlife and fish are still present and many activities are enjoyed throughout the corridor. Conditions change even without humans being involved.
- Others said the pressures of increasing human population in the West and increasing numbers of recreational users mean that the **resources in the Lower Dolores River Valley need protection** now if they are to retain their special values.
- It was noted that **a foundation of the Dolores River Dialogue** has been to work with available flows/spills. There is some debate about what those constraints are and whether they could be changed.
- The Working Group would like **more information** on a number of topics, including historic river hydrology and details about wildlife species and their range and habitat, including along tributaries and into uplands.

“**T**his river has been diverted for a hundred years. We changed the native species a long time ago. How do we know what's native and what's not?
Group member

Management Questions

Shauna Jensen, hydrologist with the SJPLC, presented management questions to discuss at future meetings as follows:

Ecology

- How do we protect and enhance the ecology (specifically, aquatic and riparian) of the Dolores River while allowing for compatible uses?
- What are possible management objectives for old-growth ponderosa pine? (There is significant ponderosa pine in the corridor.)
- What management opportunities and strategies exist to maintain or improve the existing quality of the riparian and wildlife habitat?

Wildlife

- How do we ensure the continued existence of federally listed, state-listed, and BLM and Forest Service sensitive species?
- How do we minimize potential conflicts with recreational use of public lands and the preservation of federally, state-listed and BLM and Forest Service sensitive species and their habitat?

Recreation

- Should the Dolores River be on a permit system for rafting use?
- Should campsites be on a reserved or first-come, first-served basis?



Wendy Mimiaga

NO decisions or recommendations were made at this meeting.

LOWER DOLORES WORKING GROUP FACT SHEET

Meeting #4

March 16, 2009

Archaeology, geology, and Wild and Scenic Rivers

Archaeology and geology

Presenter: Vince MacMillan

Field archaeologist, Dolores Public Lands Office

Archaeology:

- Archaeological resources in the Lower Dolores River Valley date back about 12,000 years. These resources include rare pre-historic rock shelters, rock-art panels, prehistoric cliff dwellings and quarries used for stone tools. Also present in the valley are historic Euro- and Native American sites, including historic ranches, uranium mines, and Native American sweat lodges and hogans left from the uranium-mining era.
- Primary threats to these cultural resources are impacts from recreational users and from cattle-grazing. Cows tend to group inside rock shelters and will trample a looted hole, compacting layers and causing further damage. At some sites, all the surface artifacts listed in site documents from 10 years ago have now vanished, taken by visitors.



David Graf/Colorado Division of Wildlife
The Pyramid formation

- Needed: funding to survey and find sites that are being damaged; and further education and outreach, e.g., through interpretive panels and site stewards at river put-ins.

Geology:

Geology in the Lower Dolores River corridor spans 100 million years. The rock layers range from Wingate sandstone at the bottom, dating from the Early Jurassic Period about 200 million years ago, to Dakota sandstone at the top, which is approximately 100 million years old.

Fact
Only about 3.6 percent of the Lower Dolores River corridor managed by the BLM has been surveyed for cultural resources.

Background on Wild and Scenic Rivers

Presenter:

Steve Beverlin

Manager, Dolores Public Lands Office

The 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provides for the preservation and protection of "certain selected rivers" that possess "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values. . ." In 1975, a total of 194 river miles of the Dolores River from McPhee to the Colorado-Utah border, with a few spots excluded, was identified for study for possible Wild and Scenic River (WSR) designation. The 2007 Draft Revised Resource Management Plan for the San Juan Public Lands found 109 miles of the Lower Dolores, and some tributaries, from McPhee to Bedrock to be preliminarily "suitable" for WSR status, meaning they meet the criteria for WSR eligibility and are judged to be "manageable" as WSRs.

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Types of Wild and Scenic River

There are three categories of WSR, based on the type and degree of human development associated with the stream and stream corridor:

- **Recreational:** the type most impacted by human activity. It is readily accessible by roads or railroads and may have had some impoundment or diversion in the past.
- **Scenic:** largely primitive and undeveloped, with no impoundments.
- **Wild:** the most natural WSR. The water is unpolluted and the shoreline is primitive. Generally there are only trails in the corridor, not roads.

Livestock-grazing and historic buildings can occur in all three categories. Most multiple-use activities are allowed under the "scenic" and "recreational" categories. "Wild" rivers, however, must remain primitive and undeveloped.

Working Group discussions and thoughts

- Major concerns and issues about WSR status for the Dolores were the **types of uses that would be allowed** and what **impacts** there might be to any **private property** in the area.
- Of great concern was what effect a WSR designation would have on **existing water rights**. Designation of a WSR by Congress generally carries with it a **federal reserved water right**. However, some Working Group members said it is theoretically possible to have a WSR without a federal reserved water right.
- It was asked **how much water is actually needed** to protect the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the river.
- There was discussion of whether a special designation would **bring much-needed protection to the resources** or would draw so many more people into the corridor that they would **cause further damage**. Some members stated that, because of increasing population in the West, more people will come regardless, increasing the need for greater protection.
- A common theme was the need to **continue to allow historic uses** while providing protection for the resources.
- Some individuals said that there was **no reason to seek WSR status** since the same uses (e.g., grazing and recreation) that occur now could continue after the designation. Others said places like the Lower Dolores are getting rarer and rarer, and WSR status can **prevent other federal entities from doing something to damage the area**, such as building impoundments.
- The Working Group would like **more information** on the possible impacts of WSR designation, the legalities involved in federal reserved water rights, and instream flows. Presenters may be brought to speak to the group on such topics.

NO decisions or recommendations were made at this meeting.

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LOWER DOLORES WORKING GROUP FACT SHEET

Meeting #5

April 20, 2009

Potential tools and 319 Watershed Study

Tools for protection of land and water

Presenter: Marsha Porter-Norton
Facilitator for the Working Group

State tools:

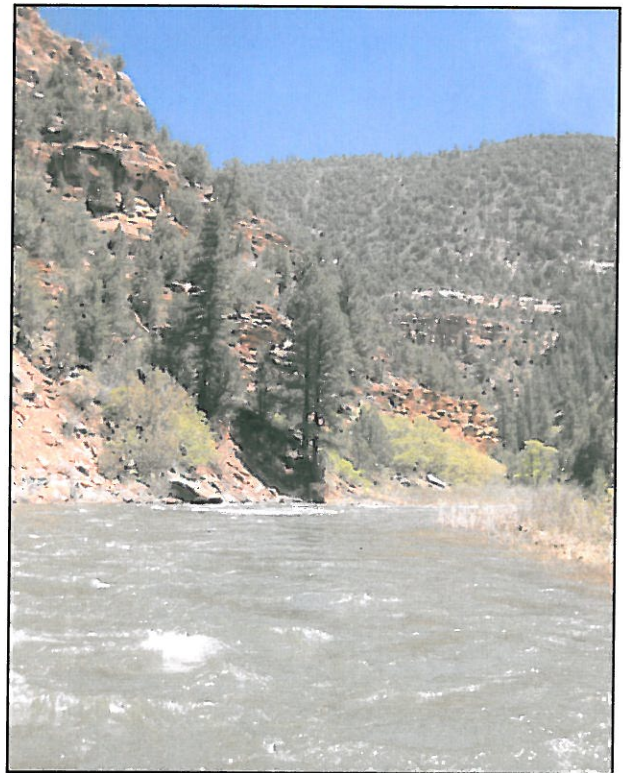
- **The Colorado instream flow program**, a voluntary program by which water rights can be purchased or leased to protect values in a stream. The water is then administered by the Colorado Water Conservation Board. This method primarily protects stream flows.
- **State laws and intergovernmental agreements**, developed on a case-by-case basis.
- **Gold-medal waters designation**, for the highest-quality coldwater fisheries.
- **Outstanding waters designation**, a Colorado Water Quality Control Act classification that is the most protective designation for water.
- **Recreational In-Channel Diversions**, which provide a minimum water right for recreational uses between two points.

Federal tools:

- **U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management resource management plans**. These establish broad guidance for project and activity decision-making.
- **Wild and Scenic River (WSR) designation**.
- **Wilderness-area designation**.
- **Special designations** (e.g., National Conservation Area, Research Natural Area, Area of Critical Environmental Concern). These require legislation.
- **Other special legislation** targeted to a specific area.

County and local tools:

- **Conservation easements on private land**.
- **Local work projects** (tamarisk removal, riverbank stabilization, cultural-site stewardship programs).
- **Land stewardship programs**.
- **County land-use policies**.
- **Local contractual agreements**.
- **Buying land (land acquisition)** from willing sellers.



Marsha Porter-Norton

The Dolores River gorge

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319 Watershed Study

Presenter: Chester Anderson

Owner/president, BUGS Consulting

BUGS Consulting is engaged in the 319 Watershed Study, a voluntary, non-regulatory watershed planning process for the Dolores River. The goal is to protect or improve water quality on the Dolores River from McPhee to the Utah state line by identifying sources of non-point pollution, identifying best management practices (BMPs) to mitigate those sources, and implementing the BMPs after obtaining funds to do so.

Some sources of nonpoint source pollution are:

- Excess fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides.
- Oil, grease and toxic chemicals from urban runoff and energy production.
- Salts from irrigation runoff.
- Bacteria and nutrients from livestock wastes and malfunctioning septic systems.

Chester would like to receive feedback from throughout the watershed to identify areas of concern.

To help with the
319 Watershed Study:
Contact Chester Anderson
970-764-7581
chester@bugsconsulting.org

Working Group discussions and thoughts

- The Working Group emphasized its **concerns about the possible effects of a WSR designation on private property rights** and private landowners. Could such a designation devalue private property?
- It was stated that **water is also a private property right**, as are mineral interests.
- The group said counties' and citizens' interests must be considered, and noted that acquisition of land means a loss of property-tax revenues for counties and schools.
- The group asked for more information in order to evaluate alternatives to WSR designation, and said **all potential management tools should be evaluated in detail** as to their pros and cons.
- It was asked **whether a change in river management is really needed**. One person stated the group should not have a mindset that it has to change current management if things are working well; the river corridor that we recognize as being "wild and scenic" has been in place many years. Marsha agreed that one option is the "null alternative", meaning keeping the status quo.
- However, another person pointed out that the 2007 Draft Revised San Juan Public Lands Resource Management Plan found portions of the Lower Dolores River "suitable" for WSR designation. **If the Working Group does not come up with its own recommendations, then the suitability recommendation** contained in the plan **will move forward**. The Working Group can come up with something of its own that it will be happier with.
- It was suggested that the group **examine the Dolores River according to its different reaches**, all of which have different characteristics and values. There may be an opportunity within those unique reaches to develop different alternatives to WSR designation.

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LOWER DOLORES WORKING GROUP FACT SHEET

Meeting #6

May 11, 2009

Minerals, oil and gas, and grazing

Agency perspective on minerals, oil and gas

Presenter: Tom Rice

Natural-resource specialist, Dolores Public Lands Office

The BLM manages all federal minerals under the surface of federal lands, as well as the federal minerals that lie beneath private surface (split estate). Four times a year, the BLM state office conducts a lease sale. Nominated properties are reviewed by local BLM personnel, who decide whether leases should be granted and under what conditions. The agency can apply lease stipulations (restrictions), or can defer some parcels from leasing because of resource concerns. When the lease sale takes place, the public has an opportunity to comment. When the agency wants to move forward with a lease, it must receive an application for permit to drill ("APD") from the operator.

Most oil and gas activity in the region involves:

- Drilling for natural gas or oil in the Paradox Basin;
- Coal-bed methane extraction in the San Juan Basin (La Plata County and northern New Mexico) and
- Carbon-dioxide production on the McElmo Dome (in and around Canyons of the Ancients National Monument).



Wendy Mimiaga

Industry perspective on oil and gas

Presenter: Jim Felton

Communications manager for Bill Barrett Corp.

Bill Barrett Corp. has leased approximately 400,000 acres in the Paradox Basin in the local area. The target is natural gas in the Gothic shale layer. Extracting the gas from this thin layer has always been difficult, but new technology may make it more feasible.

Bill Barrett Corp. conducts seismic testing to reveal anomalies in the sub-surface that may suggest oil or gas resources. If the results are promising, an exploratory well is drilled. A single well costs \$5 million to \$6 million. It may be years before Bill Barrett Corp. knows whether this will be a viable field. The company has drilled about a dozen wells in the area so far.

Jim discussed some broad issues involving energy consumption in the United States and worldwide. He said that every year since this country's inception, its demand for electricity has grown. Approximately 23 trillion cubic feet of natural gas per year is consumed in the United States, and this amount is expected to continue growing as a projected 100 million more people are added to the country by 2050.

Jim went on to say that domestic natural gas may offer a real opportunity for meeting energy needs. Natural gas is abundant in the United States and is cleaner-burning than coal. Renewable energy is still a small factor in the energy picture.

He said oil and gas is a \$23-billion-per-year industry in Colorado.

The Lower Dolores Management Plan Working Group is working to provide recommendations for updating the Dolores Public Lands Office (Forest Service/BLM) 1990 Dolores River Corridor Management Plan. The Working Group includes diverse stakeholders with many perspectives and interests in the Lower Dolores River Valley. Its goals are to gather information, identify values worthy of protection in the planning area, formulate ideas for protection of the values, and make recommendations to the Dolores Public Lands Office. The Working Group will meet until Fall 2009. Presentations, documents, meeting summaries, agendas and other information related to the Working Group process are posted at <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drd/>.

Lower Dolores
Working Group
Members & Alternates

Chester Anderson
Linda Bassi
Steve Beverlin
Ann Brown
Chris Burkett
Jon Callender
Randy Carver
Steve Chappell
Amber Clark
Scott Clow
Clint Cressler
Cole Crocker-Bedford
James Dietrich
Carolyn Dunmire
Nathan Fey
Jim Fisher
Lynn Gardner
Rick Gersch
Art Goodtimes
David Graf
Dave Harper
Vern Harrell
Al Heaton
Shauna Jensen
Rick Keck
Julie Kibel
Gerald Koppenhafer
Ted Kowalski
Tony & Peggy Littlejohn
Andy Logan
Joe Mahaffey
Meghan Maloney
Karel Miller
Ann Oliver
John Porter
Mike Preston
Larrie Rule
Rick Ryan
David Schneck
Lisa Schwantes
Don Schwindt
Leslie Sesler
Jim Siscoe
Bruce Smart
Dale Smith
Doug Stowe
Rowdy Suckla
Steve Trudeau
David Vackar
Chuck Wanner
Mely Whiting
John Whitney
Ernie Williams

Staff

Marsha Porter-Norton
Kathy Sherer
Gail Binkly
Gina Espeland

Agency perspective on grazing

Presenter: Steve Beverlin

Manager, Dolores Public Lands Office

Grazing permits on public lands are issued to private ranchers for a 10-year period. At the end of that period, the permit is reviewed. Within the next two years the DPLO must conduct a NEPA analysis on all its permits. There are 95 allotments across the DPLO landscape, and 110 permittees.

Permittees are responsible for maintenance of any range improvements (e.g., ponds, fences) they create. Permittees must deal with many issues, including recreational users, wildfire, soil conditions, wildlife, oil and gas, wild horses, and invasive species such as tamarisk.

Steve said most permittees care about the long-term health of the land and voluntarily reduce their livestock numbers during droughts.

Monitoring standards have to be met while livestock is on the land. BLM land must meet Colorado standards and guidelines for rangeland health.

Grazing-permittee perspective

Presenters: Al Heaton and Rowdy Suckla

Grazing can be beneficial to the landscape. Al said wildlife follows grazing cattle because the cattle chew off dead and decadent plants. Wild animals also appreciate the water wells and stock ponds built by ranchers. The entire ecosystem benefits.

Agriculture creates open space. If ranchers were to lose their grazing allotments they would have to subdivide their land because there is not enough private land available to support their livestock.

Grazing permittees said they don't really have conflicts with recreational users such as river rafters. They said everyone needs to respect everyone else, follow the multiple-use philosophy of public lands, and learn to get along.

“You can't starve money out of a cow.”
Group member, on why most ranchers take care of their range

Working Group discussions and thoughts

- Working Group members suggested finding out more about **impacts from and to livestock-grazing** within the individual reaches of the river. One of the special values of the Lower Dolores is “ecology”, which includes riparian vegetation. Properly managed grazing may actually improve that particular value. Working Group members said **there are some “bad apples” in the livestock business**, but they don't stay in business long. **The majority of ranchers are good stewards** of public lands.
- Members acknowledged the **economic benefits of energy production** but had **some concerns about impacts** in the Dolores River corridor, including sedimentation from oil and gas roads that aren't properly maintained, water usage and amounts, disposal of energy wastes, and the footprint of the infrastructure.

NO decisions or recommendations were made at this meeting.

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