Alternatives to Wild and Scenic River Designation of the Dolores River Progress Report to CWCB, October 27, 2009

This report will address progress on the Scope of Work and deliverables as of October 27, 2009 for P.O. #090000000029. Attachments to this report have been selected as examples which document and depict work plan items and deliverables. The full information set from which attachments were accessed can be found at the on the Dolores River Dialogue Website at: http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drd/ at the link entitled "Lower Dolores Plan Working Group."

Lower Dolores Working Group Schedule and Process

The focal point for the entire "Alternatives to Wild and Scenic River Designation on the Dolores River" process has been the meetings and work products of the Lower Dolores Working Group. Attachment A is the Scope of Work and Deliverables to which this report is addressed. Attachment B is the Working Group Schedule and Membership which shows where the process has been and where it is going.

Topical Meetings 1-6 (December 2008-May 2009):

Meetings 1-6 from December 2008-May 2009 began with an introduction to key laws and documents (including the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the Dolores River Corridor Management Plan and role of the Dolores River Dialogue), followed by a series of topical meetings, relevant to the protection of Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) including: Meeting 2 – Science, Recreation and Spill Management, Meeting 3 – Fish, Ecology and Wildlife, Meeting 4 – Archaeology, Geology and Wild and Scenic Rivers, Meeting 5 – Potential Protection Tools and the 319 Watershed Study, and Meeting 6 – Minerals, Oil & Gas Development and Grazing.

The website listed above provides detailed meeting summaries, presentation materials and power point presentations as well as the discussion of Agency and work group issues, opportunities and concerns discussed towards the end of each meeting. Facts Sheets briefing each of the meetings were placed on the website, and distributed in hard copy to key distribution points throughout the local area. Attachment C is the Fact Sheet series for Meetings 1-6.

DRD Reaches and Field Trips in May, July and September:

The Field Trips focused on **5 Reaches** of the Dolores River delineated by the DRD Science Coordinator and Technical Committee that fall within the jurisdiction of the Dolores Public Lands Office. A **Reach Map** depicting DRD reaches 1-5 as well as how the River is divided into Wild, Scenic and Recreational eligibility classifications is Attachment D. The May Field Trip was on **Reach 2** which is only accessible by raft. Nine rafters volunteered to take Working Group members down this unique and isolated stretch characterized by a unique combination of red rock desert canyons populated by large old growth ponderosa pines. The July Field Trip was to the lower end of **Reach 1** to discuss research and monitoring of the fisheries, water quality, riparian health and flows. The September Field Trip was along **Reaches 3 and 4** which include substantial private property, the Big Gyp Monitoring Site, major efforts at Tamarisk removal and restoration, grazing and the Slick Rock Boat Launch. Sample photos and a brief write up on each of the 3 field trips is Attachment E.

Reach by Reach Meetings in August-November 2009:
Working Group Meetings 8-11 (see Attachment B) are focused the presentation of information and small group brainstorming on Management Strategies and Tools for Protection on a **Reach by Reach** basis. In order to document how deliverables called for in the Work Plan are being packaged into Work Group meeting materials, I have attached narrative information for the October 19, 2009 meeting focused on Reaches 3 and 4 (Attachment F), and Supporting Maps (Attachment G).

The narrative for each of the Reach by Reach meetings begins with Overall Goals and Objectives for the 1990 Dolores River Corridor Management Plan. The update of the Corridor Management Plan is one of the Management Actions to be taken by the Dolores Public Lands Office based on Working Group recommendations, and open public input during the subsequent E.A. process that will be conducted by the Public Lands Center.

Page 2 of Attachment F addresses Wild and Scenic Eligibility Classifications and Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) for reaches 3 and 4. This information comes out of the Draft San Juan Forest/BLM Plan Amendment. It was this Plan Amendment that brought Wild and Scenic Eligibility and Suitability onto the front burner and challenged the DRD to explore WSR alternatives and enduring protections:

> *"The DRD process shows great promise in achieving enduring protections for this stream reach. Should the DRD make substantial progress in identifying and securing needed protections of the ORVs, the recommendations of the group could be used to supplement or replace this preliminary finding of suitability. Ideally, the DRD will be able to provide their recommendations for management of the lower Dolores River prior to the close of the public comment period for this draft Plan Revision. Input from the DRD could then be more fully considered in the final Plan and associated environmental analysis."[Appendix D– Wild and Scenic Rivers Suitability, Page D-20]*

Pages 3-6 of Attachment F summarize DRD science input on Reaches 3 and 4 including: River Mechanics, Riparian Health, Cold Water Fishery, Warm Water Fishery, Top Research Needs and Recent Partner Efforts. Reach 4 also includes the Big Gypsum Study Site which has been a focal point for DRD Science and flow response monitoring. Pages 6-7 of Attachment F address "Current Management Objectives" for Reaches 3 and 4 as outlined in the 1990 Corridor Management Plan.

Beginning on Page 7, Attachment F addresses the **Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)** that drove Wild and Scenic eligibility and preliminary suitability. Pages 7-11 deal with Rafting including: Significance, Goals, Current Management, Status/Trends and Problems/Concerns. Pages 11-12 deal with Archaeological Resources by the same categories, followed by Roundtail Chub (p. 12-14), New Mexico Wild Privet (p. 14-15), Eastwood Monkey Flower (p. 15-16), Canyon Tree Frog (p. 16-17), Geology (p. 17-18) and Scenery (p. 18-19). The **ORVs are summarized for Reaches 1-5** as Attachment H.

The information presented above demonstrating information presentations in Meetings 8-11 is intended set up small discussion groups to discuss Strategies and Tools for Protection. Since all of the small group input from the October meeting on

Reaches 3 & 4 has not been processed, the discussion questions and input summary from Meeting 9, which focused on Reach 5 are included as Attachment I.

When **Reach by Reach** Work Group Meetings are concluded, information presented to the Working Group and generate by the Working Group in small group discussions in Meetings 8-11 will be organized into an Information Grid (Attachment J). The Information GRID will be filled out except for the Column on the far right "Bucket Lists", which will be developed in 3 Workshops conducted in Meetings 12-15.

Topic Workshops and Final Report, December 15, 2009-May 17, 2010:

Having, reviewed key issues in Topical Meetings 1-6 (Attachment C), engaged in three Field Trips on the River (Attachment E), been involved in **Reach by Reach** presentations and small group discussions (Attachments F, G, and I), and had all of this information and input summarized into an Information Grid (Attachment J), the Working Group will move to a series of 3 Topic Workshops which will result in "Bucket Lists" of Protection Strategies as summarized in Attachment K.

The Final Report will be drafted and reviewed by the Working Group in March-May of 2010. The report will contain a Preferred Alternative in areas where consensus can be reached, and a range of alternatives in areas were a range of opinions exist. The Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) from the Dolores Public Lands Office will draw on the Working Group Report in formulating a Corridor Plan update, and recommendations for incorporation or amendment into the San Juan Forest/BLM Resource Management Plan, which is currently in draft.

Science and Adaptive Management

The Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) that were the basis for "eligible" and "preliminarily suitable" designation in the Draft San Juan Forest/BLM Resource Management Plan involved values that had been the focus of the Dolores River Dialogue (DRD) since it's inception in 2004. This was the basis in the Plan for stating that the "*DRD process shows great promise …in identifying and securing needed protections of the ORVs"* [Full quote on page 2]. The alignment of the DRD focus on fisheries, riparian ecology, geomorphology and rafting, which encompass all of the ORV's except archaeology; made science and adaptive management a strong foundation in the design of the Lower Dolores River Working Group process by the DRD Technical Committee.

The August 5, 2009 DRD Technical Committee meeting summary (Attachment L) demonstrates the DRD Technical Committee role in a number of the Work Plan Deliverables: Pages 1 and 2 discussing 2009 spill management and results. Pages 2-3 include the regular discussions by the Tech Committee in evaluating and planning for Lower Dolores Working Group meetings and process strategies. Pages 3-6 outline science presentation summarizing summer field work and knowledge gained. The science deliverables are addressed below.

Spill Management:

Spill Management, which has been a major focus of DRD adaptive management, is brought into the Working Group process in two phases. The Working Group received a presentation in January of 2009 reviewing the 2008 spill, talking about how the spill is estimated and managed and putting 2008 into historic context.

On August 5, 2009 following the spill a presentation was made to the DRD Technical Committee reviewing the 2009 spill and comparing it to 2008. The 2009 spill came early because of dust on snow and early warm weather. Graphics were displayed showing inflows from the Dolores River compared to averages, comparing the spill hydrographs for 2008 and 2009, and showing daily water accounting during the 2008 and 2009 spills.

The 2008 spill lasted 85 days and was 3.5 times larger than 2009 which lasted 15 days. The size of the 2008 spill made and "spill and fill" year making it easier to plan and advertise rafting flows. The relatively small 2009 spill, which came over two weeks early was "fill and spill", resulting in releases that were a function of inflows from the Dolores River minus irrigation diversions. While the 15 day duration of the 2009 spill resulted in average releases of 1,400cfs, ideal for rafting, the lack of predictability made it difficult to advertise. The earliness of the 2009 spill disrupted planned fish survey flows which were scheduled for the normal peak flows and had to be cancelled when the river peaked early forcing high releases just when the surveying was scheduled to begin. The January and August spill presentations are excerpted in Attachment M.

Summary of Field Science Work and Knowledge Grained:

One of the science deliverables is "a summary of field work conducted . . . and the knowledge gained and its application to ORVs." Attachment N presents the Field Science Summary prepared by Chester Anderson, which includes science, monitoring and adaptive management questions going forward. Attachment O is a research report by M.A. Candidate Adam Coble on the "Relationship between Regulated Stream Flow and the Establishment of Native Riparian Tree Species in the Dolores River Watershed." The combination of these reports address ORVs pertaining cold water and native fisheries, riparian vegetation, channel maintenance, and rafting. Specific issues include water quality, water temperature, dissolved oxygen levels, flushing flows, tamarisk removal and cottonwood regeneration. All of these functions are considered in light of managing for rafting flows. A key question that comes out of these studies is how to prioritize among native fish, trout, and rafting in managing spills, fish pool releases, and outlet levels in McPhee dam.

Interaction between Field Science and ORVs:

Results from the ongoing DRD field research, monitoring and adaptive management, particularly in relationship to Wild and Scenic ORVs will continue to be integrated into the Working Group effort to develop tools and strategies for ORV protection.