

MILL CREEK CANYON

MANAGEMENT PLAN



Prepared by Bureau of Land Management, Moab Field Office
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Mill Creek Canyon Management Plan

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Mill Creek Canyon Management Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Location and Setting

Mill Creek Canyon (Mill Creek or the planning area) is located adjacent to Moab, Utah. Within the boundary of the planning area there are 1,164 acres of public lands. This plan refers only to those public land acres, with the exception of the recommendation to acquire lands within the planning area through exchange. Approximately 268 acres of the Mill Creek planning area boundary includes state lands (located within T 26 S, R 22E Sections 23 and 24, and within T 26 S, R 23 E, Sections 19, 30, 31 and 32). An additional 261 acres of private lands are found within the canyon (See Appendix I for planning area maps).

The planning area encompasses the main fork of Mill Creek Canyon from rim to rim, or along ownership boundaries from the Powerdam to the Forest Service boundary. The planning area is bordered on the west by the state land boundary in T 26 S, R 22E, Section 5 and by the private property at the end of Powerhouse Lane. On the north, the planning area follows the rim of Mill Creek Canyon and the Mill Creek Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) boundary to the state land near the old county dump. With the exception of the confluence area (up to the waterfall at the WSA boundary), the North Fork of Mill Creek is not included in this plan.

The planning unit includes several commonly used access points. Vehicle access to Potato Salad Hill (an extreme four wheel drive challenge) occurs adjacent to the old county dump off the Sand Flats Road. The Powerdam parking lot is located within the planning boundaries and is accessible from Powerhouse Lane. Navajo Heights (near the Moab Golf Course) provides vehicle access to Hidden Valley and the Steelbender Trail, and access to the Flat Pass diversion dam area is a continuation of the road to Kens Lake. Hiker and horseback access also occurs behind the subdivision near Cedar Hills (See Appendix I for maps of access points).

B. Background Information

Mill Creek Canyon has become increasingly popular as a recreation destination due to its proximity to Moab due to its outstanding features. Mill Creek contains hydrologic and riparian resources which are rare in the arid Southwest and serve to attract local residents and visitors year round. Recreation activities include hiking along the creeks, backpacking, viewing ancient rock art, swimming in natural pools formed by the creek, picnicking and horseback riding.

Long range management of public lands within this area is addressed in the Grand Resource Area Resource Management Plan (Grand RMP) initiated in 1981 and approved June 21, 1985. The plan was written at a time when recreation use was relatively stable, and was expected to grow at moderate rates throughout the region. Recreational planning issues in the RMP are concerned with providing recreational opportunities to meet the increasing demand while protecting the existing natural resource base. The only specific recreation decision that directly involved the Mill Creek area was to limit OHV use to designated roads and trails for watershed protection purposes. This decision is quoted in full as follows:

“Designate 15,206 acres (in the Mill Creek and East Mill Creek area) as limited to designated roads and trails, to provide for OHV use while reducing annual soil erosion in this area by about 200 tons.

This action will result in closure of 7 miles of duplicate roads and protection of scenic values.”
(page 22, Grand RMP, 1985)

Over the intervening years, recreational use of Mill Creek (particularly at the Powerdam area) continued to grow. The area had been historically utilized by local residents, particularly since the old dam was constructed in the early part of the century. The Powerdam area had also become more of an attraction to outside visitors, primarily as a trailhead and for camping. Local youth used the area as a nighttime “party” location, resulting in a significant law enforcement problem, with underage drinking, vandalism and reckless driving along Powerhouse Lane. Four wheel drivers discovered Potato Salad Hill which was utilized by the Easter Jeep Safari until 1997. Potato Salad Hill has recently become a major destination for OHV challenge activities, attracting large crowds of drivers and spectators over Easter week.

The increasing use of the area was resulting in long-term degradation of the riparian zone along the creek. Impacts to adjacent watersheds from OHV use and camping were accumulating to unacceptable levels. In 1996, the Bureau of Land Management, working in close coordination with the City of Moab, Grand County Council, the Red Rock 4-wheelers Club and adjacent property owners, prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA # UT-068-96-028; see Appendix A for a copy of this document) which concluded that changes had to be made to the management of the Powerdam area. After publication and review of the document, many on-the-ground changes were made. The upper Powerdam road was blocked to public vehicle use 100 yards west of the dam and a parking lot constructed. The landfill access road to Potato Salad Hill was closed before it entered the creek. Access was still available to Potato Salad Hill, but the route went neither upstream nor downstream from there. BLM constructed a cable and rock barrier across the canyon precluding vehicle use up Mill Creek within the stream and riparian zone. The crossing from the Powerdam side to Potato Salad Hill was closed. The access road from the Kayenta Heights ridge to the south was closed and rehabilitated. Several undesignated vehicle and ATV routes in the vicinity of the Powerdam were also closed.

Following the 1996 Environmental Assessment, overnight camping was eliminated in the Powerdam area. All recreational use was limited to day use (i.e., limited to 10 PM). Campfires, firearms discharge and wood collection were not allowed. EA # UT-068-96-028 called for extensive rehabilitation of alternate trails and parking areas. To date, some of this rehabilitation work (especially to the old parking area) has been accomplished. Other proposed actions (such as the construction of information bulletin boards) have not yet been implemented.

In the Summer of 1996, a private landowner approached the manager of the Moab Field Office with a proposal to form a coordinated partnership among State Trust Land, BLM and private landowners. This Mill Creek Partnership (MCP) would study the area and make recommendations to the Bureau and other landowners for management of the main fork of Mill Creek. In the Fall of 1996, the partnership was formed. The partnership gathered community input regarding the management of the Mill Creek area, and met to formulate recommendations to the Bureau of Land Management.

On November 29, 1996, the BLM published an emergency order in the Federal Register prohibiting camping within a 1/4-mile of the stream for a distance of 1-mile upstream of the Powerdam. Camping was also prohibited similarly in the Flat Pass area (the access route from the Kens Lake road.). This order also prohibited wood collecting in this area. (See Appendix B for a copy of the Federal Register notice of 11/29/96.)

On September 27, 1997, the Moab Public Lands Day (a large scale volunteer effort) focused on the main fork of Mill Creek. Trash and old fences were removed, now-illegal campsites were rehabilitated and some trail maintenance was done.

On July 2, 1998, the BLM published a Federal Register Notice that initiated a moratorium on issuing all new commercial permits including new special recreation and filming permits, and rights-of-way. This moratorium prohibited the issuance of any new commercial permits in the Mill Creek area until the BLM completed planning for the area. (See Appendix C for a copy of this notice #UT-060-08-1040-00)

On March 4, 1999, an Environmental Assessment (EA#UT-062-99-56) was signed which analyzed the impact of trail construction and rehabilitation in Mill Creek Canyon below Hidden Valley. See Appendix D for a copy of this EA.

On June 28, 1999, an Environmental Assessment (EA#UT-062-99-105) was signed which analyzed the impact of trail maintenance in the main fork of Mill Creek Canyon from the Powerdam to Hidden Valley (T. 26 S., R. 22 E., Sections 8, 9, 10, 11 and 14. This EA covered actions designed to reduce soil and vegetation loss and stream sedimentation by reducing trail density. See Appendix E for a copy of this EA.

During this time, the Mill Creek Partnership continued to meet and work on their recommendations to the Bureau of Land Management. On October 14, 2000 these recommendations were presented to the BLM and have been considered during the development of this plan. (See Appendix F for Mill Creek Partnership Recommendations).

On October 19, 2000, an Environmental Assessment concerning vegetation control in the Moab Field Office area (EA #UT-062-98-10) was signed. This EA addresses the BLM's proposed action to control noxious and exotic plant species by cutting, burning, and/or applying herbicide. Mill Creek is one of the specific locations of the proposed action. This EA is attached as Appendix G.

In October 2000, Bureau of Land Management began preparation of a draft plan for Mill Creek Canyon. Appendix H includes the Documentation of NEPA Adequacy (DNA # UT-062-01-018) which reviews conformance of the Plan to existing NEPA documents. The plan considers the above preliminary actions and recommendations, and incorporates them as appropriate to the draft management objectives and actions for the area.

C. Resources in the Management Area

Mill Creek is a tributary of the Colorado River, portions of which pass through Moab city limits. Existing resources in the Mill Creek area are relatively unique because of the presence of a perennial stream and an outstanding riparian environment in the canyon bottom. The concentration of plants and animals is quite high due to the presence of excellent habitat and permanent water. Deer, coyotes, mountain lion, beaver, and turkey are found. The more common bird species include canyon wren, rock wren, rock dove, mourning dove, red-tailed hawk, golden eagle, turkey vulture, kestrel, raven and several species of waterfowl. Migrant birds utilize Mill Creek Canyon as well. Common species of reptiles and amphibians include red-spotted toad, bull frog, side-blotched lizard, striped whipsnake, rattlesnake and gopher snake. The planning unit includes potential habitat for special status species, including Mexican spotted owl, Utah black-headed snake, spotted bat and Southwestern willow flycatcher. Canyonlands biscuitroot, a special status plant species, is

documented to occur within the canyon.

Vegetation within the planning area is typical of both desert riparian and upland pinyon-juniper environments. Outstanding riparian values exist along the stream which consist of a mature cottonwood-willow gallery with Fremont cottonwood, narrowleaf cottonwood, water birch, willow, sedges, rushes and a variety of perennial grasses and forbs. Exotics such as tamarisk, Russian olive, ravena grass and other species have made extensive inroads into the native vegetation in Mill Creek.

From the scenery standpoint, the area has an exceedingly high visual appeal, with the slickrock of the canyon, the green of the riparian zone, and the LaSal Mountains. Its Visual Resource Management Class (in the Grand RMP) is Class III. However, in the Visual Inventory Class Ratings that were done subsequent to the RMP, the canyon itself is rated as Class II- the second most restrictive class (with the parking lot area around the Powerdam as Class III). The Class II rating reflects increased public use of a formerly less visited area.

Mill Creek, a perennial stream, recharges the drinking water aquifer for Moab and Spanish Valley and provides irrigation water to both areas. The stream is currently listed by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality as an impaired stream and exceeds water quality standards established for temperature and total dissolved solids. A watershed water quality study required by the Environmental Protection Agency for all streams designated as impaired has been started for Mill Creek. This study, a total maximum daily load analysis (TMDL), conducted by the State of Utah Division of Water Quality, will identify and analyze problem areas and activities within Mill Creek. The final report, due in April 2002, will make specific recommendations on how to improve water quality in Mill Creek.

Mill Creek is one of only five designated cold water fisheries in Grand and San Juan counties. Fish species include brown trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, brook trout and speckled dace. This fishery is currently affected by the high water temperatures recorded in portions of Mill Creek, and in this fork in particular. These stream segments are being studied currently, and recommendations on how to improve habitat will be made in the final TMDL report.

Mill Creek Canyon has a rich store of archaeological sites with over 40 sites identified to date. These include rock art, open campsites, pithouses, cave sites and historic homesteads. Human occupations appear to span at least the last 5,000 years. Many of the sites have been damaged by human activities ranging from vandalism by illegal digging and defacing of rock art to recreational trail erosion and past vehicle traffic. The rate of new damage has diminished in recent years, but the archaeological and historical studies needed to preserve the remaining data from continued loss have not kept pace with increasing recreation uses.

Portions of the planning area have been determined to contain areas with wilderness character by the Bureau of Land Management in its 1996-1999 Wilderness Inventory. In addition, the planning area includes lands proposed for wilderness by the Utah Wilderness Coalition.

Existing recreation facilities are primarily related to the changes made at the Powerdam area in 1996. There is a parking lot at the end of Powerhouse Lane, with a sign stating that the area is for day use and not camping. The trail leading from the parking lot is largely hiker-made, generally following the old cattle trails and roads which have existed for some time. There is a great proliferation of duplicate social trails as hikers attempt to find the easiest way up the canyon.

Potato Salad Hill is partially surrounded by vehicle barriers (mainly rock, but with some cable as well) to prevent vehicle access up and down Mill Creek. During Easter week 2000 (the week of peak use of Potato Salad Hill with an estimated 550 vehicles/day), Grand County arranged for a dumpster and portable toilets. These facilities were only temporary for that weekend.

At the Cedar Hills entrance, there are signs prohibiting the use of motorized vehicles within the canyon.

At Flat Pass, there is a BLM bulletin board which explains the vehicle camping restrictions in Mill Creek. Flat Pass is also the access point for the Flat Pass Bike Trail and the Steelbender 4WD Trail, both of which are marked from this point to their exit at Hidden Valley. At both the Hidden Valley and Flat Pass entrances to Mill Creek, there are BLM signs explaining the need to stay on designated roads only. Where the Flat Pass/Steelbender Trail crosses the creek upstream from Flat Pass, there is an archeological rock art site with a fence and a sign explaining the negative impacts of vandalism. Old camping sites along the Flat Pass road are signed "No Camping" and there has been some rehabilitation work done on these old sites.

Within the canyon, there is an extensive network of hiker-made and horseback rider-made trails, including the historic mail trail. These trails were apparently not planned nor developed; rather, they are the result of generations of users trying to find the best way along the creek and to various attractions. This has resulted in a network of social trails, many of which go to the same place.

D. Use in the Management Area

Use in the management area includes the diversion of water from the creek into Kens Lake. The Water Conservancy District is required to maintain a minimum instream flow of 3 CFS in South Mill Creek directly below the Kens Lake diversion. Water is also diverted near the Powerdam area for Moab City irrigation. Other water diversions occur downstream of the planning area.

There is one grazing permit in a portion of Mill Creek Canyon. Within the canyon, the allotment extends from the U.S. Forest Service boundary downstream to the Flat Pass area. This permit has been issued to Carol Meador Stubblefield (Permit #43611).

Prior to the moratorium, film permits were issued occasionally for filming within the planning area. Requests focused on a stream setting with easy access. The primary locations were on public lands in the Powerdam and Flat Pass areas.

The following rights-of-way have been granted within the planning area. In the Powerdam area, Grand County Water Conservancy has a right-of-way for the access road, buried water line, buried telephone line and a pumphouse; Pacificorp has a right-of-way for a buried power cable to the pumphouse; USGS has a right-of-way for a gauging station; BLM has a right-of-way reservation for the parking lot and the Mill Creek Trail from the Powerdam to the waterfall in the North Fork of Mill Creek. In the Flat Pass area, Grand County Water Conservancy has a right-of-way for the access road from Kens Lake to the Mill Creek diversion and the diversion structures; three private landowners have rights-of-way for the access road from Flat Pass to the private land less than one-half mile to the northwest (downstream); San Juan County claims a "D" road from Flat Pass to private land approximately 0.8 mile southeast (upstream) along Mill Creek.

Recreation is the major resource use occurring in the planning area. The primary recreation activity is hiking within the riparian corridor. Although some hikers are going point-to-point, the majority are hiking up the creek to enjoy the water activities associated with the riparian greenbelt. Since dogs are allowed if leashed or controlled as per County ordinances, many hikers are accompanied by their pets. In addition to the many private users, there are three commercial hiking permits. In the last reporting year (1999), 179 hikers were reported under commercial permits.

Mill Creek Canyon is also used by horseback riders. The scarcity of trails in the region along permanent water makes this an attractive location for riders. Portions of the canyon contain a stock trail which has been used historically for horses and livestock to access Forest Service lands in the headwaters of Mill Creek. Local residents use the canyon rather frequently for horseback riding. The main entrance for horseback riders is Hidden Valley, although private users trail throughout the entire planning area, including the Powerdam. There is one commercial horseback riding permit in the area (there were 228 commercial users reported during 1999) with standard stipulations to protect resource values.

Extreme four-wheel driving in the Potato Salad Hill area occurs primarily in the springtime, with use peaking during Easter Week. Four-wheel drivers enter the Potato Salad area via the old county dump road; spectators generally park on the top of the hill or at the bottom of the hill and watch others attempt to climb the Hill. Spectators also view the hill climbing activity from the Powerdam parking lot across the creek. In Easter of 2000, there were an estimated 550 vehicles/day (1,700 people/day and 12,160 vehicle trips/9-day event) associated with the hill climb as participants or spectators (per Tom Johnson private citizen survey of 2000). This is not an organized event, but rather a spontaneous gathering during Easter week. (Potato Salad Hill was at one time part of an organized Easter Jeep Safari Trail, but it has not been used by the Safari since 1997).

Vehicle use in the remaining portions of the planning area is most popular on the Steelbender trail, a permitted Jeep Safari route. Mountain bike use occurs primarily on the Flat Pass trail which partially follows the Steelbender trail.

Backpacking in Mill Creek is a recreational activity enjoyed by a very small number of people. Since the majority of users of Mill Creek are local, backpacking is probably less prevalent than it would be if Mill Creek were a more remote destination.

Vehicle camping is not allowed at the major vehicle entrances; while some illegal camping occurs, it is not very frequent.

Volunteer and other organized groups currently support cultural, trail and vegetation studies within the Canyon.

II. CONFORMANCE WITH THE GRAND R.A. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (RMP)

The Mill Creek Canyon Management Plan is in conformance with the Grand Resource Area RMP (1985) and its amendments.

The Grand RMP includes a recreation goal "to accommodate the expanding recreation use while reducing the impacts on the resource base." There are also several recreation actions which affect the planning area:

-Continued issuance of recreation use permits of various types to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities and provide business opportunities for private enterprise.

With respect to realty actions, the plan states, under on-going management programs and actions, the "applications for minor rights-of-way and for use of the public lands through land use permits, temporary use permits, leases, and cooperative agreements will continue to be considered individually . . . recommendations made and actions approved will be consistent with the objectives of the RMP".

III. MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MILL CREEK PARTNERSHIP

On October 14, 2000, the Mill Creek Partnership developed and presented their recommendations for the management of Mill Creek to the Bureau of Land Management. These recommendations were the result of many public meetings, and were also based on public surveys done concerning Mill Creek. The Bureau of Land Management has considered these recommendations in developing this plan. These recommendations are presented in Appendix F.

IV. MANAGEMENT CONSTRAINTS

Mill Creek Canyon has mixed ownership. While the BLM manages much of the canyon, several miles of the canyon bottom between the Hidden Valley and Flat Pass entrances are managed by SITLA (State Institutional Trust Lands Administration). There are also five parcels of private property within the canyon bottom. Of the 1,693 acres of land in Mill Creek Canyon, 1,164 acres are under the management of the BLM, 268 acres are managed by SITLA, and 261 acres are in private ownership. This ownership pattern makes management a challenge. In conformance with the Grand RMP and its amendments, other management constraints within the planning area include: areas determined to contain wilderness character, visual resource management classes, and fire management prescriptions.

V. MANAGEMENT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal for the planning area is to protect, manage and improve natural and cultural resources through effective use of minimum tools.

The following objectives for the Mill Creek Canyon Management Plan were developed after considering past management actions, legal requirements, public input, and conformance with the Grand RMP.

A. Cultural

To protect and manage cultural and archaeological resources in Mill Creek Canyon in accordance with BLM policies. All activities will be evaluated and designed to avoid or mitigate negative impacts to cultural resources.

B. Minerals Management

To propose closure of the planning area to new entry under the mining and mineral lease laws, including oil

and gas leases, subject to valid existing rights. The planning area is currently open to mining claims and oil and gas leasing with no surface occupancy (Category 3) under provisions in the Grand RMP. No mineral related activities have occurred recently in the planning area and the potential for activity in the foreseeable future is considered to be low. While there is a high potential for sand, gravel and stone resources, exploration and development is unlikely due to widespread availability and distance from market outlets.

C. Wildlife and Vegetation Resources

To protect and manage wildlife, special status plant and animal species, ecological sites, water quality, and native riparian and upland vegetation to benefit resources in the area. Riparian values will be enhanced through this management plan. The plan seeks to protect and enhance wildlife habitat within the planning area, but objectives may include removal of species which may be damaging to the environment (i.e., extreme beaver densities or specific individuals as deemed necessary in coordination with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources).

D. Noxious and Exotic Species

To control noxious weeds and exotic species (i.e., Russian olive, tamarisk, revena grass, elm, and mulberry). An Environmental Assessment covering this action within the Moab F.O. was completed on October 19, 2000 (EA # UT -062 -98-10). The control of noxious weeds and exotic species will protect and restore native riparian vegetation within Mill Creek Canyon.

E. Water and Watershed Resources

To maintain instream flows in Mill Creek. In 1978, Environmental Assessment # UT-060-8-35 analyzed proposals for a water development near Flat Pass, and a right-of-way was issued to the Grand County Water Conservancy District for a diversion structure with a stipulation for specified instream flows. The Bureau will work with the Grand County Water Conservancy District to ensure a minimum flow of 3 cfs is retained in the creek at all times below the diversion. BLM may pursue acquisition of available water rights as allowed by State water law to protect water dependent resources on public lands.

To implement recommendations made by the State of Utah Division of Water Quality in the final watershed water quality report (TMDL , Total Maximum Daily Load). These recommendations should improve water quality so that state standards will be met. This report is scheduled to be completed in April 2002.

F. Land Tenure Adjustments

To continue efforts to acquire or exchange private and SITLA (State Institutional Trust Lands Administration) lands from willing owners within the planning area. SITLA has nominated state parcels within the canyon for exchange with BLM. Should this exchange occur, the portion of the canyon that is now under state management would be managed under the same guidelines as the public lands within the planning area. Acquisition of private lands within the planning area will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Should any lands become public, they will be managed as the public lands are in this plan.

The BLM recognizes the desirability of obtaining a non-motorized easement from the Steelbender/Flat Pass trail across the private property in Hidden Valley to assure better public non-motorized access downstream of Hidden Valley.

G. Off Road Vehicle Designations

To continue to manage the planning area as limited to designated roads under the Grand RMP. The following routes have been designated as open to travel: Flat Pass, Steelbender (entire route), the routes to the private properties over Flat Pass, the landfill road to Potato Salad Hill, the road to the Powerdam parking lot, and the access route north of Cedar Hills Subdivision.

H. Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

To recommend a land use plan amendment to consider Mill Creek Canyon as an ACEC, based on the presence of high value resources.

I. Fire Management

To manage resources within the planning area according to the approved Fire Management Plan. Due to sensitive riparian and cultural resources, prescriptions identified for the area include suppression of wildfires according to Fire Category A, which identifies wildland fire as undesirable. Further prescriptions identify the planning area in Fire Management Zone 2 (FMZ) and Representative Location 2 (RL) which specify resource objectives to keep fires at 5 acres or less in riparian areas and similarly constrain use of motorized earth-moving equipment and use of chemical retardant within riparian habitats. Other constraints identified within the Fire Management Plan include archaeological clearances for dozer and major hand line construction, motorized earth-moving equipment in endangered plant and animal species, and use of Interim Management Policies and Guidelines for activity within wilderness study areas (WSAs). Use of fire as a management tool to alleviate fuel hazards and manipulate undesirable exotic species may be approved.

J. Visual Resource Management (VRM)

To manage resources within the planning area according to identified VRM classifications in conformance with the Grand RMP.

K. Recreation Management

To maintain primitive dispersed recreation opportunities using the minimum management tool to be effective or as necessary to achieve goals.

VI. MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Implementation of these actions will help bring about the desired goals and objectives for the area. All actions within the planning area will be evaluated based on impacts to natural and cultural resources, and management may be adjusted or activities prohibited to meet objectives.

A. Recreation Facilities

Sign the planning area as necessary to minimize recreation impacts. Bulletin boards providing public information will be installed at the Powerdam parking lot, Flat Pass and Cedar Hills entrances to South Mill

Creek. A bulletin board may be located near Hidden Valley with landowner coordination and permission. Install additional information at the public land boundary on the landfill road to Potato Salad Hill. Utilize small, unobtrusive signs on the hiking trail system to indicate the proper route of travel as necessary to establish the trail system, close redundant trails, and help protect sensitive resource values. Maintenance of vehicle closures may require constructed barriers (such as a barrier at Cedar Hills to close access to the canyon to ATV's). Signs will also be installed to close vehicle routes that are not designated. Human waste facilities will not be provided on a permanent basis (EA # Ut-068-96-028).

B. Trail System

Delineate a trail system in the planning area, particularly from the Powerdam up to the Hidden Valley entrance, and from the Powerdam to the waterfall in the North Fork of Mill Creek. This trail system will be limited to non-motorized and non-mechanized uses (OHVs and mountain bikes prohibited). Portions of the trail system may eventually be managed for hiking only based on resource impacts or user conflicts. The BLM will secure a right-of-way reservation for the trail within the entire planning area. The trail system will generally follow existing routes in response to minimal needs. Routes may be adjusted to reduce impacts to resources. The historic mail trail from the Cedar Hills access through Mill Creek Canyon will be used as the principal route in that area. The BLM will work to close and rehabilitate redundant trails. Duplicate trails and erosion areas within the entire planning area which need rehabilitation or closure will be restored using brush, logs, vegetation, rocks, native seedings or other natural barriers.

C. Vegetation and Wildlife

Protect and manage wildlife, special status plant and animal species, ecological sites, water quality, and riparian and upland vegetation to benefit resources in the area. Control noxious weeds and exotic species (i.e., Russian olive, tamarisk, revena grass, elm, and mulberry) as analyzed in EA # UT -062 -98-10 through hand removal, approved chemical applications or controlled use of fire.

D. Mountain Bikes

Limit mountain bikes to designated roads in the planning area which include Flat Pass, Steelbender, routes to private lands over Flat Pass, landfill road, Potato Salad Hill, road to Powerdam parking lot, and rim access route north of Cedar Hills subdivision.

E. Dogs

Request people with dogs to clean up after them (bulletin boards will have signs with dog etiquette on them.) Should the problem of dog waste become unacceptable, the BLM may require owners to carry out dog waste or prohibit dogs. Dogs must remain leashed or under control at all times as per County ordinances.

F. Camping

Manage the planning area as a day use area with the exception of backpacking. No vehicle camping will be allowed within the planning area. Specifically, camping (including backpacking) is not allowed within 1/4-mile of the stream for a distance of 1-mile up canyon from the Powerdam parking lot. Backpacking (overnight use utilizing non-vehicular access) will be allowed in other parts of the canyon. Require that camps not be

made within 100 feet of the creek, nor within 100 feet of cultural sites.

G. Fires and Wood Collecting

Prohibit campfires within the planning area to protect resource values and provide for public safety within the narrow, heavily vegetated canyon system. Backpackers must bring portable stoves. All wood collecting is prohibited.

H. Private Horse Use

Study and monitor private horse use working with user groups to monitor and mitigate impacts. Horse use could be limited based on impacts to resources and values.

I. Potato Salad Hill

Coordinate with local officials and user group representatives on overall management of OHV use in the area. Control the impact area of Potato Salad Hill with signs, wire fencing and other appropriate barriers along the BLM boundary and other areas to protect adjacent riparian and upland areas. The BLM will install additional barriers to protect the vegetation within the planning unit. The BLM may seek an event manager to organize the Potato Salad Hill Climb as a motorized event for the period of time around Easter. Vehicle access during Easter will be monitored and controlled by the event manager. During the rest of the year, vehicle access to the Potato Salad Hill area will be open to all private users. Additional informational signs will be installed in this area to limit additional impacts from motorized users.

J. Commercial Permits

Issue additional commercial recreation permits for hiking only. There are currently three commercial hiking permits and one commercial horse permit in the canyon. During the planning period, a moratorium was placed on all additional commercial permits. This moratorium is to be lifted upon completion of the Mill Creek Plan. The Bureau of Land Management will monitor commercial hiking use and set additional limits if this use is found to be impairing. A group size of twenty, including staff will be the maximum allowed. All new commercial hiking permits will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and approved only where consistent with objectives of the plan.

This plan limits the commercial horse permits to one permit to help ensure the long term sustainability of resources due to existing concerns about impacts of horse use on soils, vegetation, water quality and cultural resources. This permit will not be transferable. Limits on numbers of use days by the commercial horse permittee will currently be set at the highest use reported in any year prior to 2000 (approximately 363 visitor use days/year). Commercial horse use will be evaluated and may be adjusted or eliminated based on resource monitoring and evaluation. Commercial horse use will be allowed only on authorized trails or roads to avoid cultural or other sensitive resources.

This restriction does not apply to commercial use on the Steelbender and/or Flat Pass Trails or Potato Salad Hill.

K. Commercial Film Permits

Limit film permits to two days. The total number of people on location shall not exceed twenty. Each authorization will be evaluated on a case by case basis. The only areas that are allowed for staging are the Powerdam Parking Lot, Potato Salad Hill and the Flat Pass parking area. All filming permits will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and approved only if actions are consistent with objectives of the plan. Allow further consideration for additional mitigation to benefit resources. Stringent review of applications will be conducted. Films shall not identify the location of the production to avoid additional publicity in the planning area.

L. Rights-of-way

Evaluate new rights-of-way, on a case-by-case basis, for need of the facility and potential impact to resource values. Reserve a right-of-way reservation to BLM for the designated non-motorized trail system between the Powerdam and Hidden Valley or elsewhere as appropriate in the planning area.

M. Volunteer Projects/Education

Utilize volunteers to help implement the plan. Volunteer projects may include trail reconstruction, trail blocking, vehicle barrier construction, vegetation management and similar activities which benefit public land resources and values. Allow education and scientific research for resource enhancement. Group sizes will be managed at twenty to help ensure minimum impacts.

N. Publicity

No attempt will be made to popularize the Mill Creek area due to community recommendations, particularly those of the Mill Creek Partnership. Mill Creek will not be included in BLM brochures distributed to the general public.

O. Concessions and Vending

No provision will be made for a concessionaire or vending in the Mill Creek Area with the exception of short term use at the Potato Salad Hill area if an organized event manager is obtained.

P. Minerals

Recommend a land use plan amendment to withdraw the planning area from entry under the mining and mineral lease laws subject to valid existing rights.

Q. Cultural Resources

Where consistent with BLM policies, authorize BLM and other approved entities to conduct inventories, investigations, testing, stabilization, research and monitoring of cultural resources to determine the extent, content and impacts to historic and prehistoric sites. All activities will be evaluated to avoid negative impacts to cultural resources, and uses may be adjusted to alleviate damage. Some cultural resources may be interpreted on-site to promote public and resource education if determined appropriate.

R. Water and Watershed Resources

The BLM will work with the Grand County Water Conservancy District to ensure a minimum flow of 3 cfs is retained in the creek at all times below the diversion. Installation of a meter/measuring device below the diversion dam is proposed to monitor specified instream flows. BLM may pursue acquisition of available water rights as allowed by State water law to protect water dependent resources on public lands. Reduce impacts to vegetation and soils through restriction of impairing activities and restoration of disturbed areas.

S. Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Recommend a land use plan amendment to consider Mill Creek Canyon as an ACEC.

VII. RESOURCE MONITORING

The BLM will develop a monitoring plan to evaluate the condition of the planning area, uses or their impacts. Trail conditions, recreation use, stream health, vegetation, cultural resources, water quality and stream geomorphology would be topics of monitoring objectives.

VIII. IMPLEMENTATION PHASING AND COSTS OF RECREATION PROGRAM

A. Implementation

The implementation of the management plan will require flexibility in decision making at various points.

Management actions will be phased in over a period of five years with the most critical components required for resource protection to be undertaken first. Other actions will be implemented on a continuing basis (e.g. trail rehabilitation). This will include the installation of information boards, signing, fencing of the area around Potato Salad Hill, vehicle barriers at several locations, a water measurement facility below the Kens Lake diversion, and the consolidation of the trail system into one trail.

B. Cost Estimate Summary and Development Schedule - Public Expenditures

4 Bulletin boards: \$200 apiece for materials and fabrication, \$200 for installation	\$1600
Signing and fencing Potato Salad Hill area:	\$4000
Vehicle barriers:	\$2000
Trail rehabilitation (Challenge Cost Share projections):	\$50,000
Water measurement facility:	\$5,000

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COORDINATION

Following receipt of the Mill Creek Partnership Recommendations on October 14, 2000, the draft Mill Creek Management Plan was initiated. On November 17, 2000, the Documentation of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) and draft management plan were posted on the Utah Electronic Bulletin Board (ENBB) as initiated on November 17, 2000. On November 29, 2000, a newspaper article was printed in the local Times Independent announcing a 30-day public review and comment period for the draft management plan and DNA. In response to several requests for an extension for comments due to the holiday season, comments were accepted through January 16, 2001.

A. Comments and Responses

Written comments were received from a total of 11 individuals. General concerns and comments are summarized with responses below.

Concern: Objections to off-road vehicle closures in the Mill Creek area.

Response: The Mill Creek Canyon Management Plan does not actually propose additional vehicle closures. The planning area was previously limited to designated roads under the Grand RMP (1985) and by additional actions in EA # UT-068-96-028. The following routes remain designated as open to travel: Flat Pass, Steelbender (entire trail), routes to private properties over Flat Pass, the landfill road to Potato Salad Hill, the road to Powerdam parking lot, and the access route north of Cedar Hills Subdivision. Additional popular routes exist outside the Mill Creek planning area boundaries.

Concern: Impacts associated with the commercial horse permit have increased. Suggest relocation of permit to another area.

Response: Evaluation of all horse impacts is identified in the plan. Concerns with soil erosion, cultural resources impacts, number of users, and location, extent, and condition of trails have been raised and will be considered.

Concern: Lifting the moratorium to allow commercial hiking and filming permits is contrary to goals in the plan to avoid popularizing the area. The carrying capacity of the canyon is currently exceeded with existing uses. Even with group sizes of 20, impacts of groups are greater than individual hikers.

Response: BLM recognizes the concerns regarding commercial hiking and filming authorizations in the Canyon. However, following stringent review of proposals commercial activities may be provided without conflicting with objectives of the plan.

Concern: The plan needs to state overall management goals to clarify a minimal management approach, avoidance of fee-based development such as sand-flats, and to broaden management statements to evaluate and potentially prohibit actions based on impacts.

Response: The plan has been revised to include minimum management goals and actions. The plan does not identify non-commercial user fees.

Concern: There is often no flow below the water diversion near Flat Pass and the water is noticeably warmer.

Response: BLM is aware of concerns related to maintaining instream flow below the diversion dam. Measuring devices are proposed to determine the amount and timing of flows designed to maintain functions of the stream and its dependent values. Coordinated efforts related to meeting established water quality standards (temperature and total dissolved standards) are currently on-going through a TMDL study (Total Maximum Daily Load) with Utah Department of Environmental Quality and associated landowners for waters within Mill and Pack Creek.

Concern: VRM (Visual Resource Management) Class 3 areas as identified in the Grand RMP and the Mill Creek Canyon Management Plan are obsolete and should be Class 2 (not obvious or detracting).

Response: VRM Classes need to be revised based on current conditions through an RMP amendment.

Concern: User numbers cited for Easter 2000 Potato Salad Hill activities are referenced incorrectly.

Response: Thank-you. The plan has been revised.

Concern: Vehicle access at Cedar Hills should be eliminated to alleviate ATV problems and the road locked at the existing subdivision gate. Off-road vehicle activities at Potato Salad Hill are incompatible with management of Mill Creek.

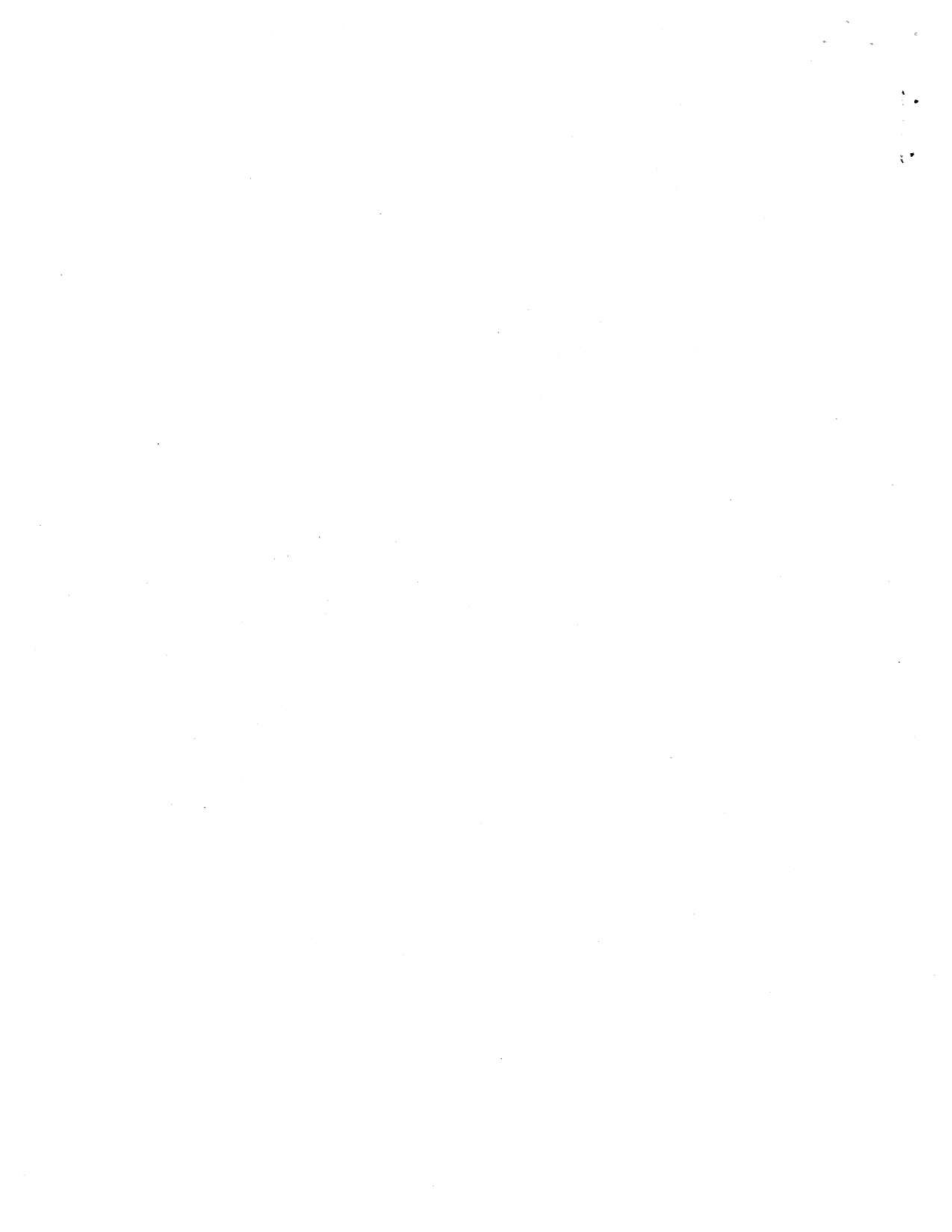
Response: Trailhead access would need to be maintained at Cedar Hills independent of vehicle restrictions. Coordination with local government officials and user groups on overall OHV use at Potato Salad Hill and the surrounding area has been initiated.

/s/ Margaret Wyatt

/s/ Margaret Wyatt
Margaret Wyatt
Moab Field Office Manager

02/05/2001

Date



DECISION RECORD

EA Log Number: DNA #UT-062-01-018

Action: Mill Creek Canyon Management Plan

Project Location: T. 26 S., R. 22 E., sections 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 24 and
T. 26 S., R. 23 E., sections 19 and
T. 27 S., R. 23 E., sections 3, 4, 5 SLM;
Grand and San Juan Counties, Utah

BLM Office: Moab Field Office

Phone: (435) 259-2100

Decision:

It is my decision to approve and implement the Mill Creek Canyon Management Plan with identified actions as listed and analyzed in the Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and NEPA Adequacy (DNA). These actions are summarized below.

Rationale for Decision:

I have reviewed the Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and NEPA Adequacy (DNA) and have determined that the Mill Creek Canyon Management Plan is in conformance with the Grand Resource Area Management Plan. It is my decision that no further environmental analysis or mitigation measures are required to implement identified actions.

Authorized Official: William Stungis
Assistant Field Office Manager
Division of Resources

Date: 2/2/01

Summary of Approved Actions:

1. Install bulletin boards and signs at the Powerdam parking lot, Flat Pass, Cedar Hills, Potato Salad Hill and Hidden Valley.
2. Delineate a trail system, close and rehabilitate redundant trails and erosion areas. The trail system will be limited to non-motorized and non-mechanized uses.
3. Control vehicle access by constructing barriers, specifically at Cedar Hills and Potato Salad Hill.
4. Control noxious weeds and exotic species.
5. Limit mountain bikes, ATVs and vehicle use to designated roads.
6. Monitor dog waste, with restrictions on dogs should problem worsen.

7. Prohibit vehicle camping in the area. Backpacking will be allowed, but camps shall not be made within 100 feet of the creek, nor within 100 feet of cultural sites.
8. Prohibit fires and wood collecting.
9. Limit additional commercial recreation permits to hiking only, with a maximum group size of twenty. (Does not apply to Steelbender/Flat Pass Trail nor to Potato Salad Hill).
10. Limit commercial horse use to the existing permit. Do not allow future transfer of the permit. Limit number of use days by the commercial permittee to the highest use reported in any year prior to 2000 (363 visitor use days/year). Evaluate commercial and private horse use based on resource monitoring. Commercial horse use is restricted to authorized roads or trails.
11. Limit film permits to two days and twenty people. Vehicles and staging allowed only at Powerdam Parking Lot, Potato Salad Hill and Flat Pass.
12. Evaluate new rights of way for potential impact to resource values. Reserve a right of way to the BLM for the designated non-motorized trail system between Powerdam and Hidden Valley.
13. Use volunteer projects and allow education and scientific research for resource enhancement.
14. No provision for concessionaires or vending in the Mill Creek Area, with the exception of Potato Salad Hill.
15. Recommend a land use plan amendment to withdraw the planning area from the actions of mining and mineral leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights.
16. Authorize cultural resource inventories, investigations, testing, stabilization, research and monitoring of cultural resources.
17. Install a measuring device below the diversion dam to monitor instream flows.
18. Recommend a land use plan amendment to consider Mill Creek Canyon as an ACEC.
19. Do not publicize Mill Creek in BLM general distribution brochures or in association with commercial recreation or filming permits. Commercial recreation and filming permits will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure compatibility with objectives and stipulations within the plan.