



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# Announcement

BLM Colorado Uncompahgre Field Office

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October 8, 2024

## BLM celebrates 25 years of Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area

**MONTROSE, Colo.** – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) invites public land enthusiasts everywhere to join in celebrating the 25th anniversary of Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area (NCA) and Wilderness. Driven by local community efforts, the nearly 63,000-acre NCA was established on Oct. 21, 1999 to recognize and protect the area’s outstanding natural, cultural, geologic, scenic, wilderness, and recreation resources.

Several public events are planned to mark the occasion. All require registration and space may be limited. Visit <https://www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org/events/gunnisongorge-anniversary> for event details and to register.

- **Oct. 18, 6:30-8 PM - Eagle Rock Shelter Talk, Bill Heddle’s Recreation Center, Delta:** Learn about the archaeological discoveries of Eagle Rock Shelter in this one-hour lecture with retired BLM archeologist, Glade Hadden.
- **Oct. 19, 9 AM and 10:15 AM - Eagle Rock Shelter Hike:** Join Glade Hadden and BLM staff on a 1.5-mile hike to one of Colorado’s oldest archeological sites.
- **Oct. 19, Noon to 2:30 PM, Gunnison Gorge Pleasure Park:** A celebration highlighted by uplifting words, fond remembrances, and light refreshments.



Photo Credit: Jerry Sintz



“The establishment of this national conservation area 25 years ago involved tremendous community support,” said **BLM Colorado State Director Doug Vilsack**. “The BLM manages this special place to protect its cultural, ecological, and wilderness resources, along with abundant opportunities for recreation, exploration, and solitude. Rafting the Gunnison River is a personal highlight for me, from the thrill of maneuvering the rocky rapids of the gorge to the tranquility of floating the calmer waters downriver.”



Whitewater rafting in the Gorge. Photo: Jerry Sintz

The NCA stretches from Delta County in the north to Montrose County in the south just east of Colorado Highway 50 and encompasses diverse scenic landscapes, ranging from desert shrub and sagebrush lowlands to highly eroded adobe badlands to piñon-juniper woodlands adorning the slopes. At the heart of the NCA lies the spectacular rugged canyon of the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness, a 17,700-acre treasure that showcases about 1.7 billion years of geologic history, from the ancient metamorphic and igneous rock of the steep-walled inner gorge to the younger sedimentary layers lining the upper walls and rim.



Sixth graders watch Colorado Parks and Wildlife biologists at work along the Gunnison River during Cottonwood Days. Photo: BLM

While Gunnison Gorge is well known for world-class trout fishing, challenging whitewater rafting, and flatwater paddling, visitors can also explore over 225 miles of trails by foot, horseback, mountain bikes, and off-highway vehicles. Camping and stargazing are popular activities as well, with the NCA recently being certified as an [International Dark Sky Park](#). Local community partners come together to offer volunteer opportunities and youth education programs including Cottonwood Days, which just celebrated sixteen years of offering hands-on educational activities to area sixth graders about riparian resources along the Gunnison River.

“All the wonderful opportunities the diverse landscape of the NCA provides — from youth education to agriculture to personal recreation and renewal to outfitting services — serve as a perfect illustration of the BLM’s multiple-use mission in action,” said **Gunnison Gorge NCA Manager Edd Franz**.

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*The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land located primarily in 12 western states, including Alaska, on behalf of the American people. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. Our mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America’s public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.*