

# 1990 Dolores River Corridor Plan

## Overall Goals and Objectives

1. Protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources of the Corridor while allowing compatible uses.
2. Maintain or improve the existing quality of riparian and wildlife habitat by identifying and implementing management opportunities and strategies. Determine the present condition and ecological structure of riparian and aquatic communities. Identify areas which provide unique habitat features for species considered relic or unusual to region.
3. Provide full protection to threatened and endangered species. Determine distribution of and identify all areas that provide habitat for federally listed, state listed, and BLM sensitive species to ensure the continued existence of such species and the conservation of their habitats.
4. Coordinate with CDOW for management of wildlife and fisheries resources within the corridor.
5. Protect and enhance cultural resource values by identifying significant cultural resources and paleontological sites and performing necessary documentation. Identify and implement appropriate management actions.
6. Conduct planning for the Dolores River within a “regionalized system of rivers” context.
7. Maximize availability of impounded water released for river management opportunity by coordinating with DWCD.
8. Provide for recreational opportunities in the fall and winter seasons in addition to standard spring/summer activities.
9. Maintain primitive and semi-primitive experience opportunities by limiting and/or distributing visitor use and commercial guide/outfitter use.
10. Protect those public lands which are utilized intensively as recreational sites by exploring the need for and feasibility of withdrawing from mineral entry.
11. Develop recreation sites as prescribed in the Dolores Project ES, the Dolores River Downstream Site Report (as modified) and in accordance with BLM's MOU with BOR and USFS.
12. Minimize potential conflicts with recreational use of public lands by working closely with private landowners and users. Maintain options to develop BOR funded sites if private enterprise chooses to close area to public.
13. Ensure consistent and/or complementary management of adjacent lands, especially in terms of commercial use and facility maintenance/management by coordinating with the US Forest Service and the Lone Dome Mgt. Plan
14. Reaffirm BLM's support for the inclusion of the Dolores River into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System (as per recommendation in the 1976 Dolores River Wild and Scenic River Report). \*\*\*this objective was mistakenly omitted in the original handout\*\*\*

# Reaches 1 and 2: ORV's and Top Management Topics

- Outstandingly Remarkable Values
  - Rafting
  - Archeology
  - Scenery (groves, cliffs and linear canyons)
  - Geology (linear canyons)
  - Roundtail Chub
- Top Management Topics
  - Coldwater Fishery

- Specific Goals/Objectives
- Current Management
- Status/Trends
- Problems/Concerns

# Reaches 1 and 2: Questions for Consideration

- What is your input on the management goals and objectives? Are there goals or management objectives missing?
- 
- What are your groups' ideas about how the DPLO should manage this reach?
- Specifically address:
  1. What should be the role of wildland fire within the river corridor?
  2. How should the ponderosa pine be managed within the river corridor?
  3. Should there be any additional recreation opportunities in any of the existing recreation sites (i.e. Bradfield Bridge, Ferris, or Cabin Recreation Sites)?
  4. Should the Bradfield Launch Site be permitted?
  5. Do we have the appropriate mix of outfitter and guides to meet the public's needs?
  6. Should there be reserved campsites on the river during rafting season?
  7. Is there a threshold for use that if we approach or exceed we would need to implement further restrictions for use? If so, what is that threshold and what potential restrictions may this be?
  8. Are there management activities we need to implement to support a cold water fishery in these two reaches?
  9. How do we cooperatively fund invasive species inventory and treatment? (noxious weeds)
- Overall, what management/protection tools might be recommended in these reaches? (Especially "so as not to diminish" the ORV's)

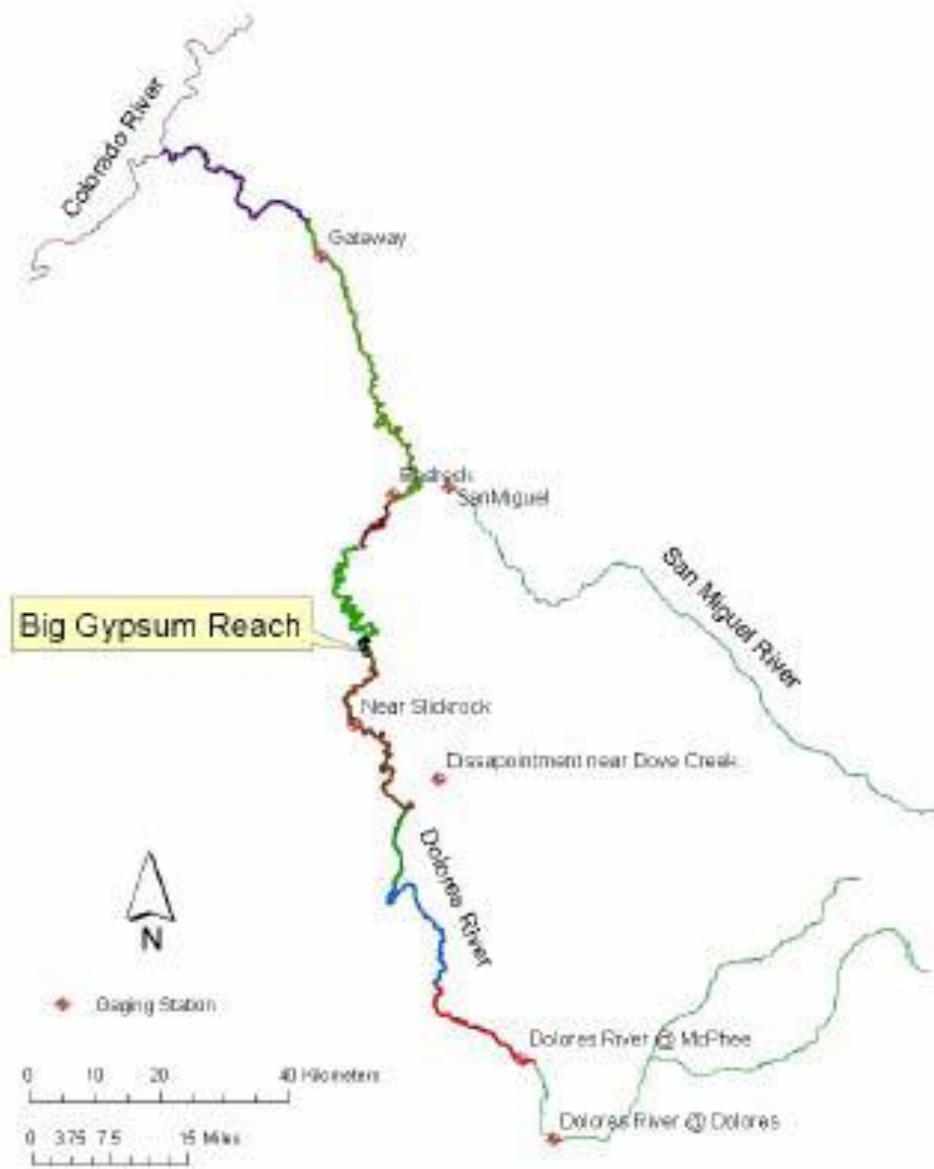


Figure 7 - Location of Big Gypsum Reach on the Dolores River, Colorado.

# Reach 1



Bradfield Bridge

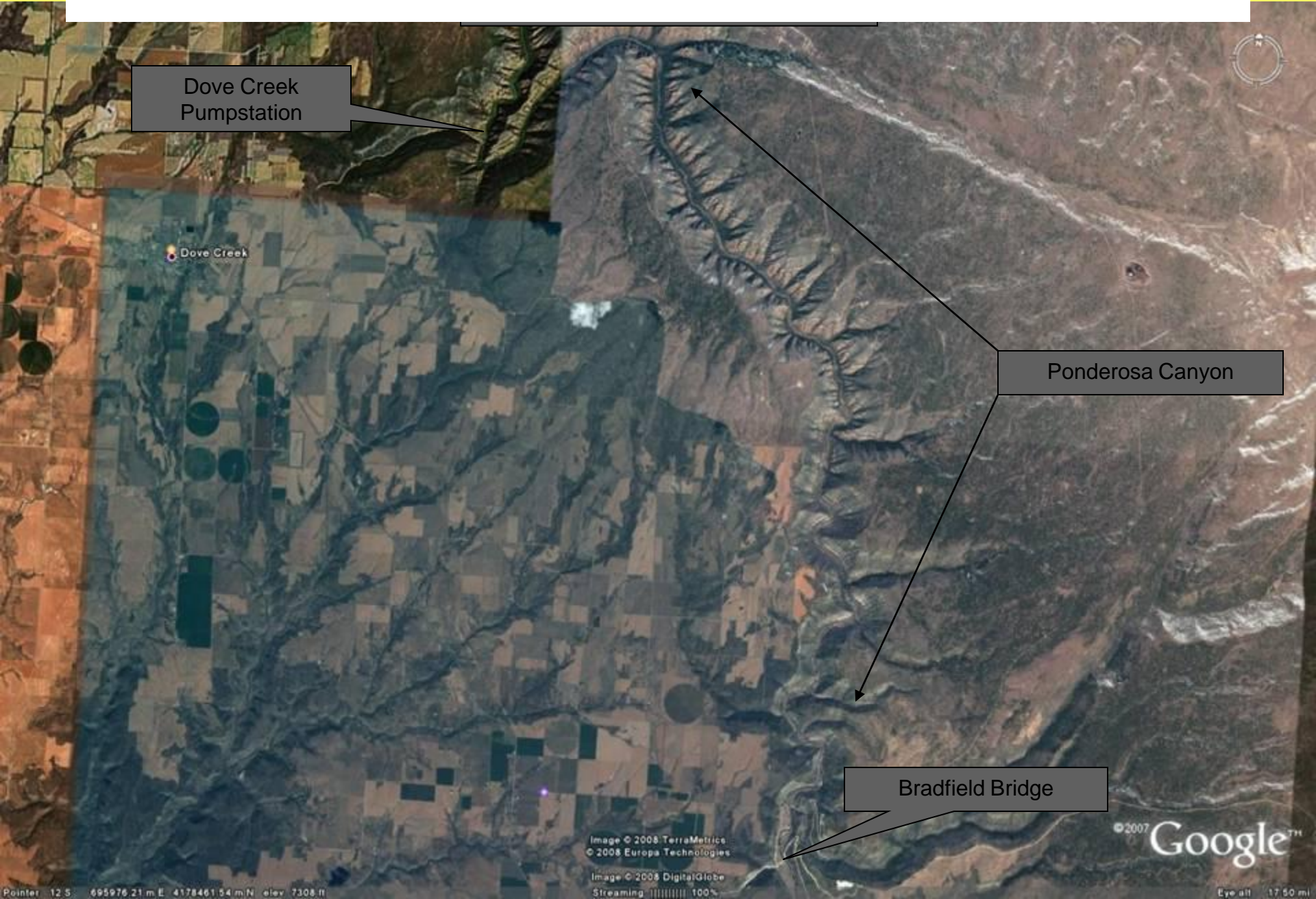
Rockstock Pile

Ferris CG

Stream Habitat Improvement

Metaska

# Reach 2



Dove Creek Pumpstation

Dove Creek

Ponderosa Canyon

Bradfield Bridge

Image © 2008 TerraMetrics  
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Image © 2008 DigitalGlobe  
Streaming 100%

© 2007 Google™

Pointer 12 S 695976.21 m E 4178461.54 m N elev 7308 ft

Eye alt 17.50 m

# Reaches 1 and 2: Wild and Scenic Eligibility Classifications

**Reach 1 = Recreational**

**Reach 2 = Scenic (1990 Plan) Wild (2008 Draft Plan)**

## **Recreational.**

Most impacted by human activity. Readily accessible by roads or railroads and may have had some impoundment or diversion in past.

- most activities are allowed.
- Livestock-grazing.
- Historic buildings
- Motorized trails are allowed.

## **Scenic**

Has had no impoundments. Largely primitive and undeveloped. Nearby roads generally cross it and do not run parallel to it.

- most activities are allowed.
- Livestock-grazing.
- Historic buildings and stores
- Motorized trails may be allowed depending on visibility

## **Wild**

Most natural. No dams or impoundments. Water is unpolluted and the shoreline is primitive. Generally there are only trails in the corridor, not roads.

- Livestock-grazing.
- Historic buildings
- Non-motorized trails are allowed.
- Motorized trails may be allowed depending on visibility
- No timber-cutting,
- No stores, roads or bridges that cross them, roads that parallel them, or low dams or diversions.

## **ORV's**

- Eligible streams = free-flowing and possess one or more Outstandingly Remarkable Value ("ORV").
- ORV = a unique, rare or exemplary feature that is significant at a regional or national scale.

# Reach 1:

## Current Management Objectives

### **Current management based on Amendment #7(1989) and #11(1990) to 1983 Forest Plan**

#### **General**

- Provide variety of recreation opportunities and invest in activities which enhance this resource.
- Protect important cultural values. Develop suitable cultural resources for public use (e.g. Interpretive signing, stabilization, access trails).
- Maintain Class II visual standards.
- 1 day use area (Metaska) and 2 campgrounds (Ferris Canyon and Cabin Canyon) July 2008 Recreational Facilities Analysis: Metaska Picnic Area will continue to offer vehicle access to the river but will not be operated as a formal recreation site.

#### **McPhee to 1 mile downstream (south boundary of r16w, t39n, section 34) prescription 5b:**

- Emphasis = provision of forage and cover on winter range for wildlife.
- Full range of treatments possible for forage and cover.
- Compatible resource uses may occur.
- Motorized recreation use is managed to prevent conflicts during critical use periods.

#### **River corridor (1 mile downstream of McPhee to BLM boundary):**

##### Riparian (9A):

- Emphasis = protection and maintenance of riparian areas.
- Treatments possible to enhance plant and animal diversity.
- Not suitable for timber production.

##### Potential Wild and Scenic river (10D):

- Emphasis = maintaining potential for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River system.
- "Recreational River" managed to be readily accessible by road, and to maintain developments that may have occurred along the shoreline, and impoundments or diversions that may have occurred in the past.

#### **Ormiston Point and (sections 35 and 36 e. Of) Hoppe Point are 6B**

- Emphasis = livestock management.
- Variety of forage improvement practices possible.
- Compatible resource uses possible.

#### **Narraguinnep Research Natural Area (1,928 ac)**

- Representative of the mesa country of southwestern CO.
- Ponderosa pine, pinon pine, juniper and oakbrush.
- Virgin conditions prevail, due to topography,
- Livestock excluded through fences and natural barriers.



# Reach 2:

## Current Management Objectives

- Largely free from the evidence of humans.
- Motorized vehicle use is prohibited within this unit.
- Project designs should stress protection of natural values
- managed to maintain an environment that offers some degree of risk and challenge with infrequent contact of other users (normally less than 10 group encounters per day).
- Recreational activities occurring in this unit include river running, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, picnicking, hunting, camping, viewing scenery, photography, fishing, and nature study.
- Manage consistent with criteria used to recommend “Scenic” classification status as per findings in the 1976 Dolores River Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report. *[Note, 2008 Draft Land Management Plan finds it eligible for Wild status: “there is no road, no developed or maintained trail, and the area is closed to motorized uses]*
- Frequency of managerial contact with users is very low.
- Specific wildlife objectives:
  - Identify all riparian and key wildlife areas which are in less than good condition: take action to improve.
  - Monitor all key areas to maintain an overall condition class rating of good.
  - Determine the present distribution of aquatic and macroinvertebrate species. Develop and implement actions to enhance conditions whenever possible.
  - Monitor selected aquatic species to determine which factors may be influencing habitat conditions or restricting species from maintaining viable populations.
  - Survey and map all areas which provide unique habitat features for species of plants and animal considered as relic or unusual to this area of Colorado.

# Rafting

## Significance

- listed as one of the most popular and beautiful rafting areas in SW CO. Contains Class II and III rapids.
- Regionally significant for boating based on actual use and interviews with commercial providers.

## Goals and Objectives

Reach 1: Recreation emphasis, maintaining eligibility classification of "Recreation River"

Reach 2: "Manage to maintain an environment that offers some degree of risk and challenge with infrequent contact of other users (normally less than 10 group encounters/day)." (1990 Mgt Plan)

## Current Management

### Reach 1

- 1 commercial outfitter permitted to float and fish (Duranglers).

### Reach 2

- Bradfield Bridge CG: 18 family campsites, restrooms, raft launch, 14 day-parking sites, and river register
- Mountain Sheep Point Parking, put in, river register.
- Resource Protection
  - Require all recreationists required to pack out their trash and use porta-potties.
  - Require firepans and pack out ashes. No collecting of dead/down firewood, or driftwood for fires
  - Continually monitor the river corridor during boating season; periodic patrols the rest of the year.
  - Implement temporary closure, rehabilitation, or rotation of use for campsites suffering abuse/resource damage.
  - Control non-native invasive plants along the river.
- Visitor Services
  - Intensive education/information to get voluntary compliance with carrying capacity guidelines.
  - Provide the Dolores River hot-line service and periodic news releases during boating season.
  - Cooperative agreements with local search/rescue groups to provide prompt, efficient attention to emergencies.
  - Require all boaters to register at put-ins.
  - Restrict all groups floating from Bradfield Bridge to Gypsum Valley Bridge to 25 persons.
  - 1 WSA float thru trip (launching above Slick Rock) of 16-25 persons allowed per week.
  - Upper River low-water (after June 19) groups limited to 12 persons.
  - Campsites "first come/first serve"; with voluntary sign-up for campsites at river registers.

## Bureau of Reclamation

- Fill reservoir when possible.
- Manage excess supply for rafting
- Provide a minimum raftable release of 800cfs as long as possible
- Time peak cfs over Memorial Day
- Managed spill ends when inflow = demand.
- Use ramping to avoid stranding rafters.

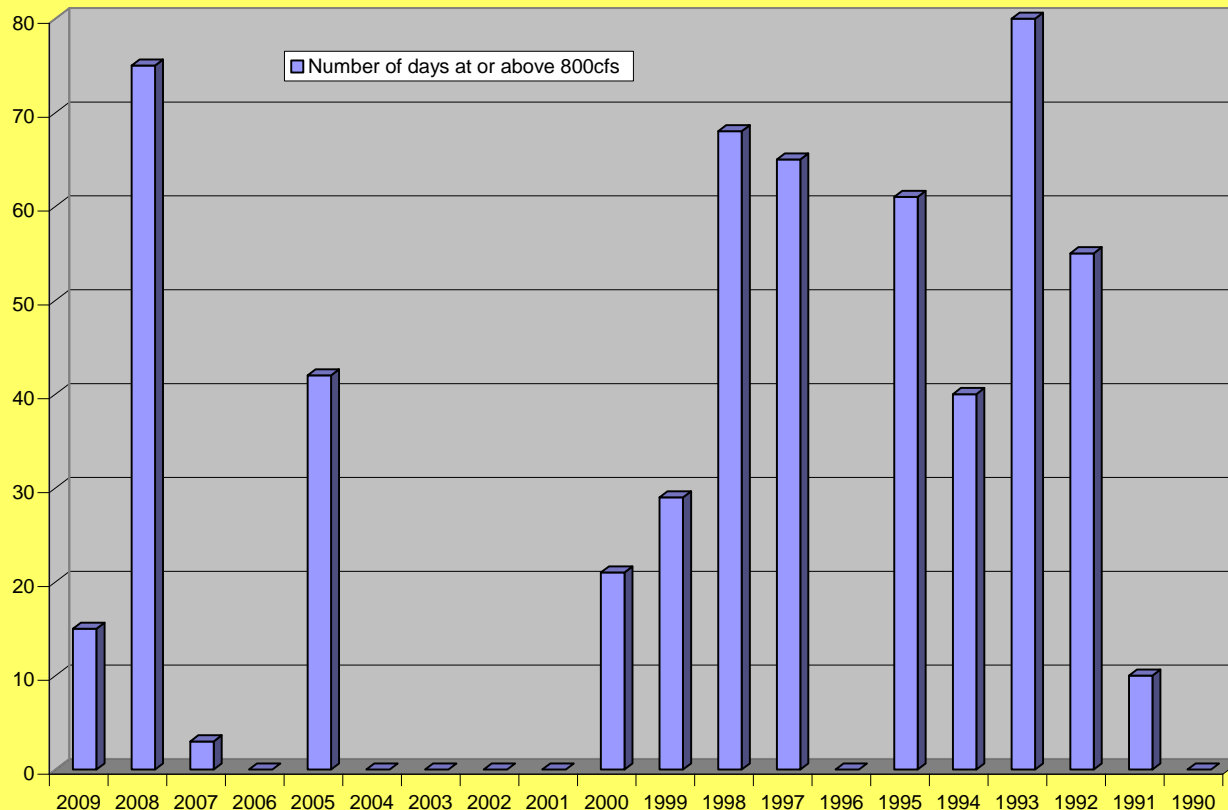
# Rafting

## Current Management

### Reach 2

- Special Area Permits/Allocation of Use
  - Commercial outfitters permitted. Private boaters permits not required.
- **Whitewater Season (April 1-June 18)**
  - Guaranteed daily total commercial allotment = 3 launches. Commercial launches assigned BLM ; allocated among 18 multi-year outfitters and 18 annual outfitters. No outfitter assigned >1 launch on any day.
  - 2 daily common pool launches available.
  - If resource damage occurs or carrying capacity limits are exceeded >20% of the days of the use season, private permits to be initiated.
- **Low Water Season (June 19-March 31)**
  - Guaranteed daily commercial allotment = 1 launch. Commercial launches assigned by BLM.

## Status/Trends



# Rafting

## Status/Trends

- Changes in view of what constitutes a rafting day: BLM counts a rafting day as flow at or above 800cfs, some private rafters define a rafting day as 1000cfs with 2 weeks notice, etc.
- Reach 1
  - Launches from and camping on CDOW property just above Bradfield.
  - Used to see some launches from Cabin Creek Campground, not now.
- Reach 2
  - Currently 16 commercial multi-year permits. Down from 31 in 1990 and 18 following implementation of 1990 plan. More than meeting demand.
  - Level of river use very related to predictability (ie. 2005, 2008 good years for predictability = high spill years).
  - Campsites tend to have time to recuperate (within a season and between seasons). Some even disappear due to changes in channel and changes in vegetation.
  - Seemed to be more campsites at the end of 2008 season downstream of Coyote Wash.
  - 2008: Several reports/complaints of drunkenness, noise and late nights.
  - 2008: Several reports by large commercial groups of small groups using bigger sites and not being able to find commercial campsites.

## Problems/Concerns

- Reports and observations related to “social carrying capacity” : people being nice and ability to find campsites. Can reach “saturation” on weekends and holidays in a predictable flow year and also in certain places: WSA and Bedrock takeout.
- Reports and observations of ATV use in Coyote Wash (within WSA).
- Small groups using limited number of large campsites best suited to large (16 people) commercial trips.

# Archeological Resources

## Significance

- Several rare and exemplary prehistoric archeological sites.
- Large Anasazi pueblos such as Mtn. Sheep Point Village and Kayenta House cliff dwelling
- At least 11,000 years of connection between the Dolores river and humans.

## Goals/Objectives

### Reach 1

- Protect important cultural values. Develop suitable cultural resources for public use (e.g. Interpretive signing, stabilization, access trails).

### Reach 2

- Identify and evaluate all significant cultural resources along river and where access brings increases in recreation.
- Protect from damage (e.g. visitation, trampling, camping, removal, or vandalism).
- Protect from effects of erosion or controlled fluctuations in river flow.
- Develop and interpret for public education, enjoyment, and resource protection.
- Periodically monitor to assess cumulative impacts and track site condition.

## Current Management

### Reach 2:

- Reach 2: no-surface-occupancy stipulations for mineral leasing.
- Secret Canyon to Gypsum Valley: vehicle use on designated roads and trails only
- Bradfield Bridge to Secret Canyon: ORV use prohibited.
- Evaluate impacts to archeological site from access construction to the Bradfield Recreation Site.
- Interpret the Bradfield Homestead.
- Late prehistoric or historic Ute wickiup site needs protection from wood-gathering activities associated with a high use campsite. Reduction in use or elimination of use at this campsite may provide adequate protection.
- Stabilize, map, and interpret Kayenta House near the Dove Creek pump station. The sites are not in good condition and need treatment to preserve their architecture and interpretive value.
- Investigate and map trails that access the river from rim near Dove Creek pump station, These likely were prehistoric access routes.
- Protect and interpret prehistoric Wickiup site near a high-use campsite.
- Geologic fault near Dove Creek pump station provides a foot route from the river up the east side of the canyon to the rim. Determine if used prehistorically.

# Archeological Resources

## **Status/Trends** (V. McMillan, 2009)

- Only ~3.6% of 91 miles of Lower Dolores managed by the BLM has been systematically surveyed.
- 85 archaeological sites recorded within the 1/2-mile corridor; for many only documentation in 1975 in an unsystematic survey of river corridor.
- Estimated total # of sites is 1,500.

## **Problems/Concerns**

- Impacts recreaters and impacts from cattle grazing.
- Disappearance of artifacts from both major and minor sites: at some sites, all the surface artifacts listed in site documents from 10 years ago have now vanished (V. McMillan).
- Funding for surveys and evaluations is extremely limited.

# Roundtail Chub



## Significance

- Sensitive native species, declining in many areas of its range.
- USFS sensitive species list, CDOW species of special concern.

## Goals/Objectives (1990 Plan)

- Identify all riparian and key wildlife areas which are in less than good condition: initiate actions to improve.
- Monitor all key areas to maintain an overall condition class rating of good.
- Determine present distribution of aquatic/macroinvertebrate species: implement actions to enhance conditions.
- Determine factors influencing habitat conditions or restricting species from maintaining viable populations.
- Survey and map all areas which provide unique habitat for species considered as relic or unusual to this area.

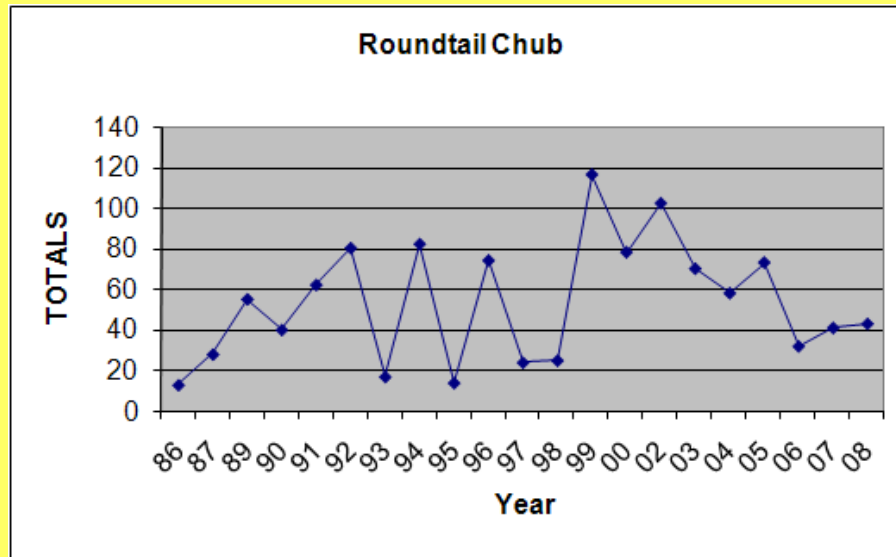
## Current Management/Indicators (1990 Mgt Plan)

- Establish permanent aquatic habitat monitoring sites. At least 2 sites in warm water sections. Monitor at least once every 5 years.

# Roundtail Chub

## Status/Trends

- Reach 1:
  - Rare, not captured since early 90s. Roundtail chub are currently in Beaver and Plateau creeks so historic RTC habitat.
- Reach 2:
  - assumed to be common (versus abundant or rare) based on spotty data (walking surveys at DCPumps).
  - 1 YOY smallmouth bass captured; 1<sup>st</sup> recorded at this site



## Problems/Concerns

- Difficult to monitor: Boat electrofishing is a poor estimator of RTC because relatively small and difficult to catch.
- Shortened spills and reduced baseflows. Water is the key to suitable habitat (pool depth) and appropriate spawn timing.
  - Pool/rubble; Complex habitat important for RTC
  - Generally spawn in early summer.
- Non-native fishes (e.g. small mouth bass)
- Cold water temperature in Reach 2: probably a little colder now than what they prefer due to the dam.



# Scenery



## Significance

- Scenic values are associated with recreation.
- Cliffs, canyons and old growth ponderosa pine groves.

## Goals/Objectives

- Class II Objective:
  - retain the existing character of the landscape.
  - The level of change to the landscape should be low.
  - Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer.

## Current Management/Indicators

- Reach 2:
  - Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II guidelines
  - No-surface-occupancy stipulations for mineral leasing

## Status/Trends

- Ponderosa pine 'groves' in good condition
- No significant man-made changes to the scenery in reaches 1 and 2 since 1990

## Problems/Concerns

- Lack of fire (under specific conditions) to maintain them and promote regeneration.

# Geology

## Significance

- Dramatic Cretaceous (dinosaur age) sandstone cliffs throughout the canyon
- Uniquely persistent linear and angular form.
- Northerly flow is rare within the region and documents the uplift of Colorado Plateau and subsidence of the Paradox Basin.
- Action of the Dolores River to penetrate the caprock of the present-day cliffs and the linear flow pattern of its canyon demonstrate unusual rapidity of the areas tectonic processes and the speed of the corresponding downward cutting of the river.

## Goals/Objectives

- Conduct paleontological overview of geological formations to determine scientifically important and interpretable fossil remains. Remains that are significant scientifically would be protected from unauthorized collection.

## Current Management/Indicators

- No surface occupancy stipulations for mineral leasing.
- Class II Visual Management Guidelines

## Status/Trends

- Geologic time...

## Problems/Concerns

- ?

# Reach 1: Cold Water Fishery

(brown, rainbow, cutthroat trout)

## Goals/Objectives

- USFS Forest Plan: Recreation emphasis, maintain classification as “Recreation river”, riparian management prescription.
- CDOW: managed as a quality trout fishery (a Dolores project commitment), with goal of 32 lbs/ac.
- BOR: “proposes to acquire at least 7,200 AF of water to establish a pool of storage in McPhee Reservoir with a total annual volume of up to 36,500 AF for downstream release...” (1996 Fish Pool EA)

## Current Management

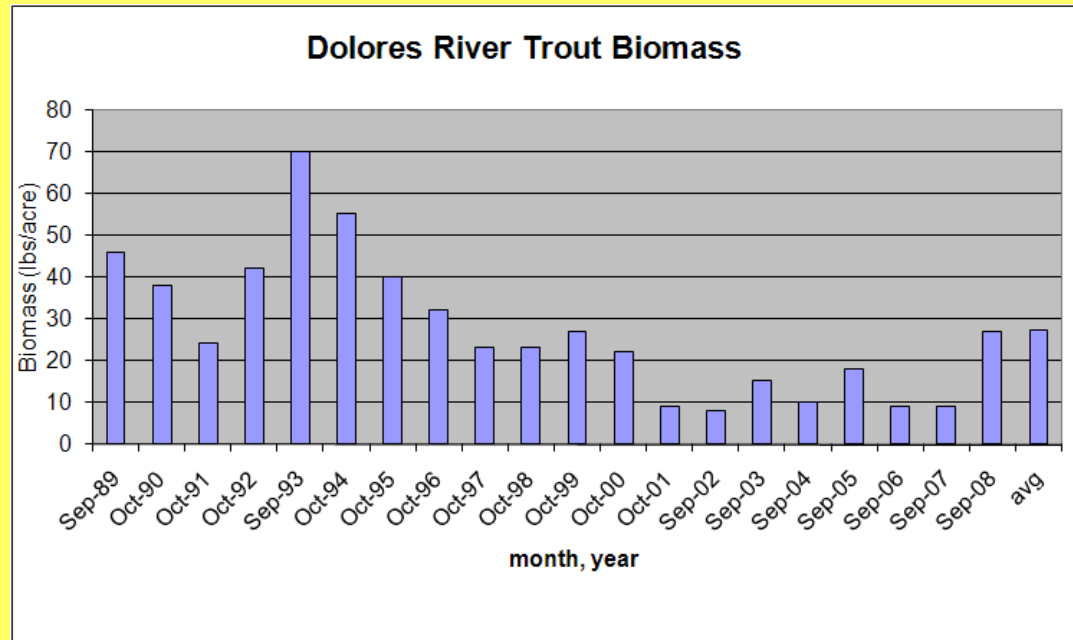
- Public Lands: 1 outfitter for float fishing, 2 campgrounds and 1 day use area
- CDOW: Dam to Bradfield Bridge is
  - Brown trout are self sustaining
  - Rainbow and cutthroat trout are stocked
  - Catch and release only (flies and lures))
- BOR: Current water available for downstream release = 31,798 AF( much of this shares dry year shortages)

# Reach 1: Cold Water Fishery

(brown, rainbow, cutthroat trout)

## Status/Trends

- Generally downward trend from 1993 to present.
- 2008 survey shows biomass of trout up from 9 to 29 lbs/ac (long term average is 27.3 lbs/ac)



## Problems/Concerns

- Drought years are very hard on the trout population.
- Water quantity is not sufficient (or consistent enough) to provide habitat for adult trout: 78 cfs flow years produced trout biomasses that typically exceeded the 32 lbs/ac management goal.
- Temperatures getting too high in late summer and/or Dissolved Oxygen getting too low. Related to algal growth.

# Top Management Questions for Reaches 1 and 2

1. What should be the role of wildland fire within the river corridor?
2. How should the ponderosa pine be managed within the river corridor?
3. Should there be any additional recreation opportunities in any of the existing recreation sites (i.e. Bradfield Bridge, Ferris, or Cabin Recreation Sites)?
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