

**LOWER DOLORES WORKING GROUP**  
**Meeting 8 Summary**  
**Sept. 21, 2009**

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Note: Presentations, documents, meeting summaries, agendas and other information related to the Lower Dolores Working Group process are posted at <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drd/>. There is a button on the left on the home page for the Lower Dolores Working Group.

Meeting agenda: The agenda was approved by the group.

Public comment: none.

Review of meeting schedule and Working Group goals and process(es): Marsha reviewed the progress of the Working Group so far. The group began by learning about key issues in a broad way, and has moved to in-depth study of the individual river reaches as defined by the Dolores River Dialogue (DRD), which is governing this process. Currently the group is in an input and idea phase brainstorming management goals and protection tools and strategies. The group will eventually organize all the input by topic by filling out a spreadsheet containing categories of the types of information provided for each reach. A few of the categories are "Current Dolores Public Lands Office (DPLo) Management Goals and Objectives for this Reach"; "Management Questions"; and "DRD Research or Other Research Occurring & Research Questions".

The Working Group will also fill in information gleaned from the small breakout groups regarding "Ideas for the Future", the next-to-last column on the spreadsheet. The final column is the "Bucket List."

Marsha proposed a revised meeting schedule that would extend the Working Group process by about six months, until the end of June 2010. The proposal is for the Working Group to choose three major issues involving the Lower Dolores River e.g., recreation and rafting for in-depth analysis. The three issues would be chosen in December. Then the Working Group would have three extended meetings on those three topics in which to consider possible management strategies, solutions, and protection tools. Marsha emphasized that if an issue does not make the list, it doesn't mean that issue isn't important. However, the DRD would like the Working Group to hone in on three major issues and endeavor to reach consensus on a range of options for dealing with those issues. The goal is to hold Workshop #1 in January, probably from 5 to 10 p.m. Workshop #2 would be in February and Workshop #3 in March.

In addition to the three big-ticket issues, the Working Group would also

consider other topics during a speedy “popcorn” process. The goal would be to ascertain rapidly whether there is consensus on these topics.

Then the Working Group would develop the “Bucket List”. The concept of the bucket list is used in many other public-lands processes. First the group would brainstorm what it would like to recommend, then break into small groups. All of the possible recommendations would be numbered. Bucket 1 would be what each small group agrees on and/or prefers as a tool or management strategy. Bucket 2 would be management strategies/tools to use if No. 1 would not work. Bucket 3 would be for strategies/tools to use only if No. 1 and 2 would not work, and so on.

Then the small groups would report their Bucket Lists to the Working Group as a whole. If there is no consensus, the Working Group will provide a list of alternatives for DPLO Manager Steve Beverlin.

Under Marsha’s proposal, there would be no meeting in April.

Don Schwindt of the Dolores Water Conservancy District said he was concerned about having to meet in May and June because that is such a busy time in the agricultural community. Marsha said the schedule could be adjusted, perhaps by having two meetings in March and in April.

Montezuma County Commissioner Gerald Koppenhafer said the group should have started out with the first columns on the spreadsheet, “Current DPLO Management Goals and Objectives for this Reach” and “Management Questions”, filled out. He said it would have been more efficient to start by showing what is already in place and then seeing what needed to be changed.

Steve said the 1990 Dolores River Corridor Management Plan was passed out in Meeting 2 in order to show what management is in place now.

Cole said he believes the 1990 plan was very good and suggested that, in order to streamline the process, the group could start with the plan and then revise it as necessary. He said the process Marsha had lined out was fabulous but would be best used if the group were starting from scratch.

Marsha said the 1990 plan can be melded into the process. The Bucket List can include a recommendation to follow the 1990 plan. She said 19 years is a long time for a plan to be in place, and some things have changed regarding the river and its management.

Cole said he is concerned about the length of time the process is taking. Marsha said she and the DRD Technical Committee don’t believe finishing by December is a realistic goal. However, the group could try to wrap up work by April 15.

There was general consensus with the idea of extending the process. Marsha said she will talk to the DRD Technical Committee and try to readjust the schedule. She will bring the new schedule to the next meeting.

DPLO attendance: Steve Beverlin addressed concerns expressed at the September meeting about why members of the DPLO's Interdisciplinary Team have not been attending the Working Group meetings. He said the ID Team has an incredible work load right now regarding issues such as oil and gas, grazing, uranium, and more. Also, he believes it is inappropriate for DPLO staff to be present for all the inner workings of this group. The discussions would not be as open and frank if there were nine or 10 government employees in the room. Steve said it was originally hoped the Working Group could finish its task and provide recommendations for inclusion in the overall revised Resource Management Plan (RMP), but that clearly is not going to happen. However, the Dolores River is identified in the overall plan as a Special Management Area, which allows for special management specific to the corridor. Steve does not think the RMP will be specific enough to conflict with any of the group's recommendations, but if need be, a plan amendment can be done.

Meeting summaries: The April meeting summary was approved with two changes. May was approved with no changes. August was approved with no changes.

Reach 5:  
An in-depth look

Ann Oliver provided a Power Point presentation and a detailed handout on Reach 5, including current management status and concerns. Reach 5 is within the Dolores Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and extends from the Big Gypsum Valley Bridge to Wild Steer Canyon.

Ann said it is important for the group members to read the goals and objectives from the 1990 Dolores River Corridor Management Plan and provide feedback on those.

Rowdy Suckla commented that if Reach 5 extends to Bed Rock, it passes through a considerable amount of private land with many different landowners, and those people are not represented on the Working Group. Steve said the 1990 plan only covers the river as far as Coyote Wash but the DPLO will need to talk to those private landowners.

Marsha said this is an important point and if the group will be making recommendations about that portion of the river, input is needed from the

private landowners who might be affected.

Ann discussed the ORVs and top management topics for Reach 5. The ORVs are:

- Recreation (rafting and two hiking trails): Reach 5 is one of the most popular and beautiful rafting areas in Southwest Colorado, containing Class II and III rapids.

- Archaeology: The area along this section of the river contains rare and exemplary prehistoric archaeological sites and sacred sites, such as a rock-art panel at the mouth of Bull Canyon. It represents at least 11,000 years of connection between the Dolores River and humans. Ann said, in regard to status and trends, some funding has been secured to complete field surveys of archaeological resources and field work has begun.

- Ecology: Reach 5 is home to three notable species of plant the New Mexico wild privet, also known as desert olive, the Eastwood monkeyflower, and the Kachina daisy. The New Mexico wild privet is not significant for the presence of the plant itself but rather for large communities of the privet, which are considered special. Both the Eastwood monkeyflower and Kachina daisy are rare and grow in seeps and crevices in canyon walls. The Kachina daisy is the rarer of the two. It was a candidate for listing as an endangered species but in 1993 was removed from the list; Ann is not sure why.

- Fish: The roundtail chub, a native warmwater fish species that is declining throughout much of its range, is present in Reach 5. This fish was considered for endangered-species listing and found to be “warranted but precluded”, meaning it merits endangered status but there are other species that are higher-priority.

- Another animal species of interest in Reach 5 is the Canyon tree frog. It is a Colorado Species of Special Concern and a BLM Sensitive Species, but it is not in danger rangewide.

- Scenery (cliffs and linear canyons): Ann noted that scenery enhances and drives recreation. Current management provisions to protect scenic values include no-surface-occupancy stipulations for mineral leasing, a ban on commercial gravel operations within the planning area, and a ban on OHV use.

- Geology (linear canyons): Notable geology along the reach includes dramatic Cretaceous sandstone cliffs. There are dinosaur tracks near La Sal Creek Rapid that are visited at moderate levels and may require protective measures.

The Working Group then broke into small groups for discussion. The notes are below organized by question.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be Monday, Oct. 19, at the Lewis-Arriola Community Center. The meeting and dinner will start at 6PM.

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**Lower Dolores Plan Working Group  
Small Groups Exercise  
9/21/09 – Reach 5**

Group 2 & 4

Group 5

Group 1 & 6

A. Similar to all reaches, should the outfitter and guide permits have reserved campsites?

- First come, first served, or designate one camp in each for commercial trips (no consensus)
- Is this a non-issue? Not much guiding and outfitting
- Very limited campsites
- How can we enforce?
- First come, first served most practical
- Yes, might help organize and address issues
- Since they have to have permits (to launch) anyway
- How can you enforce?
- Educate private parties with signage
- But a lot more bureaucracy – enforcement is a challenge
- How about “preferred campsites” versus assigned? (use signage to indicate)
- Wait until it's a bigger problem and solve it then

B. Should we withdraw lands in the Dolores River Wilderness Study Area from mineral entry?

- No, surface occupancy stipulation should be enough
- Range – need oil – NSO working
- Stick with NSO and BMP's because we need the energy (some agreement)
- Others: prefer withdrawal, but NSO good as long as stipulation cannot be waived
  - Volume of gas is small
  - Focus on energy alternatives

- Geology restricts anyway - don't really know what volume/value is there - don't trash the place

C. Should the Big Gypsum recreation site be maintained as is, improved, or decommissioned?

- Need sanitary facilities, otherwise no improvements – also, better management of weeds in recreation site
- Decommissioned is unrealistic
- Better maintenance – trash issues
- Improvement – better maintained
- Don't decommission
- Don't know much about site
- Best access to river in area
- No strong need for improvements – don't improve because detracts from values
- Is it not meeting demand?
- The actual put-in ramp is very small - consider adding another put-in

D. How should the Dolores office coordinate river management with the downstream offices?

- Should coordinate management plan so management doesn't change when management boundaries are crossed
- What does "coordination" mean between district?
- Already coordinated – needs more private land owner input
- By telephone
- Makes sense to change management at end of WSA (not in the middle)

E. If tamarisk is removed from the main Dolores and associated tributaries, how active should the subsequent restoration efforts be?

- Should be passive because it's in WSA, but water could be an active restoration tool to release floods to improve habitat for cottonwoods and willows
- Knapweed control and seed sowing
- Not many weeds upstream of Coyote Wash
- Passive – grasses and willow and cottonwood will come back
- Should be active, at least to restore grasses and prevent invasion by knapweed and tamarisk (general agreement)
- Be realistic: don't get overambitious – it's extremely challenging to manage plants
- Make an honest effort
- What do you do if the bugs get there first?

F. How should the illegal OHV access into the Dolores Wilderness Study Area be managed?

- Permanent posted signs big enough to see – most people may not know – are there multiple entry points? – physical barrier might help in Bull Canyon and Silvey's Pocket
- Physical barrier won't work or will block Suckla's
- Enforcement nearly impossible
- What is damage?
- "Actively discourage" illegal use – a few motorcycles already signed
- Education - don't let up
- Signage (although some have heard that signs routinely get removed)
- Start slow, don't get too heavy handed
- Figure out where they are coming from, although others added: this is obvious, they are using the existing old road

G. How should the cultural sites currently being impacted from rafters be protected?

- Recommend that Shoman Cave be day-use only – signage at major sites – visitation ethics posted at launch sites and registered – closing some social trails
- Remote sensing?
- Wild & Scenic – more damage, more people
- Spill – more people
- Education/signage/peer pressure
- Small fence or barrier
- Brochure with outfitters and guidebook information
- Education
- Close camping @ archeological sites
- 1% of the people cause the problem
- Use low fence around sites to remind people to keep a distance
- Plant poison ivy, etc.

H. Should there be additional interpretation at Indian Henry's Cabin located in Bull Canyon?

- Need sign and history of cabin
- None of us have been there
- Yes, should protect and in favor of education about history of cabin

I. How should water managers balance both rafting with flushing flows for management of other resources?

- DRD science recommendation for habitat restoration should be implemented on "big water years" over consistent 800 cfs for boaters
- Time with spawning better
- 800 cfs steady siltation is problematic
- 2000 max? Natification needed downstream
- Need to understand flushing better – what is the needed Q
- This is the basic issue that DRD struggles with

- Rafting is the priority (question raised: isn't management for fishery also a stated priority?)
- Keep science driving process
- Keep DRD effort focusing on this question
- Could re-operate under EIS if science supports
- BLM management plan is the wrong document to address this question
- General agreement: management focus should be changed to address not just rafting but also ecology - comment: this is just the reality

J. If you were granted one wish for the Dolores River, what would it be?

- Management plan is now good, with a few exceptions – would like to see plan more permanent – would like to keep 1990 plan (not everyone wished)
- Leave alone, limit advertising
- Manage spills for ecological benefits
- Rafting remain informal
- BLM retain and improve management
- Keep it a secret
- Long-term protection
- Keep it as it is and has been
- Not so many tourists
- Provide access to most of the river – provides important recreation area for low income folks

Overall, what protection tools might be recommended in this reach?

- Existing plan covers a lot
- Can have too many rules
- Wild & Scenic interpretation would help (Roy Smith)
- \*Use good scientific information
- WSA should be designated as Wilderness
  - already pre-scripted as WSA
  - recommended for designation
  - language w/o federal reserved water right
- Water rights are contentious in Wilderness issue, so look a different direction
- General Agreement: the WSA/Reach 5 is worth protecting
- Current Goal = "Not more than 3 group encounters per day between users"
- Is it realistic to be that specific?
- Raising the profile brings more people
- If we don't act, the area might get overrun with people in the future
  - Better to be proactive than to have to react to protect the resource
  - There are 2 sides to wilderness issue: impacts by use/impacts for people
- Limit use, but don't need Wilderness: Wilderness = an advertisement (like the Monument)



- Personal observation: Monument did not increase use of Sand Canyon, etc.
- Personal observation: Monument did increase use on north end, around Pleasant View
- Question: are we currently under the 1990 plan? Yes, although not all of it is implemented/enforced
- Is there a plan that can be enforced?
- W&S water language even less tractable than Wilderness
- Proposal: remove Suitability in Reach 5 and just focus on Wilderness designation; solve the water rights language to meet approval of water community and wilderness community - general agreement of group.
- Agree as long as something happens to protect for the future
- Group member strongly supports the idea, would be pretty much the same management as currently exists - Concerns:
  - Prior and existing rights must be protected and honored
  - Grazing must continue
- Could live with suitability if knew it wouldn't get designated as W&S (because of Federal Reserve Water Right)