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Comments: Comment - Draft assessment on Cultural Resources

Hi,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft assessment on Cultural and Historic Resources. I am an active member of the Grand Junction chapter of the Colorado Archaeological Society (CAS-GJ). Preservation, documentation and appreciation of our cultural resources on GMUG and other public lands are very important to me.

I read with interest the list of books/reports at the start of Chapter 2 on page 3. I happened to note though that two of these are not in the "References Cited" section on pages 24 and 25. Specifically missing are: Reed and Metcalf 1999; and Buckles and Buckles 1984. I also noted that the Reed 1984 report is titled "West Central Colorado Prehistoric Context" so on page 3 the reference needs the word "Colorado" added and on page 25 the West-Central should not have a hyphen. I see there are other uses of "West-Central" but it is just the report title that I'm talking about here.

On page 4 in the 4th paragraph there is a sentence about projectiles in the Gateway area. The text says "indicate trade with Anasazi and Fremont ceramics." Should that be "trade for" or "trade with Anasazi and Fremont Indians."?

On page 5 there is the text "Refer to Areas of Tribal Importance section...". When I first read this I had guessed it was a section within this assessment. So I repeatedly searched for it within this assessment. I finally realized that it was a separate assessment. It would be helpful to the reader if this separate assessment was referenced in the same manner used on page 1 of the Aquatic assessment when in paragraph 1 it uses Italics for the title and mentions "assessment" vs "section". Perhaps the Areas of Tribal Importance started as a section of this assessment but was later changed to be a separate assessment. Please note there are several references to Areas of Tribal Importance in this assessment and they all would benefit from this clarification.

Having not heard of "Battlement Mesa Forest Reserve" before, I was quite interested to read on page 1 that was the Grand Mesa's original name. However later on page 8 the text seems to imply that the Grand Mesa was the name used back in 1892. Should page 8 mention "Battlement Mesa Forest Reserve" too?

Page 8 mentions that the Silesca Cabin will soon be available for rent. From the webpage:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/gmug/recreation/camping-cabins/recarea/?recid=32844&actid=101> it appears that the cabin is already available for rent. So this text should be updated. Looks like a great cabin.

Members of CAS-GJ have expressed interest in helping with FS with tasks such as monitoring. There may be some of the PHA sites from Table 4 or NRHP sites from Table 3 that might make a starting list for sites that would benefit from being monitored by volunteers from the local Colorado Archaeological Society chapters. Other

federal agencies have successfully enlisted caring citizens to visit sites with a set of photos for comparison purposes of monitoring conditions over time. I'm suggesting sites whose location are already well enough known to the public, such as the Lands End Observatory, that they are more likely to be exposed to the dangers of vandalism. Or sites such as Leon Peak Fire lookout that require such an effort to get to that volunteers willing to undertake the task of a yearly visit might save considerable effort from FS staff. I've been up to the Leon Peak Fire Lookout 3 times and enjoy the challenge of that hike.

I'm surprised that Yellow Jacket Mine on Bear Creek is not on the list of PHAs in Table 3. From the maps it appears that the site is within GMUG. There is quite a bit of machinery at the site and it was interesting that it had come all the way from Joplin Missouri. The trail to the mine is of interest too and worthy of NRHP designation. The way the trail clings to the cliff and the engineering involved in its construction are both amazing. I've read some interesting accounts in historic newspapers about a group going in to work the mines in spring and after many hours of slogging through snow they then had to dig their cabin out from under 20 feet of snow. This shows the ruggedness of early miners that many in our current society would find inspiring. Bear Creek is a National Recreation Trail and deserves further recognition as a PHA or NRHP for its historic significance.

I'm surprised that there doesn't appear to be any wickiup "villages" in the list of PHAs? Or perhaps I just failed to recognize them among the listed sites? A few summers ago the GJ BLM had an intern who applied a computer model she had developed to determine likely locations of wickiups. Because of the use of the model a previously unknown "village" was located on GJ BLM managed land. Applying such a computer model to GMUG might help locate previously unknown wickiup locations and should be included in the section on "Potential need for plan changes..." Computer modeling and other newer technologies available through satellite analysis should be mentioned in the assessment as ways to update the plan.

Consider "Thanks to NASA and others we now have an enhanced Space Archaeology satellite imaging technological capability to accurately identify and map buried archaeological settlements, across large areas. Objects or features of less than a metre in size can be discerned." from the website http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/space_archaeology/space_satellite_archaeology.html
Shouldn't assessment consider the possibilities of collaborating with NASA and others on this amazing development?

By the way I note that there is no mention of the BLM in the assessment. Given that several boundaries of GMUG are shared with BLM managed land this assessment should include a description of the current collaborations between FS and BLM archaeology staff. There should also be a statement on how those collaborations might be improved to yield better management of the cultural resources. This is especially important when the cultural resources cross the FS/BLM boundary. That boundary is just a line on the map. Prehistoric and historic people crossed that boundary repeatedly and without knowledge of it. So understanding cultural resources needs collaboration between our federal agencies. Even the current public is often unaware when they are crossing from FS managed land onto BLM managed land, unless they happen to see a sign and much of the border is not signed. The wickiup model software is another example where collaboration of knowledge between the agencies would be beneficial to both.

It would be nice if there was more of a description of Table 5 on page 17. For example "Ruins" is an ambiguous term to be used for judging the condition of archaeology sites for it might be thought of as a type of prehistoric structure rather than a condition. But perhaps "ruins" is just a colloquial term for a prehistoric structure used by the general public. However this document is aimed not just for experts in the field of archaeology but also the general public. So the use of "ruins" here deserves clarification. Also it might seem to some (me, for example) that "No data", "Disturbed Extent unknown" and "Unknown" are all the same classification. Can some clarification be included on how those are different?

On page 23 there is the statement that most of the significant cultural resources within GMUG are in stable condition. But with more than 90% of GMUG not surveyed, is the complete set of significant cultural resources really known? Shouldn't the word "known" be added to that statement? As in "Most of the known significant cultural resources ..." There should also be a statement reminding the reader that more than 90% of the plan area has not been surveyed so there may be more significant cultural resources yet to be located.

Also how does that statement on page 23 about most significant cultural resources being in stable condition correlate with the information that over 63% of known cultural resources in GMUG have unknown condition (Table 5). Couldn't it be that some of those cultural resources in unknown condition were documented long ago and if revisited now by a professional archaeologist might be appraised with higher significance based on the better understanding in the profession of the information gaps in the prehistory and history of the plan area? Or even that more of the site has been exposed by erosion and may now be seen as significant. So that statement on page 23 needs to be augmented with a caveat that until the known cultural resources with unknown condition are revisited the list of "significant" sites might be in flux.

On page 24 there is a mention of "PAs" but I'm not familiar with that acronym. Is it the equivalent of "seasonals", perhaps? Clarification is needed, please.

On page 24 there is a mention that GMUG has one archaeologist per Forest. I don't think that is adequate staffing. Given the large number of acres in the GMUG plan area and the statistic that >90% of GMUG has not yet surveyed, then I believe that more than one archaeologist per forest area is needed. Even if some projects requiring cultural surveys are handled by contract archaeology companies, their work must be reviewed by a FS staff archaeologist. It is very important that the FS make significant progress on surveying more of the plan area and updating the condition and knowledge of the known cultural resources. More than 90% unsurveyed acres and the 63% of known sites in unknown condition are problems that need to be addressed at a higher pace than is possible with one archaeologist per Forest area. Making progress on these two issues is important to me. I'm sure I'm not alone in thinking that. Look at the numbers of the public interested in heritage tourism. Consider the number of active participants in groups such as Historical Societies and chapters of the Colorado Archaeological Society. They would also think it is very important for the FS to make progress on surveying more of the plan area and to get condition status updated on more of the known cultural resources. To make a dent on those tasks would take more staff archaeologists. The assessment should make that clear.

Devoting more staffing to archaeology is consistent with the public interest expressed in heritage tourism as

noted page 19. Given the economic benefit derived from heritage tourism adding to the archaeological staff would be a win-win situation. Especially if a small part of the time of the extra archaeological staff could be spent interacting with the public such as an occasional lecture on the PHA and NRHP sites. Doing the archaeology that results in better knowledge of the GMUG cultural sources would continue to build on community pride in our collective heritage on public land (as mentioned on page 20).

Regards,
Janice Shepherd