QUESTION 1:
How were the boundaries of the NRGA determined?

RESPONSE (Bill Stringer, Uintah County Commissioner):
The answer to that question was on the map that was shown previously. When you look at where the sinks are, where the water actually flows, those are the areas that we were looking to protect, knowing full-well that we get run-off from above and seepage coming in down the way. We weren’t trying to look at saying, “Well, every bit of forestland is contributing.” There’s watershed everywhere. Watershed is literally everywhere. But the ones that we were most concerned about are those that feed the culinary water systems. We were careful to include those areas that feed Ashley Springs, in particular, but also Dry Fork and Ashley Creek, without, again, including the whole world. It was really zeroing in on the water that is coming into the valley.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSE (Don Jaques, ANF Partnership Coordinator):
Thank you, commissioner, for that. And as mentioned by Tom, our District Ranger, that is one of the things that the Forest Service is tasked with is completing a legal description of the final NRGA boundary. That is one of the things we will be moving forward with as part of this effort. Production of a detailed map is left up to the Forest Service on the eastern boundary.

QUESTION 2:
Will there be a chance for the public to see the plan before it is finalized?

RESPONSE (Don Jaques, ANF Partnership Coordinator):
The answer to that is yes. We do want to hear from you. The goal of this process is to involve the public in the development of the management plan. We are currently seeking your questions, comments, and concerns surrounding the designation as well as other input that you may have to help us in this effort. Once we prepare a draft plan, we will present it for additional comments prior to finalizing the plan.

QUESTION 3:
What impact will the NRGA designation have on grazing?

RESPONSE (Tom Parrack, ANF Vernal District Ranger):
The Dingell Act, which created this NRGA, specifically states that grazing is a permitted activity and is recognized as a continuing activity on the new NRGA. There should be no noticeable impact to grazing. Grazing of livestock as established before the designation will continue under current rules and regulations in the new NRGA.
QUESTION 4:
What will happen to the access to Ashley Gorge, which previously had walk-in access? At the public hearings, it was stated that the change to county ownership would not change that public access. Since Ashley Gorge is such a spectacular feature, and the closest trout stream to Vernal, this is an important issue.

RESPONSE (Bill Stringer, Uintah County Commissioner):
The question may not be exactly pertinent to the NRGA plan that we’re discussing tonight, but I will go ahead and address it. Part of the conveyance of that land from the BLM to the county included the requirement for access. There is still walk-in access from, I believe, Forest property from the east up high. So, there is access, but it is for the stout, not the faint of heart. And as far as the lower access is concerned (once again, this is not part of the Ashley Karst plan, but just to answer the question), the county has been working with landowners down where the access pinch points might be and we firmly believe that we’ll have that access issue taken care of here in the fairly near future.

QUESTION 5:
Will the National Forest maintain authoritative control and management of the NRGA?

RESPONSE (Tom Parrack, ANF Vernal District Ranger):
The short answer to that question is yes, the Forest Service will maintain authoritative control over the NRGA in the same way it maintains administrative and authoritative control at the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (NRA), which is also part of the Ashley National Forest.

QUESTION 6:
What type of restrictions might be imposed upon current recreation activities, such as with existing roads, trails, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) access? Are we going to see more trails closed off and more limited access? Are existing trails going to be maintained and kept open?

RESPONSE (Ryan Buerkle, ANF Recreation Planner):
The roads and motorized trails that are currently open and are Forest Service system routes within the NRGA will remain open. There will be no change. Maintenance of trails and roads will continue, and those Forest Service system routes will continue to be kept open to the public. There is a stipulation in the Dingell Act that says there can be no new road construction or motorized access routes. However, maintenance on roads and motorized trails is allowed and route relocation for the benefit of resources is allowed as well.
QUESTION 7:
Are there plans for additional developed recreation sites as a result of the NRGA designation?

RESPONSE (Tom Parrack, ANF Vernal District Ranger):
The designation did not come with any additional funding for development. And the plan as we are writing it is not incorporating any new development. However, that is one reason we are interested in your comments. If you have ideas or concerns about what is required or needed or necessary, we would like to hear from you about that. And in the future, if those sorts of developed sites are determined to be appropriate, we will go through the necessary planning and compliance for those activities.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSE (Don Jaques, ANF Partnership Coordinator):
In connection with that, the plan that we are anticipating is a higher-level plan, but certainly that is what the management plan will be there for – to be a guiding document for us as other site-specific kinds of projects are proposed that we can utilize as we move forward.

QUESTION 8:
How will the designation of the NRGA affect being able to obtain and deliver water?

RESPONSE (Don Jaques, ANF Partnership Coordinator):
The designation itself is very specific that it is not intended to affect water rights or the delivery or access to water systems in this area. We do not anticipate that this would be an issue as we move forward. The designation itself is very specific in that regard.

QUESTION 9:
Will there be any impacts to angling regulations and fish stocking schedules?

RESPONSE (provided post-meeting by Lesley Tullis, ANF NEPA Coordinator):
The designation of the NRGA does not change or affect angling regulations or fish stocking schedules. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) will continue to implement fishing rules and regulations and conduct fish population management in the area, as they do across the state of Utah.

QUESTION 10:
Are the current trails master plans considered in this plan?

RESPONSE (Ryan Buerkle, ANF Recreation Planner):
The designating act from Congress states that no new roads, temporary roads, or motorized access routes are allowed within the Ashley Karst NRGA. Maintenance on current motorized trails and roads will continue to occur, as well as relocations where necessary to increase user availability for all different skill levels and to address issues to protect resources. Beyond that, if the trails master plans include new motorized access routes then, underneath the Dingell Act, those are not allowed.
**QUESTION 11:**
How will the designation of the NRGA affect timber harvest in the area?

**RESPONSE (Don Jaques, ANF Partnership Coordinator):**
While timber harvest is not specifically mentioned in the designation, the first part of the designation does say that the NRGA will be administered in accordance with the laws generally applicable to the National Forest System. These previous laws identify timber harvest as one of the recognized multiple uses of National Forest System lands. We anticipate that timber harvest will continue. There is access to harvest some areas from the existing roads that we have. However, there could be an impact to some timber harvest due to the Dingell Act’s requirement of no new temporary roads.

**ADDITIONAL RESPONSE (from Q&A sheet):**
Permanent and temporary roads are an integral part of any timber harvest activity. The designation provides for the use of existing roads and much of the area that has seen timber harvest in the past contains routes that can be reused for the purpose of timber harvesting.

The Dingell Act states that no new permanent or temporary roads will be constructed within the NRGA. However, the Act also states that “Nothing in this section prevents the Secretary from conducting vegetation management projects, including fuels reduction activities, within the Recreation Area for the purposes of improving water quality and reducing risks from wildfire.”

In connection with this, careful consideration to complying with both aspects of the Act will be examined in development of the management plan.

In many cases, existing motorized routes identified in the 2009 Travel Management Plan that were administratively closed to general public use, but still available for administrative use (including by special permit) may be a possibility to blend the seemingly opposing sections of the Act.