

Decision Memo

HIGH UINTAS WILDERNESS

Group Size Limits, Trail Use, Camping Locations, Overnight Care of Horses or Other Saddle or Pack Animals, and Waste Disposal

Duchesne, Roosevelt, Vernal and Flaming Gorge Districts
Ashley National Forest
Summit, Duchesne and Daggett Counties, Utah

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to amend the Ashley National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) so that it is consistent with administrative actions to be taken to protect the High Uintas Wilderness resource. These actions were proposed by a citizen's task force and have been approved by the Supervisors of the Wasatch-Cache and the Ashley National Forests.

I have reviewed the rationale and analysis provided for amending the group size limits for people and horses or other saddle or pack animal for the High Uintas Wilderness. The proposed limits would change the Forest Plan limits (currently at 15 people and 20 horses) to groups no larger than 14 people and 15 head of horses or other saddle or pack animal.

I have also reviewed the High Uintas Wilderness Forest Plan direction and recommendations for camping locations near trails, lakes, streams, springs and other campsites. The **recommendations** currently in the Forest Plan would be changed to **prohibitions** that would limit camping within 200 feet of trails, lakes, streams, ponds and other water sources, and within 100 feet of an occupied campsite.

In addition, I have noted the lack of High Uintas Wilderness Forest Plan direction on trail hiking, disposal of garbage, and the overnight caring of horses or other saddle or pack animals. Proposed new Forest Plan direction for these items would prohibit: 1) shortcutting of trail switchbacks, 2) disposal of debris, garbage or other waste, and 3) the bedding, tethering, hobbling, or hitching of a horse or other saddle or pack animal overnight within 200 feet of lakes or springs.

Scoping and Public Involvement

I contacted the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) Task Force for the High Uintas Wilderness on the need to amend the existing Forest Plan standards for the Wasatch-Cache and Ashley National Forests. This group is composed of a wide variety of users and represents a broad spectrum of public opinion on the proposed action. The LAC Task Force developed a consensus recommendation for the changes proposed above. Again, they are 1) maximum group size limits of 14 people and 15 head of horses or other saddle or pack animal, 2) restricting camping to within 200 feet of trails, lakes, ponds, streams, springs and other water sources and within 100 feet of an occupied campsite, 3) prohibiting shortcutting a trail switchback, 4) prohibiting the disposal of debris, garbage

or other waste, and 5) restricting the bedding, tethering, hobbling or hitching of a horse or other saddle or pack animal overnight within 200 feet of lakes or springs.

Decision

It is my decision to amend the Ashley National Forest Plan to incorporate the five recommendations made by the citizen's task force into the Plan's standards and guidelines for Wilderness management. This amendment emphasizes the intent of the Ashley National Forest to protect for user's enjoyment the pristine qualities of the High Uintas Wilderness. Approval of this amendment does not alter the balance of multiple use goals and objectives for the Ashley National Forest in the long-term; therefore this amendment is not considered significant (36 CFR Part 219.10 (e)(f)).

The proposed action falls under Category 1 of FSH 1909.15, Section 26b. Based on an environmental analysis and past experience, the effects of implementing this action will be of limited context and intensity and will result in little or no environmental effects to either the physical or biological components of the environment. The action does not involve any extraordinary circumstances. Therefore, this action can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

A portion of the proposed action (limits on party size) is not consistent with current Forest Plan standards (see Ch. IV of the Forest Plan). The remaining elements of the proposed action add guidelines where they are currently lacking. The attached Forest Plan amendment documents the specific changes made to party size and adds language which formalizes the four remaining administrative actions taken to protect the Wilderness resource.

Floodplain, wetlands, prime lands, threatened and endangered species, minerals, and cultural resources have been considered and these resources will not be adversely affected.

This decision may be implemented no sooner than 7 days after notice of the decision is published in the Vernal Express.

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with Forest Service appeal regulations 36 CFR 217. Any appeal of this decision must include the information required by 36 CFR 217.9, including the reasons for appeal. Two (2) copies of the Notice of Appeal must be filed with the Regional Forester, Intermountain Region, 324 25th Street, Ogden, Utah 84403, within 45 days of the date notice of this decision is published in the Vernal Express.

For further information contact Garth Heaton or Laura West at the address or telephone below: Ashley National Forest, 355 North Vernal Avenue, Vernal, UT. 84078; telephone (801) 789-1181.


DUANE G. TUCKER
Forest Supervisor

7/30/91
Date

AMENDMENT NO. 8

High Uintas Wilderness - Use Restrictions

JULY 30, 1991

The analysis to support these changes in the Forest Plan standards and guidelines is found in a 2320 memo to the Ashley and Wasatch-Cache National Forest Supervisors dated June 11, 1991.

I. Maximum Party Size in the High Uintas Wilderness

A. Forest Plan Direction-Chapter IV-22, objective 2.

Current language:

Limit group sizes to 15 people and 20 horses per camp.

Change language to:

Limit group sizes to 14 people and 15 horses or other saddle or pack animals.

B. Forest Plan Direction-Chapter IV-24, objective 2.

Current language:

1. Limit camp size to a maximum of 15 people with no more than 20 horses per camp.

2. North Fork of the Duchesne River drainage will have no more than 12 horses per camp.

Change language to:

1. Limit camp size to a maximum of 14 people with no more than 15 horse or other saddle or pack animals.

2. [Delete the language for the North Fork of the Duchesne River drainage.]

C. Forest Plan Direction-Chapter IV-25, objective 2.

Current language:

1. Limit camp size to a maximum of 15 people with no more than 20 horses per camp.

2. Limit camp size in the North Fork of the Duchesne River to a maximum of 12 people with no more 12 horses per camp.

Change language to:

1. Limit camp size to a maximum of 14 people with no more than 15 horses or other saddle or pack animals per camp.

2. [Delete the language for the North Fork of the Duchesne River drainage.]

II. Trail Use in the High Uintas Wilderness

Forest Plan Direction-Chapter IV-22, objective 2.

Add the following:

Prohibit shortcutting a trail switchback.

III. Campsite locations

Forest Plan Direction-Chapter IV-23, objective 2.

1. Current language:
Terrain permitting, discourage camping within 200 feet of trails, lakes, streams and other campsites.
2. Change language to:
Terrain permitting, prohibit camping within 200 feet of trails, lakes, ponds, streams, springs, and other water sources.

Prohibit camping within 100 feet of an occupied campsite.

IV. Overnight Care of Horses, Saddle or Other Pack Animals

A. Forest Plan Direction-Chapter IV-22, objective 2.

. Add the following:

Prohibit bedding, tethering, hobbling, or hitching of a horse or other saddle or pack animal overnight within 200 feet of lakes or springs.

B. Forest Plan Direction-Chapter IV-24, objective 3.

Add the following:

Prohibit bedding, tethering, hobbling, or hitching of a horse or other saddle or pack animal overnight within 200 feet of lakes or springs.

V. Disposing of Debris, Garbage or Other Waste

Forest Plan Direction-Chapter IV-22, objective 2.

Add the following:

Prohibit the disposal of debris, garbage or other waste.