

SOCIAL ASPECTS and TRADITIONAL LAND USE

Within the areas of concern in Alternative E are many notable and important Western American history sites. The Spanish Trail was created following the 1776 journey of Fathers Escalante and Dominguez. This route was a significant trading resource, particularly in the early 1800's when the route was used as a frontier route for early explorers like John C. Fremont and John W. Gunnison in the 1850's. Famous Indian leaders like Chief Walker also used the route during the early history of the area. During the "Utah War" of 1857 and 1858, U.S. Army troops traveled the area on their way to the Sevier valley.

Between 1881 and 1883, a railroad project was undertaken from the present location of Green River, west to the San Rafael Swell, across the Buckhorn Flat and south towards the town of Salina. Although the project was never finished, the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway (D&RGW) grade is still visible for nearly 40 miles in affected area and dozens of rock structures and workers names carved on rock faces bring visitors on a regular basis.

Livestock grazing attracted the first Anglo-American people into the San Rafael and Green River Desert areas in the mid 1800's. Areas such as Sinbad Country in the San Rafael Knob area, Desolation Canyon and Price River were especially attractive with tall grass and along with development of water sources, cattle, horses and sheep did well on the newly discovered forage sources.

The cattle industry continues to be a vital economic force within Emery County. Furthermore, as families and other residents recognized the inherent value of the wide open, natural conditions, recreational activities developed which continue at present. Trail riding on the cattle trails developed by the early cowboys has become more popular. What has become "dispersed camping" to BLM recreation planners is the remnant activity of making camp in the shade of the nearest tree at the side of the trail or near the only water source for miles.

"Eastering" has more to do with enjoying the first outing following winter than recognizing the Christian event, and is socially and geographically unique. This one activity brings as many as 7,500 people out onto the lands managed by the Price Field Office of the BLM on a single weekend.

Local residents have utilized many types of machines over the years to traverse the sometimes inhospitable terrain of the area. Trucks of various makes were utilized for cattle operations as soon as routes were developed that would get them to the cattle camps. Bulldozers were soon put to work making nearly all to the area accessible for oil and mineral exploration and many of those routes and roadbeds serve as county and BLM system roads today. During the 1950's and 1960's, the "Uranium Boom" led to the development of hundreds of miles of bulldozed routes throughout the region.

Other roads were created to develop other minerals that are available in the area. Significant sand and gravel beds are dispersed throughout the areas. Gypsum, traditionally used for plaster, was developed in a number of locations. Even metals such as copper and silver had active mining operations, particularly in the 1930's. Each of these activities created roads and trails to develop the resources.

As these routes proliferated during this time, the addition of these routes led to the development of new activities in the area. Recreational use of these lands became a regionally significant activity. Tote-goats, trail bikes, dune buggies, 4X4's of every type were employed and over the years became an industry of their own. It quickly became apparent that motorized travel was an enjoyable means of exploring these roads/trails or wash bottoms or just the open country between here and there. Technological advances in the motorized travel industry have led to more and more use over the decades.

It should be pointed out that until the Wilderness Study Areas were created in the mid 1980's, there were no limitations on motorized vehicle travel in the areas. Furthermore, with a few exceptions, until the San Rafael Route Designation Plan of 2003, open, cross country travel has been a legitimate and legal option for all motorized use. Open cross country travel is still legal and recognized as a legitimate use in the northern half of Emery County.

Notwithstanding this, Emery County has undertaken to provide management of motorized vehicle use by adopting a County Travel Plan and a related OHV ordinance. Furthermore, most of the incorporated communities have created plans of their own.

In recent years new recreation opportunities began to appear within the affected areas. Hiking, Rock Climbing, Rappelling and Bouldering have become significant and important recreational opportunities. On the Green River, rafting and kayaking have transitioned from small scale recreational opportunities to significant businesses. On the San Rafael, Muddy and Price Rivers, high seasonal flows enable rafting, tubing and kayaking opportunities. For more than 40 years, the County has participated in the "Friendship Cruise". A multiple day event held each May between Green River and Moab.

Mountain Biking is a relatively new activity that is exploding in scope. For 20 years, local biking enthusiasts have hosted a spring mountain biking festival and in the past five years, a fall festival has been created. Other mountain biking activities center on the world famous biking area of Moab. Since much of the "San Rafael Swell" is relatively close to Moab, overflow traffic is increasing by leaps and bounds.

Local residents of the area have utilized the living natural resources of the area since prehistoric times. Hunting and fishing opportunities abound and are recognized even in early prehistoric petroglyphs throughout the region. Today, the area is known for its significant Deer, Antelope and Bighorn Sheep (both Rocky Mountain and Desert varieties) populations. Upland game, particularly Chukar Partridge, and small game hunting opportunities are also important to local residents.

Within the borders of Emery County are some of the most outstanding archeological sites in the western United States. Some estimates place the peak primitive American Indian population as high as 50,000 people at 1100 A.D. Notable archeology sites include Rochester Panel, Range Creek and the Buckhorn Panel. However, thousands of smaller, less known archeological sites are known and visited by local residents on a regular basis.

Paleontology (Dinosaur) resources in the area are world renowned and local residents have participated in the identification and recovery of these resources for more than 50 years. Active, permitted quarry's exist in several of the affected areas and are important sources of scientific information.

The unique archeology, paleontology and early history in the area has led to the creation of a number of active amateur study groups and has facilitated the creation of 4 museums located in the Carbon and Emery county area.

Other opportunities that have proven to be important social activities within the study area include "rock hounding", prospecting, and firewood gathering. Photographers and landscape artists from around the world have recognized the region as a "hidden gem". New activities, such as geo-caching are being developed each year and as technology improves, new activities will certainly be created.