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BLM ECRMP Priority Area Descriptions

Badger Creek North

Badger Creek, with headwaters just a few miles north in South Park, is one of few perennial streams in the rugged Arkansas River Canyonlands, located just east of the Chaffee/Fremont County line. A hike along this vegetated stream section speaks to the great amount of life that this watershed supports. Or take in a breathtaking view of Bighorn Sheep Canyon and the scenic Sangre de Cristo Mountains beyond from atop Jack Hall Mountain, one of the higher peaks in the area at over 11,000 feet and few areas to stroll through bristlecone pine trees in the region.

Badger Creek South

The lively and yearlong running Badger Creek flows four miles through this unit before depositing into the Arkansas River, about 10 miles east of Salida, CO. The creek dissects rugged, arid terrain, including impressive steep red sandstone uplifts. Badger Creek offers excellent opportunities for trout fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing. You may see a herd of Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, mule deer, brown trout, or many other forms of life that depend on this important waterway.

North of Coaldale/Cotopaxi: Sand Gulch, Falls Gulch Mountain

This area offers exceptional backcountry hiking and big game hunting opportunities. It encompasses the epitome of the Arkansas River Canyonlands with dense pinion-juniper woodlands that roll over hilly and canyoned terrain, while also providing mid-elevation mixed forests in the higher sections to the north. There are also rare and vulnerable riparian plant communities and wetlands on the east side of Falls Gulch Mountain. And a short hike to the top of Falls Gulch Mountain offers incredible views of the surrounding Arkansas River Canyonlands with the jagged Sangre de Cristo Mountains as your backdrop.

Bear Mountain

Nestled in between two motorized areas, north of Texas Creek, CO, Bear Mountain and West Table Mountain loom large over the pinyon-juniper rolling hills and incised gulches and sandy washes. The rugged cliffs and steep terrain provide excellent nesting areas and habitat for birds of prey, including the bald eagle, golden eagle, and osprey. However this area is not completely arid, as Monument Creek flows year round through the center of this landscape. Riparian vegetation – cottonwoods, willows, watercress, and more – line the creek bed. That is until the creek tightens and slots through granitic rock, with pools carved out from the slow passage of time and Monument Creek Falls spilling over from above.

Echo Canyon, Table Mountain

This area is one of the wildest and inaccessible in the Arkansas River Canyonlands, and also the largest, containing over 30,000 acres of wilderness character land. The scenic Table Mountain over Echo Canyon can be glimpsed from a drive along US Highway 50, or better yet, a boating trip on the Arkansas River. This area is also an important wildlife corridor and habitat for many species, including Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, black bear, elk, mule deer, pronghorn, mountain lion, as well as bird species such as the bald eagle, American peregrine falcon, Mexican spotted owl.

Eightmile Mountain/Thompson, Gribble, Twin Mountains



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Enjoy a hike or horseback ride to Thompson Point from one of two trailheads in Deer Haven Park, off of High Park Road. From there, you can take in the best of what Colorado has to offer – landscape views of the snowcapped Sangre de Cristo Mountains draping over central Colorado’s canyon country – highlighted by the Arkansas River and Bighorn Sheep Canyon. This mostly untouched, rugged landscape is also an important wildlife connectivity corridor, providing species safe travel and refuge from the Gold Belt region and greater Pikes Peak area north of Canon City to Bighorn Sheep Canyon and the many mountain ranges in central Colorado.

Upper Red Canyon

Established areas off of Shelf Road offer some of the best rock climbing opportunities in the region. However just west into this unit you can find excellent backcountry climbing opportunities as well as rugged mountain biking trails. Or take a nice easy stroll or a multi-day backpacking trip through the massive backcountry and enjoy the trickling streams, high grasslands, cavernous valleys, red rock outcroppings, and mountainous views.

Cooper Mountain

Cooper Mountain is a large and diverse 21,000 acre area, bounded by the historic Gold Belt Byways of Phantom Canyon Road and Shelf Road. Mountain biking is popular to the west in the Garden Park/Oil Well Flats area off of Shelf Road, an area also protected for its nationally renowned paleontological sites. This is where the *stegosaurus* was first discovered! Cooper Mountain offers excellent opportunities for solitude and backcountry experiences. Established trails from either side of the mountain take you from the arid canyon terrain through mixed-forests, to high elevation grasslands. Take in views of Pikes Peak, the Wet Mountains, or the Sangre de Cristo Mountains from the buttes and lookouts atop Cooper Mountain.

Cucharas Canyon

Cucharas Canyon is a rare intact wild canyon area on Colorado’s eastern plains. Once vital for Native Indians, American settlers and ranchers, can now be enjoyed as a camping trip, hike, horseback ride, or hunting opportunity. Take a through-hike down the canyon and enjoy the sounds of the trickling river or the songs of a canyon wren. Or visit one of the lookouts on either side for a scenic vista of the Spanish Peaks over this colorful picturesque canyon.

Reinecker Ridge

This distinctive landmark in South Park, east of Fairplay, is the highest elevation and one of the most valuable landscapes that the BLM manages in Colorado. Reinecker Ridge not only boasts significant cultural and paleontological history, it is revered for its high biodiversity due to extreme rich and unique wetland fens and grasslands. Once a strategic location and valued hunting area for indigenous peoples for millennia – Reinecker Ridge remains a wildlife sanctuary – providing habitat for Canadian lynx, boreal toad, bobcat, mountain lion, moose, elk, deer, pronghorn, black bear, ermine, goshawk, bald eagle, golden eagle, great horned owl, burrowing owl, and migratory snow owl, among others! And while woolly mammoths may be long gone, 20,000 year old fossils and bones have been found here, and are on display at a local gallery and the Denver Museum of Natural History.