

**RESOLUTION # 41-93**

**CONCERNING THE ADOPTION OF THE  
GRAND MESA SLOPES MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**WHEREAS,** The City of Grand Junction is a significant landowner in the Whitewater Creek basin, which basin will supply future water to the City of Grand Junction; and

**WHEREAS,** The City Council authorized the participation of the City in a planning process with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, private land owners, and other interests to develop alternatives for the use of the Somerville Ranch and surrounding lands, including the potential purchase of portions of the ranch with Land and Water Conservation Funds; and

**WHEREAS,** The City authorized the President of the Council to sign the Grand Mesa Slopes Special Management Area Memorandum of Understanding, dated March 4, 1992, for the purpose of developing alternatives for the use of the Somerville Ranch, and

**WHEREAS,** The City, in cooperation with the signatories of the March 4, 1992 Memorandum of Understanding, has developed a Grand Mesa Slopes Management Plan, dated May 20, 1993, the intent of which is to protect existing resource values and improve manageability through cooperative management of the GMS area.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO:**

- (A) That the City understands that the Grand Mesa Slopes Management Plan is an agreement to coordinate activities and proposals within the Grand Mesa Slopes area to insure the City of Grand Junction's short- and long-term objectives for use of the Somerville Ranch, the watershed in the Whitewater Creek basin, and surrounding lands.
- (B) That the City purchased the Somerville Ranch in January of 1990 for the purpose of acquiring the senior water rights on Whitewater Creek. These rights are agricultural in nature and will eventually be transferred to municipal uses and transported to the City of Grand Junction via pipeline. To this end the City's short- and long-term objectives are as follows:
  - (1) To insure that the Somerville water rights continue to be put to maximum beneficial use on the agricultural lands to the Somerville Ranch.
  - (2) To insure that the yield on these decrees is

maximized for eventual transfer to the City water treatment plant.

- (3) To balance the need of the City to insure a significant cash return on the City's investment in the Somerville Ranch water and real property with the needs of long-term protection of the Whitewater watershed for water quality purposes and for visual and aesthetic protection of the Grand Mesa Slope.
  - (4) To insure that appropriate public land use and recreational uses are developed for this area consistent with the City's objectives.
- (C) That the City agrees to adopt the management plan as a framework and land use policy to be integrated with management of the Somerville Ranch but the City may, at any time, terminate participation in the process envisioned by the management plan should the City's objectives not be met by its participation.
- (D) That the City would intend to work with Grand Mesa Slopes participants to insure that the Somerville Ranch continue to be used for public purposes and remain in the public domain, more specifically to offer portions of the ranch to the BLM for purchase with Land and Water Conservation Funds.

**PASSED and ADOPTED** this 7th day of July, 1993.

Attest:

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City Clerk

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President of the Council

**GRAND MESA SLOPES SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA**  
**MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
**May 20, 1993**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Grand Mesa Slopes Special Management Area (GMS) is an approximately 80 square mile area of mixed ownership land lying east of and adjacent to the Grand Junction Area (see GMS Map in appendix). Elevations range from under 5,000' in the foothills by Whitewater to over 10,000' on top of the Grand Mesa. The GMS area is basically a scenic "greenbelt" area extending east from Whitewater, Colorado, running up and over the prominent slope of the Grand Mesa to Powderhorn Ski Area.

The principal land owners and land management agencies in GMS are the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), City of Grand Junction, Town of Palisade, United States Forest Service (USFS), Bill Loring Ranches, Al Lumbarly and Sons Ranches, and Bill Foster. A management plan for this area was prepared under the direction of the GMS Memorandum Of Understanding of March 4, 1992. There are over 30 cooperators in this MOU including core land owners and land management agencies, other government agencies and institutions, and a variety of public interest groups. No private lands are part of or directly affected by GMS unless the private landowner asks to be involved. The GMS Management Plan is essentially a cooperative agreement with common goals that participants will work to achieve.

The partners in the GMS MOU agree that the GMS area contains scenic, watershed, wildlife, recreational, range, cultural, and educational values important to the Grand Junction area, and that cooperative management of the entire area would be mutually beneficial to all participants. The cooperating parties are also concerned that without a coordinated management framework, the fractured land ownership pattern and piecemeal land use change in GMS would result in a future land use and development situation that would adversely affect the interests of the cooperating parties.

The overall intent of the MOU and GMS Management Plan is to protect existing resource values and improve natural resource, commercial, and public use manageability through cooperative management of the GMS area. Anticipated benefits include improved management of municipal watersheds, livestock grazing, critical big game winter range and other wildlife habitat, cultural resources, scenic landscape features, outdoor education opportunities, utility and commercial uses, public use and access, and the long term integrity of GMS as an open space area adjacent to Grand Junction.

There is no intent to popularize GMS as a public recreational attraction, or to unduly restrict public use. Active management of the public use that does occur is important to achieve other resource management goals. The GMS participants want to insure

continued opportunity to use and enjoy the existing landscape and land use opportunities within a sustainable, integrated, long term perspective.

A special report on GMS was prepared by a University of Colorado Landscape Architecture Graduate Class; The Grand Mesa Slopes Project: Site Analysis and Alternative Use Recommendations (1992).

This report contains a summary and analysis of the resources and issues in GMS. The report includes a compilation of resource data from various agencies that is consolidated in a Geographic Information System (GIS) data base. It also outlines several alternative land use emphasis scenarios for consideration. This report can be used in conjunction with the GMS Management Plan to provide both resource background information and insight into management actions proposed in the plan.

### **MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The following Management Plan contains resource issue summaries, planned actions to resolve those issues, and an implementation strategy.

### **GENERAL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

**1. GMS ADVISORY GROUP AND STEERING COMMITTEE:** The GMS advisory group consists of all GMS interests. It is impractical to hold GMS advisory group meetings to discuss every GMS related issue. For purposes of dealing with advisory group leadership there is an overall need for creation of a GMS Steering Committee. The GMS Steering Committee needs to be a focal point for coordinating GMS plan implementation, making recommendations on GMS issues, and creating appropriate forums for discussion and resolution of GMS issues. The implementation of actions and direction provided in this plan will need to be monitored, new opportunities considered, and input provided to land managers on future land use proposals in GMS (such as rights-of-way, oil and gas activity, county permits).

**Proposed Action:** The GMS advisory group will continue to consist of all persons, agencies, and institutions interested in GMS. To provide GMS advisory group coordination and leadership a GMS Steering Committee will be formed consisting of seven members, including a representative of: 1. City of Grand Junction; 2. Town of Palisade; 3. Mesa County; 4. Federal Lands (BLM/USFS); 5. Ranchers; 6. Adjacent Private Landowners; and 7. Recreational interests (motorized/non-motorized). Special committees may be developed by the advisory group to address special management issues (such as recreation, educational programs, maintenance agreements, private and adjacent land issues). The GMS Steering Committee goals will be to implement the GMS Management Plan, protect GMS participant concerns, seek GMS advisory group input on GMS issues, provide comments on GMS related proposals (to land owners and land managers), resolve issues through cooperation and

open communication, and pursue opportunities compatible with the GMS area.

GMS Steering Committee meetings will be held as needed and will be open to advisory group members and the public. The need to formalize rules of order will be minimized, and the use of voting to resolve issues will be avoided. A chairperson to conduct meetings will be selected from within the Steering Committee or advisory group. Notice of advisory group meetings will be sent to all interests on the GMS mailing list, and minutes of each meeting and any additional information materials will be mailed to any who express an interest.

Whenever the Steering Committee feels it is appropriate, the advisory group will review issues and provide advice, comments, or recommendations to land management or permitting agencies such as BLM, USFS, Mesa County Planning Department, Colorado Division of Wildlife, City governments, etc.

All GMS participants agree to coordinate activities and proposals in GMS with the advisory group for the purpose of seeking advisory group comments.

**2. SPECIAL MANAGEMENT CONSTRAINTS:** Many developments and activities on municipal and federal lands are governed by standard laws and policies that would be adhered to as a matter of standard operating and authorization procedures. These include issues such as threatened or endangered species, livestock management, fire control, leasing and permitting policy, cultural resources, air and water quality, hazardous materials, state health standards, county zoning, budget restrictions, administrative procedures, disabled accessibility requirements for facilities, planning and other policy decisions, etc.

Implementation of some proposals (particularly involving BLM lands) would require further internal agency analysis and compliance with regulatory requirements that could result in modification of proposals, or result in no action on proposals. Some agencies may want to develop special internal plans, policies, or designations to address GMS management coordination, budget, or permitting needs.

## **WATERSHED**

## **MANAGEMENT**

**1. MUNICIPAL WATERSHEDS:** Both Grand Junction and Palisade have major land ownership within GMS that was acquired primarily for watershed protection, water rights, and to construct municipal water supply facilities. It is recognized that future municipal watershed protection, management, and facility development actions will occur as needed to manage water use and protect water rights. Continuation of existing watershed management and future water related actions are recognized as a dominant land use on both the

higher elevation municipal watersheds and on the lower elevation facility development locations. Actions that will occur include reservoir maintenance, storage enhancement at existing or new locations (ie, new reservoirs), reservoir drawdown, irrigation of agricultural lands, transfer of agricultural water rights to municipal water rights, feasibility studies, maintenance of existing (and development of new) pipelines, canals, gauging stations, treatment facilities, etc.

Grand Junction, Palisade, BLM, and USFS lands above the approximately 7,500' elevation (oakbrush life zone and up) are sensitive municipal watershed water collection areas for the city of Grand Junction and town of Palisade. Both water quality (generally above 7,500') and water system facilities throughout GMS could be adversely affected by public use, or other land uses that disturb the soil surface or pollute the area. At present no public motorized vehicle use is permitted in the sensitive facility and water collection areas on BLM, USFS, or municipal lands, and other land uses (particularly livestock grazing) are managed to minimize surface disturbance and potential pollution.

**Proposed Action:** GMS participants recognize the importance of municipal watershed interests, and that GMS advisory group recommendations may not be completely acceptable to affected municipalities.

The existing closure to public motorized vehicle use will be continued in the sensitive municipal watershed areas (see Off-Highway-Vehicle Designation Map). Signing would be used where needed to inform visitors of watershed management concerns. Public uses such as hiking, horse riding, and mountain biking will be allowed but will be limited to certain trails in some areas (see Road and Trail Map). All surface uses will continue to be monitored and may be modified as needed to insure water quality and facility protection.

**2.GENERAL SOIL AND WATERSHED VALUES:** Lands generally below 7,500', particularly in the desert areas, have shallow erosion susceptible soils and relatively sparse vegetation. Soil and watershed stability need to be maintained or improved in order to continue to provide sustainable livestock forage, landscape aesthetic values, wildlife habitat, and to reduce contribution of salinity into the Colorado River system. Significant surface disturbance in new areas could occur in the future from increased vehicle use off of existing roads and trails.

**Proposed Action:** To reduce surface disturbance, vehicle use (both motorized and non-motorized) will be allowed only on designated roads and trails in most of GMS. An open area of approximately 500 acres for cross-country vehicle use will be considered for designation on BLM land on Whitewater Hill (see Off-Highway-Vehicle Designation Map). The GMS advisory group (or a subcommittee) may consider other locations for an Off-Highway-

Vehicle (OHV) use area instead of the Whitewater Hill area. Livestock use on public land will continue to be managed to maintain or improve watershed and soil conditions (as outlined in existing Allotment Management Plans; AMP's). Rights-of-way, oil & gas activity, and other land use authorizations throughout GMS will be planned to minimize adverse impact to soil and watershed conditions. Riparian zone and other watershed improvement projects would generally be welcome practices.

## **MINERALS MANAGEMENT**

**MINERALS ACTIVITY PERMITTING AND WITHDRAWAL:** Minerals management activity within GMS includes coal, oil & gas, gravel, clay, decorative and rip-rap rock, and locatable minerals (precious metals). Minerals exploration and development activity could cause surface disturbance that would adversely affect GMS concerns, and which existing practices and policies would allow for little or no coordination with the GMS advisory group.

**Proposed Action:** Mineral withdrawal or other appropriate restriction (such as a no surface occupancy lease stipulation) will be recommended (to BLM/USFS) at locations where recreational, wildlife, livestock, or municipal water facilities exist or are to be developed, or at other locations where special surface protection is deemed desirable. The intent of mineral withdrawals would be to protect capital investment in facilities, and to protect sensitive areas. The GMS advisory group will provide input to Mesa County Planning Department when minerals related Conditional Use Permits are being considered, and to BLM/USFS when minerals activity permitting or leasing decisions are being made.

## **WILDLIFE**

## **MANAGEMENT**

**DEER AND ELK HABITAT MANAGEMENT:** Generally, lands between 5,100'-6,400' provide critical winter range for deer and elk. Major investment in wildlife habitat improvement projects (chainings, reseeding, etc.) have been made in the Whitewater Creek area. Existing management of these areas includes restricting public motor vehicle use during sensitive winter-spring periods to reduce stress on deer and elk caused by human presence. Numerous roads and the remote nature of the winter range have made it difficult to restrict public motor vehicle access in the critical areas. Partial opening of the winter range area has resulted in vandalism of fences and gates.

**Proposed Action:** Install gates and signing at all road locations on the periphery of the critical winter range area. Insure that gates and signs are maintained, and that winter closure and spring opening is done in a coordinated fashion. Continue to manage for a plant species mix beneficial to wildlife, particularly deer and elk. Future habitat improvement projects are anticipated.

**PUBLIC USE AND DEVELOPMENT:** Deer and elk use and migration patterns within GMS, and other wildlife values may be adversely affected by public use on public lands and private developments on some private lands. Special hunting seasons may require temporary lifting of public vehicle access restrictions.

**Proposed Action:** Protection of wildlife habitat should be provided by the public motorized vehicle restriction on sensitive municipal watershed areas (Rapid Creek and elevations generally above 7,500'), the winter vehicle closures on critical winter habitat, and general vehicle use road and trail designations (see OHV section). Additional public trail use restrictions may be proposed to the GMS advisory group if conflicts with public use develop. Vehicle use restrictions can be temporarily lifted to accommodate special hunting seasons set by CDOW.

It is beyond the scope of this plan to address developments on private lands. GMS advisory group comments on proposed developments on private land would be coordinated with Mesa County Planning Department.

**OTHER WILDLIFE HABITAT:** Nongame and other wildlife besides deer and elk are important natural resources within GMS, and provide valuable aesthetic and recreational opportunities. Wildlife habitat generally benefits from maintenance of natural conditions and reduction in human influence.

**Proposed Action:** General management goals in GMS include maintenance, protection, and when possible, improvement of natural ecological and landscape conditions. Public and other land uses would also be coordinated to minimize adverse affects on natural resources, including wildlife. Habitat improvement projects and "Watchable Wildlife" programs would be welcome activities in GMS.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL/OUTDOOR EDUCATION**

**ENVIRONMENTAL/OUTDOOR EDUCATION:** Mesa County School District 51, Mesa College, and the Museum of Western Colorado have all expressed an interest in conducting environmental and outdoor education activities in GMS. GMS is conducive to these activities due to close proximity to Grand Junction, wide variety in life zones and habitats, and generally natural ecological and landscape character. The City of Grand Junction ranch facility on Whitewater Creek could provide a base for some facility related educational and scientific activities. Three specific areas have unique botanical study values; the BLM Cryptantha elata study site near Whitewater Hill, BLM land on the south side of Horse Mountain, and a wetland area near Cliff Lake.

**Proposed Action:** Educational and scientific activities would generally be welcome in GMS. Development of public access to GMS would benefit educational access needs. Some locations on the



Somerville Ranch (City of Grand Junction) would be identified for educational use in coordination with the ranch operator. Additional opportunities exist to consider creation of scientific research programs and related facilities and activities.

The three botanically unique areas listed above exist due to current land use and management practices that would be continued; The Cryptantha elata study site and the wetland near Cliff lake have no livestock grazing, and the south side of Horse Mountain has very limited livestock grazing. Public motor vehicle use is not permitted in any of these areas.

## **LIVESTOCK**

## **MANAGEMENT**

**LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT:** The ranching interests in GMS use public and private lands on an integrated basis. These ranchers are concerned with long term access to public lands for grazing purposes, with range condition, and with conflicts that occur as a result of public use.

**Proposed Action:** The City of Grand Junction controls grazing activities on City land and will continue to monitor livestock use to determine if watershed stability or pollution become management issues. Palisade does not allow livestock grazing on town watershed lands, and livestock use is not permitted on BLM lands immediately uphill of the Palisade watershed (below the rim of the Grand Mesa). BLM/USFS will continue to administer livestock grazing leases/permits on federal lands in accordance with Allotment Management Plans (AMP's) and federal regulations. The USFS land in the Whitewater Creek basin (below the rim of the Grand Mesa) has been closed to livestock grazing since 1979 to protect fragile soils and watershed values. This closure will remain in effect.

It is the general policy of GMS participants that well managed livestock use is appropriate in most of the GMS area. Conflicts between livestock and public use generally involve inappropriate or illegal public activity (gates left open, harassment, vandalism of facilities, shooting at targets or at livestock, dumping trash hazardous to livestock). To reduce these conflicts a number of public use management actions are planned (see Recreation/Access).

## **VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**LANDSCAPE VALUES:** Much of the GMS landscape is scenic, highly visible, and culturally important as an aesthetic resource related to community identity. The massive, mile high rise of the slope of the Grand Mesa dominates the skyline east of Grand Junction, and any change to the landscape would be noticeable and of concern. Most of GMS that is not highly visible from outside is important to visitors once they enter and are traveling through the area. Some unnatural visual intrusions exist (ie: chainings,

roads, power lines) but there is an overall sense of naturalness if not wildness in the landscape. The brooding primordial presence of the Grand Mesa rising above the Grand Valley provides both contrast and opportunity to the adjacent Grand Junction urban area, and regularly reminds residents that we live in a special place.

Some BLM lands in GMS are currently classified under the BLM Visual Resource Management (VRM) system. The cliff faces near Palisade are VRM Class II (retain existing landscape character), while the remainder of the face of the Grand Mesa is VRM Class III (partially retain existing landscape character).

Over the long term one of the greatest landscape changes that would occur without GMS would probably be subdivision and residential development of much of the area.

**Proposed Action:** The GMS advisory group would review and make recommendations concerning any land use proposal affecting GMS, and may propose changes in visual resource management standards on lands within GMS. There would be a high degree of concern for actions that would detract from the natural landscape character, particularly on the west facing slope and foothills of the Grand Mesa. The overall public vision of GMS as a scenic open space with a few necessary visual intrusions (such as power lines, pipelines, fences, roads) would be continued.

One of the proposed actions necessary to insure long term visual resource protection is to reclassify approximately 10 square miles of BLM land (between Horse Mountain and Whitewater Hill) from a disposal classification to a retention classification. Another key proposed action is to keep most of Grand Junction's Somerville Ranch in a natural state (see Land Ownership Adjustments). Although this plan has no authority over private lands in GMS, there would be opportunities for willing landowners to either sell vacant lands, exchange for other BLM or private lands, or to put lands into a conservation type of trust. Management of GMS as a scenic "open space" may also provide some benefits to adjacent landowners and inholders.

## **OFF-HIGHWAY-VEHICLE (OHV) MANAGEMENT**

**PUBLIC OHV USE AND SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS:** GMS is an important OHV use area for the Grand Junction region. Probably over half the public use in GMS involves some form of OHV activity. However, there is concern that GMS should not be promoted as a special or feature OHV riding area. Heavy levels of OHV use would displace other GMS users and would lead to a more difficult trail management situation. Existing levels of OHV use on existing roads and trails is considered appropriate for this area. The existing Colorado OHV registration and permitting program is

effective in promoting safe and responsible OHV use, and is an important funding source for trailhead development.

There is a serious concern that cross-county OHV use not occur in most of GMS. There is also a community need and public land opportunity to provide a cross country OHV play area of about 500 acres on BLM land near Whitewater, Colorado, and to reduce the highway visibility of the current OHV use in that area. The existing OHV closures in the critical municipal watershed areas (generally 7,500' elevation and up), and the seasonal restrictions in the critical big game winter range areas should be continued.

Legal public access to GMS is very restricted, and any development of access should consider OHV needs. Information concerning OHV opportunities and restrictions in GMS needs to be clearly stated at trailheads and in any maps or informational brochures for the area.

**Proposed Action:** The existing restrictions on OHV use will be maintained (sensitive municipal watershed on BLM, USFS, Grand Junction, and Palisade lands; and critical big game winter range areas, which includes most of the Whitewater grazing allotment). Municipal and private landowners will continue to decide what type of public OHV use may occur on their property, if any. An area of about 500 acres on Whitewater Hill will be considered for designation as a cross country OHV use area (Whitewater Hill OHV Area), with some reduction in the current OHV use area to reduce visibility from Highway 50. Other alternative OHV areas may also be considered by the GMS advisory group. The boundaries of the Whitewater Hill OHV Area, or any alternative OHV use area, would be well defined on the ground. In the remainder of GMS OHV use will be limited to designated roads and trails (as shown on GMS Road and Trail Map) that will be identified as needed in maps and with signing. Standard BLM OHV signing will be used throughout GMS, except on USFS land where USFS signing will continue to be used.

Information concerning OHV opportunities and restrictions will be made available at trail heads and in GMS informational materials. General promotion of OHV riding opportunities in GMS will focus on the needs of local users. Development or identification of new OHV routes will be considered by the GMS advisory group on a case by case basis. The primary OHV access points/trailheads planned for development (if access is acquired) include Horse Mountain, 34 Road on Orchard Mesa, Whitewater Hill OHV Area, and North Fork Kannah Creek.

## **RECREATION (PUBLIC USE) MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC ACCESS**

**RECREATION/PUBLIC USE:** Most of GMS is presently used as an open space recreation area with low to moderate levels of dispersed public use. There is a general lack of information about recreational opportunities in GMS, or the public access situation.

Much of GMS is seen as vacant land where there is no particular concern about public uses. This has led to some problem situations involving trash dumping, unsafe target shooting,

vandalism, trespass, cross-country vehicle use, etc. It has also led to the false assumption that most of GMS is and will remain publicly accessible public land. Development of the American Discovery Trail presently involves routing through GMS in the Whitewater Creek area, and tying into the Colorado State Parks (Riverfront) trail system along the Colorado River.

**Proposed Action:** One of the primary public use management actions is to develop a GMS Map/Information Brochure that covers both recreational opportunities and restrictions, and provides interpretative information on the resources and features of GMS.

Recreational facilities that would be developed if access is acquired include GMS entrance trailheads (gravel parking, signing, off loading ramp, toilets as needed) at Horse Mountain, 34 Road, Whitewater Hill OHV Area, North Fork Kannah Creek, and possibly near Palisade if a Rapid/Cottonwood Creek access is needed. There are no "recreation site" type of facilities planned in the interior of GMS, with the exception of signing (informational, directional, OHV).

All public roads and trails in GMS would be open to horse and mountain bike use unless specifically prohibited. There are no roads or trails proposed for closure to horse or mountain bike use at this time. Routing and use of the American Discovery Trail would be coordinated with GMS interests.

On an overall basis GMS would be managed to provide a generally natural undeveloped "greenbelt" from Whitewater Hill to Powderhorn Ski Area. This large open space adjacent to Grand Junction should continue to provide important outdoor recreation opportunities and scenic values with a long term perspective.

The "vacant land" attitude that many users have toward GMS needs to be changed to a special management area attitude where users have both ownership and responsibility to insure continued opportunity. Much of the necessary public interest is evidenced in public interest group participation in the GMS MOU, input provided for this management plan, active attendance at GMS related meetings, and commitments to "adopt" development and maintenance workloads.

The following regulations and regulatory types of action are necessary to manage public use on the publicly accessible lands in GMS:

- 1) Install a cattleguard, fence walkover, and/or a horse rider access gate at all locations where a road or trail crosses a fence line. A "please close gate" sign will also be installed at all gates.

- 2) At all GMS entrance or trail head areas there will be information on the signing to sensitize visitors to livestock management concerns, including the illegal nature of harassment

and vandalism, and the appropriate action to take in potential harassment situations (eg: encountering livestock on a narrow trail, "abandoned" calves, activity around watering areas, target shooting).

3) Target shooting would be prohibited on public land within one mile of all trailhead areas, and at the 500 acre Whitewater Hill OHV Area (or alternative OHV area).

4) BLM lands immediately east of the Orchard Mesa Gun Club Shooting Range would be signed to warn visitors of potential safety hazards in the area.

5) It is anticipated that trash dumping and other illegal activities will be greatly reduced through signing, identification of GMS as a special public use area, the self policing that community "ownership" in GMS will provide, and follow up with law enforcement actions when necessary. The trash which presently exists on municipal and federal lands in GMS would be removed during special public work days and/or as prison crew projects. Trash on private lands within GMS could also be removed, and "no dumping" signing installed based on landowner interest in GMS.

6) Camping would be prohibited on BLM land at North Fork Kannah Creek trailhead in order to protect water quality (a municipal water storage intake exists immediately downstream). Other no-camping areas may be designated based on proximity to municipal water intake facilities (ie, Rapid Creek area).

7) BLM will provide regular Ranger patrols through GMS to provide a better law enforcement presence, and would generally be responsible for public land law enforcement actions in the intermingled BLM/private land ownership areas. USFS would remain the lead on USFS lands. The Mesa County Sheriff would remain responsible for search and rescue, and continue to have lead law enforcement responsibility on the entire area.

**PUBLIC ACCESS:** Public accessibility is the key factor in providing for and managing public use in GMS. Public access is generally assumed but does not legally exist at three public access points into GMS (Horse Mountain, 34 Road on Orchard Mesa, and into GMS from Whitewater Hill area). There is legal public access only at North Fork Kannah Creek, and to USFS land off the Lands End Road.

The town of Palisade presently allows walking and horse riding public access (no motorized or mountain bike vehicle use) across Palisade land in the Rapid/Cottonwood Creek area, however, no suitable trailhead location has been identified at the lower end.

Palisade is concerned that increased public use could result in vandalism of Palisade municipal water facilities and pollution of the watershed area. Grand Junction has similar concerns and has restricted public access on most of their land in GMS. Grand Junction is interested in allowing controlled public use in some areas. Trespass on private lands is relatively common in some GMS areas. There is a willingness with some landowners to allow for managed and controlled public use on specified trails on a limited basis.

**Proposed Action:** Acquire legal public access from willing landowners at Horse Mountain, 34 Road on Orchard Mesa, and at Whitewater Hill (through easement, land acquisition, land exchange, or special agreement; see also Land Ownership Adjustments) At these locations, and at the North Fork Kannah Creek access, develop a trailhead facility with parking and informational signing (see GMS Road and Trail Map).

In the remainder of GMS work with willing landowners to achieve reasonable public access through easements, land acquisitions, land exchanges, or other special agreements (including temporary or trial period agreements). Some areas that have high public interest value include: 1) Identifying non-motorized trail routes through BLM and Palisade land in the Rapid/Cottonwood Creek area to connect with the, Miller (Swan), and Whitewater Basin trail system (may require new trailhead development near Palisade); 2) Identify a non-motorized trail on top of the Grand Mesa to link the USFS Lands End Visitor Center with the Miller (Swan) trail; 3) Identify a motorized trail route from the Whitewater Hill OHV area to the Lands End Road that can be used by OHV's to access the motor vehicle trail system on the Grand Mesa and a planned OHV trail to Delta.

#### **LAND OWNERSHIP ADJUSTMENTS**

**POTENTIAL LAND EXCHANGES, ACQUISITIONS, EASEMENTS, AND LAND USE COMMITMENTS:** The land ownership pattern within GMS involves a scattered mix of BLM, USFS, Grand Junction, Palisade, and other private lands. For future management purposes it may be more efficient to investigate the opportunity to either exchange ownership in some lands, obtain conservation/scenic easements, or acquire public ownership or access easements on some of the private lands from willing landowners and municipalities.

General GMS goals would be difficult to achieve if BLM were to sell its over 10 square miles of "disposal" lands, or if Grand Junction (17 square miles) or Palisade (4 square miles) disposed of their lands to private development interests. The long term integrity of GMS as a scenic and recreational open space would be better insured with some commitment of municipal lands to special, GMS related management, in conjunction with BLM and USFS commitments.

Some significant land exchange/acquisition/easement opportunities exist between BLM and the cities of Grand Junction and Palisade that could put municipal water facility ownership in municipal hands, public use areas and easements in BLM (or other public) ownership, and protect scenic, wildlife, and cultural resource values for the long term. There are also some private landowners who have expressed an interest in similar land ownership changes.

Government imposed land use restrictions or forced acquisitions (condemnation) of private lands would be significant issues and

are not acceptable options for consideration in this plan.

**Proposed Action:** Consider the private, municipal, and BLM lands identified on the Land Ownership Adjustment/Easement Map to be suitable for acquisition, exchange, or some form of public use or resource protection easement. The major opportunities involve putting municipal facilities that are presently on BLM land into municipal ownership (with conservation and public access covenants), and putting some municipal lands into public ownership (BLM or USFS). This could be done through exchange, through federal purchase with Land and Water Conservation Funds, or State ownership through Colorado Lottery Fund purchase. Continuation of Palisade's land use policy (watershed protection and maintaining municipal ownership) would continue to provide appropriate protection of GMS values. GMS related land exchanges may also be considered.

The City of Grand Junction agrees to adopt the GMS Management Plan as a framework and land use policy to be integrated with management of the Somerville Ranch lands. On the Somerville Ranch lands that are important to GMS, Grand Junction will maintain municipal ownership, enter into GMS related land exchanges, or offer these land for sale to BLM (Land and Water Conservation Funds) or Colorado (Colorado Lottery Funds). It is also possible that some of the scattered parcels of the Somerville Ranch lands are not important to GMS and could be disposed of. A combination of any or all four types of actions could be viable.

Approximately 10 square miles of BLM "disposal lands" in GMS would be reclassified for retention in BLM ownership, or suitable for land exchanges that would benefit GMS.

Private lands within or adjacent to GMS would also be considered suitable for public acquisition, exchange, or access/conservation easement with willing landowners if these types of actions would better insure achieving the long term management goals for GMS. These private land opportunities would generally involve BLM or State real estate actions.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Some of the proposed implementation actions would require further planning and review by the GMS advisory group, which will make recommendations as needed. The GMS management plan may be added to or amended at any time by the GMS advisory group. Participants in the GMS advisory group agree that any participant or Steering Committee member may modify or withdraw their support for GMS involvement at any time with written notice, but will attempt to give at least 30 days advance notice. Some actions proposed in this plan would involve real estate actions and special agreements that would be binding or involve more detailed terms and

conditions.

There are some specific actions proposed in this management plan for which locations, funding, responsible parties, and target dates can be set. The implementation plan for these more specific proposed actions is outlined below:

**1. Continue GMS Advisory Group and form GMS Steering Committee:**

The GMS advisory group will continue to consist of any interested persons, interest group, land user, institution, or government agency. A seven member Steering Committee will be formed to deal with GMS coordination needs (GMS plan implementation, GMS advisory group meetings, providing review and comments on GMS issues, etc).

The Steering Committee will consist of one representative from the City of Grand Junction, Town of Palisade, Mesa County, and Federal Government (BLM/USFS). These government entities will make their own selection for Steering Committee representative. The representatives for Ranchers, Adjacent Private Landowners, and Recreational interests (motorized and non-motorized) will be made from within the GMS participants.

Selection of Steering Committee members will occur during the GMS draft plan review phase so that a leadership group is in place when the GMS plan is finalized. Notice will be made to all GMS participants concerning Steering Committee selection meetings. When formed, the Steering Committee will determine the need and set dates for future GMS public meetings. The City of Grand Junction will continue to be the lead on maintaining the GMS participant mailing list. Both BLM and Grand Junction will continue to cooperate as coordinators of public inquires and interest in GMS. All of the government participants can provide meeting space as needed.

**2. Minerals Activity, Permitting and Withdrawals:** No specific changes have been proposed in the GMS plan, however, any future proposed changes in administration of federal mineral resources in GMS will be made to BLM/USFS for consideration in their land use planning or permit administration process.

Some minerals permitting procedures already include a public comment period that would allow for GMS interest input concerning proposed minerals actions.

**3. Educational Use Of Somerville Ranch:** Outdoor and environmental education programs could be conducted on Somerville Ranch (City of Grand Junction) property with appropriate coordination with existing ranch operators. The need for special facilities may be considered in the future based on need and ranch operation constraints.

**4. Off-Highway-Vehicle Management:** There are two types of OHV management actions; special designations and facilities (see Road and Trail Map and OHV Designation Map). Current OHV designations on federal lands would remain in place, with the following



exceptions.

Some special OHV designation changes will need to be made on BLM land through the BLM OHV designation process: The desert area between Horse Mountain and Whitewater Hill would become an area where public motorized vehicle use would be limited to designated roads and trails (only roads and trails that are signed would be open to public vehicle use). An approximately 500 acre area for cross-country OHV use would also be designated at Whitewater Hill or an alternative area. Any alternative OHV use area recommendations will need to be made by the GMS advisory group, which may appoint a special committee to address OHV issues. The OHV designation process will be included in a BLM Plan Amendment to cover GMS proposed actions.

Facilities needed to implement OHV designations include signs and gates. Some trail markers would also be used to identify an OHV route through GMS to the Lands End Road for access to the USFS Grand Mesa OHV trail system, and the planned trail to Delta. Gates needed for the existing winter closure of critical big game winter range have already been purchased and are being installed by BLM/DOW. Estimated sign and gate needs include:

|  |          |      |
|--|----------|------|
| Seven OHV entrance signs (two spare) at                    | \$300.00 | each |
| \$2,100.00   |          |      |
| 70 road & trail markers (carsonite) at                     | \$12.00  | each |
| \$840.00   |          |      |
| 100 OHV Area boundary signs at                             | \$12.00  | each |
| \$1,200.00   |          |      |
| One gate at USFS/Somerville Ranch boundary on Grand Mesa   |          |      |
| \$2,000.00   |          |      |
| One mile of fence with gate on Whitewater Hill (dragstrip) |          |      |
| \$3,000.00   |          |      |
| TOTAL  |          |      |
| \$9,140.00   |          |      |

All signing would be compatible with standard BLM OHV signing (except on USFS lands where USFS signing would continue to be used). Sign and gate purchase would be funded by the Colorado State Trails Fund. Local organized OHV interests and other groups have agreed to install and maintain OHV signing and fencing. Grand Junction would install the gate at the USFS/Somerville Ranch boundary on the Grand Mesa. Target date for sign and gate completion September, 1994.

**5. GMS Brochure:** A GMS informational and interpretive trail map/brochure will be developed and published. Anticipated size approximately 9"x20", two color ink on recycled paper, 10,000 at \$0.17 each, total \$1,700.00. City of Grand Junction and BLM would share lead on brochure development, in coordination with GMS advisory group, target date for completion September, 1994. Colorado State Trails Fund would fund printing. Due to potential for future changes a larger number of brochures should not be printed at this time.

**6. Trailhead Development:** Some GMS trailhead and entrance areas can be developed immediately (listed below), and several other GMS trailhead and entrance areas would be developed if the necessary public access, ownership, or special agreements are acquired. The 34 Road and Horse Mountain trailhead developments would each involve entrance signing, a 100'x200' graveled parking area, a loading ramp, and about one mile of access road development or improvement. Development at the Whitewater Hill OHV Area (if an alternative site is not identified) would involve entrance signing, a 100'x200' graveled parking area, a loading ramp, 1,200' of graveled and graded road to access Highway 141, and a double vault toilet.

Developments that can occur without further access/land acquisition work:

|  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Whitewater Hill OHV Area entrance signing (on BLM) |                                   |
| \$400.00   |                                   |
| "  | " 100'x200' graveled parking area |
| \$10,000.00  |                                   |
| "  | " loading ramp                    |
| \$200.00   |                                   |
| "  | " 1,200' graveled road            |
| \$30,000.00  |                                   |
| "  | " Double vault toilet             |
| \$25,000.00  |                                   |
| North Fork Kannah Creek entrance sign (on BLM)     |                                   |
| \$400.00   |                                   |
| TOTAL  |                                   |
| \$66,000.00  |                                   |

Future development costs for the Horse Mountain and 34 Road trailhead areas would run about \$35,000 each, with most of the cost being in road development or improvement. Completion of the proposed land exchange with the Town of Palisade would provide the needed Horse Mountain access. Agreement with the City of Grand Junction to integrate GMS planning with Somerville Ranch property would provide the needed 34 Road access. The funding source for all these projects would be the Colorado State Trails Fund. BLM would be involved in design and either construction or contract administration on facilities developed on BLM land. Target date for completion of developments that can be accomplished without further access/acquisition work is September, 1994 for Whitewater Hill (or alternative) OHV Area, and North Fork Kannah Creek entrance sign. The Horse Mountain and 34 Road developments may also be able to be accomplished by September, 1994 if necessary land use actions and agreements can be worked out with Palisade and Grand Junction.

Developments needing additional acquisition/agreement work:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Horse Mountain access road and trailhead |  |
| \$35,000.00                              |  |
| 34 Road access road and trailhead        |  |

\$35,000.00  
TOTAL  
\$70,000.00

**7. Road and Trail Fence Crossings:** All road and trail fence crossings will have a walkover, walk through, cattleguard, and/or special gate. The intent is to provide convenient recreational access through fences (via walking, horse, mountain bike, or OHV, as appropriate), while maintaining security for livestock operations. There are about four fence walkovers or walkthroughs, and four narrow (horse) gates presently needed. There will be additional needs for about eight fence crossings if trail access arrangements can be made in the Rapid/Cottonwood Creek area.

Estimated cost of four walkover/walkthroughs at \$200.00 each  
\$800.00  
Estimated cost of four narrow (horse) gates at \$150.00 each  
\$600.00  
TOTAL  
\$1,400.00

Funding source would be State Trails Fund, and target date for completion September, 1994. GMS service groups and/or BLM prison crew would do work depending on location.

**8. Trash Cleanup:** Trash cleanups will be conducted on an as needed basis by Service Groups and BLM coordinated Prison Crews. Sites needing cleanup should be reported to BLM for determination of land ownership and responsibilities. Landowners are responsible for trash cleanup on their lands, however BLM will assist in coordination of potential cleanups by being a clearinghouse for service groups interested in cleanup projects. Much of the trash dumping in GMS involves intermingled private and public lands, so coordinated cleanups are appropriate with landowner cooperation.

**9. Law Enforcement:** BLM will help provide a better law enforcement presence in GMS through regular BLM Ranger patrols in the area. The Mesa County Sheriff would maintain lead law enforcement responsibility for the entire area. GMS users will be made aware (via signs and brochures) that this is a special management area and that much of the area could be closed to public use if inappropriate activities occur (ie, trash dumping, livestock harassment, vehicle use off of trails, vandalism, etc.). Without an active sense of public ownership in the area, law enforcement presence alone will be insufficient to control unauthorized uses.

**10. Acquisition Of Public Access and Land Ownership Adjustment:** Key factors needed to achieve the GMS "vision" involve insuring appropriate public access to the area and instituting a long term "greenbelt" land use commitment on the core public and municipal lands in the area. Proposed land ownership changes, access acquisition, and land use commitments would often be complimentary

in GMS. The proposed actions which would achieve these goals include:

**A.** Continuation of existing land management emphasis on Somerville Ranch lands by the City of Grand Junction would provide the primary land use values needed to effect basic GMS goals, however there is presently no City policy to do so. Through the GMS management plan the City of Grand Junction will agree to integrate GMS planning with Somerville Ranch management, consider GMS advisory group comments in land use decision, and continue with current management emphasis of watershed protection and watershed facilities management.

The City of Grand Junction may consider selling or exchanging portions of the Somerville Ranch for GMS management, with potential for real estate actions with BLM or the state of Colorado (Go-Colorado open space funds). It is also possible that some of the scattered parcels of the Somerville Ranch are not important to GMS and could be disposed of. A combination of land sales, land exchanges, and retention in City ownership may be a viable option. Under all options it is recognized that Grand Junction would need to maintain control of water rights and watershed related land and facilities.

**B.** Approximately 10 square miles of BLM land presently identified for disposal would be changed to a retention category, or considered for exchanges that would benefit GMS interests. These lands are intermingled with Somerville Ranch lands and some other private lands. BLM will consider these changes in BLM land classification in a GMS related Land Use Plan Amendment scheduled for processing during fall, 1993.

**C.** Continuation of present Palisade management policies on Palisade lands would achieve basic GMS goals to protect watershed, wildlife, and scenic values. Through GMS involvement Palisade will agree to consider GMS values in land use decisions affecting Palisade lands, and provide comment on proposed actions on adjacent lands that may affect Palisade interests.

Additional provisions for limited public access through Palisade and other lands (Horse Mountain area) could be achieved through a proposed land exchange or sale involving BLM and Palisade lands. Public access through Palisade lands is critical to complete the trail access network involving Rapid Creek, Cottonwood Creek, The Miller (Swan) trail to top of Grand Mesa, and Whitewater Creek trails.

Private lands at Horse Mountain are needed to provide public access (proposed Horse Mountain trailhead), protect scenic values, and provide big game winter range protection. A proposed land exchange to achieve these goals involves (see GMS Land Ownership Adjustment/Easement Map):

1. Transferring ownership of 160-400 acres of BLM land at Cabin

Reservoir to Palisade.

2. Transferring ownership of up to 720 acres of BLM land in the Whitewater Creek area to Palisade (to be used by Palisade to trade for Grand Junction lands at Kruzen Springs that Palisade obtains water from).

3. BLM acquisition of approximately 15 miles of public easement (non-motorized) through Palisade land from Palisade (also involves converting exclusive Palisade use rights-of-way on BLM to non-motorized public use).

4. BLM acquisition of approximately 640 acres of private land by Horse Mountain. Palisade may be able to purchase the Horse Mountain property for use in this exchange.

Another option is for BLM to dispose of 160-400 acres of BLM lands at Cabin Reservoir to Palisade, in exchange for cash (or other lands BLM needs), and approximately 15 miles of public easement (non-motorized) through Palisade land. Private land at Horse Mountain could still be identified for acquisition (from a willing seller), with funding from either Land & Water Conservation Funds (BLM), or Go-Colorado Lottery Funds (State Land Trust).

Under all options public access would be maintained through any BLM land disposed of, and conservation easements (to BLM) would be agreed to by the municipalities involved to protect wildlife, scenic, and cultural resources.

Upon signing of the GMS Management Plan BLM will consider these proposed land ownership changes and easement acquisitions in a Land Use Plan Amendment scheduled for processing during fall, 1993.

**D.** Acquire other private lands and public easements relating to GMS from willing sellers (using BLM, state of Colorado, or other sources), or consider potential land/easement exchanges that could benefit GMS interests. Several owners of small (40-80 acre) isolated tracts within GMS have indicated a willingness to dispose of their lands for GMS purposes. The GMS advisory group would make recommendations concerning these potential actions.

**E.** No specific trail would be developed from the USFS Lands End Visitor Center to the top of the Miller (Swan) trail, however the "trail-less" hiking route along the western edge of the Grand Mesa would be identified in the GMS brochure. A defined trail may be developed in the future based on USFS concerns and user needs.

**11. Maintenance:** Maintenance and development commitments would be sought from GMS participants and service groups interested in adopting these workloads.

**12. BLM Land Use Plan Amendment:** Several key decisions proposed on BLM land would require amendment of the current Grand Junction Resource Area Resource Management Plan, 1987 (BLM Land Use Plan).

The Plan Amendment process would take a minimum of three months,

and is scheduled for completion in fall, 1993. The Plan Amendment process requires development of an Environmental Analysis, public meetings, public comment periods, Federal Register Notices, and formal review by many entities. GMS proposals could be approved for action, modified, or denied through this process. The actions to be considered in the Land Use Plan Amendment would include:

A. OHV designations; Public motorized vehicle use limited to designated roads and trails, and designation of a 500 acre OHV intensive use area.

B. Reclassifying about 10 square miles of BLM land from "disposal" to "retention, or for use in land exchanges that benefit GMS goals".

C. Identify the Horse Mountain and other scattered private lands in GMS as suitable for acquisition from willing landowners.

D. Identify BLM land available for exchange or sale to benefit GMS goals, particularly BLM land on which municipal water facilities presently exist such as Cabin Reservoir, Hallenbeck Reservoir, Juniata Reservoir, various pipelines and canals, etc.

E. Possible special designation status for GMS area.

Some of the other proposed actions on BLM would not require a Land Use Plan Amendment but would involve site specific environmental analysis. These include actions such as designating no-shooting areas (trailheads), designating no-camping areas (North Fork Kannah Creek and other municipal water intakes), trailhead facilities development, access acquisition, and fence crossings, etc.

BLM will be conducting Environmental Site Inventories within GMS to provide ecological data on the area that may be useful in future decision making and in providing baseline ecological data to determine condition and trends.