

Over the River™ Project

Mitigation Measures

November 2011

The adopted mitigation measures are the result of a significant cooperative effort between the BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado State Patrol, State Historic Preservation Office and Chaffee and Fremont counties. As a result, the project will provide substantial economic benefit to Colorado as well as additional recreational opportunities, while protecting and preserving the natural and human resources of Bighorn Sheep Canyon. The project is estimated to generate between 300,000 and 400,000 visitors during the two week display period. The economic output of the project is estimated to generate more than \$121 million in expenditures, visitation, sales taxes and local business impacts.

- *Bighorn Sheep:* The BLM worked closely with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to analyze the potential impacts to wildlife, including bighorn sheep. The BLM incorporated CPW-specific mitigation measures addressing key concerns regarding bighorn sheep. One mitigation measure is a seasonal restriction from April 15 to June 30 for bighorn sheep lambing on all project activities on the railroad side (north) of the Arkansas River. An OTR Corp funded habitat improvement project and water developments will allow sheep to access to water sources and suitable habitat currently unavailable to the sheep. Additionally, OTR Corp will fund a Bighorn Sheep Adaptive Management Fund for potential future mitigation work to prevent or offset impacts documented by an OTR Corp funded monitoring program.
- *Angling:* Angling opportunities will be significantly impacted in the immediate area of the project in the short term. Angling in the rest of the canyon will not be significantly disrupted.
- *Traffic:* The Colorado Department of Transportation highway construction rules stipulate that at least one lane of traffic on U.S. Hwy. 50 must remain open at all times during the project period and that lane closures are limited to one every 10 miles. Additionally, lane closures are not permitted on weekends or holidays, and not between Memorial Day and Labor Day.
- *Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Areas:* The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area and all developed recreation sites would remain open for recreational access during exhibition.
- *Boating:* The OTR Corp. will develop a temporary boat rationing system for the exhibition to be approved by CPW. The selected alternative includes an additional rafting period for afternoons.
- *Avian species:* The OTR Corp. and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reached agreement on a bird conservation plan to mitigate impacts to migratory birds and eagles. The conservation plan is incorporated into the mitigation measures. Mitigation measures include marking all bare cables with avian diverters before, during and after the exhibition period.

A complete list of mitigation measure is available at:
www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/rgfo/planning/otr.html

