

## Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area Secures 400 Additional Acres

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*Mesa County, CO* – A 400-acre in-holding along the Gunnison River in the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area is now in public hands, Western Rivers Conservancy and the Bureau of Land Management announced today.

The acquisition secures the conservation of 400 acres of fish and wildlife habitat along the Gunnison River that was proposed for gravel mining and real estate development.



The newly secured property is located along the Gunnison River near the entrance of the NCA. The property includes habitat for the federally threatened Colorado hookless cactus, Bald Eagles, northern leopard frogs and a wide variety of other plants and wildlife. The lower Gunnison River is also critical habitat for endangered Colorado River Basin fish such as the Colorado River Pikeminnow.

“The Gunnison River is an important river for this region, both as a treasure to the community and as a sanctuary for threatened and sensitive species. We are extremely pleased to be working with the BLM to protect these lands and grow the National Conservation Area” said Director of the Interior West, Willis Yarberry, Western Rivers Conservancy.

“In addition to the important habitat that’s protected, this acquisition increases public recreation opportunity along the Gunnison River,” said Katie Stevens, NCA manager. She explained that land acquisition such as this is complex and it takes many engaged partners to make the

projects work. According to Stevens, the project was successful due to the hard work of Western Rivers and the patience of private landowners.

“This is a place where family and friends can reconnect with the natural world and each other, and experience a landscape still largely untouched by modern development” said Yarberry.

The NCA was designated as part of the Omnibus Public Lands Act of 2009 and includes 209,610 acres of significant ecological and cultural resources including ancient fossil bed, red rock canyons and desert flora and fauna. Western Rivers Conservancy began securing portions of land in this region in 2010. Among the land secured was a 214-acre inholding purchase within the Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area, just upstream from the NCA. That property is also managed by the BLM.

Colorado Senators Michael Bennet and Mark Udall and Congressman Scott Tipton played a role in securing \$3.5 million in appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for Gunnison River properties. With funding from the LWCF, Western Rivers Conservancy is conveying Gunnison River lands to the BLM to protect sensitive fish and wildlife habitat as well as create a public resource for hikers, floaters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts.

Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect outstanding river ecosystems in the western United States. WRC acquires land to conserve critical habitat, provide public access for compatible use and enjoyment, and cooperate with other agencies and organizations to secure the health of whole ecosystems. [www.westernrivers.org](http://www.westernrivers.org)