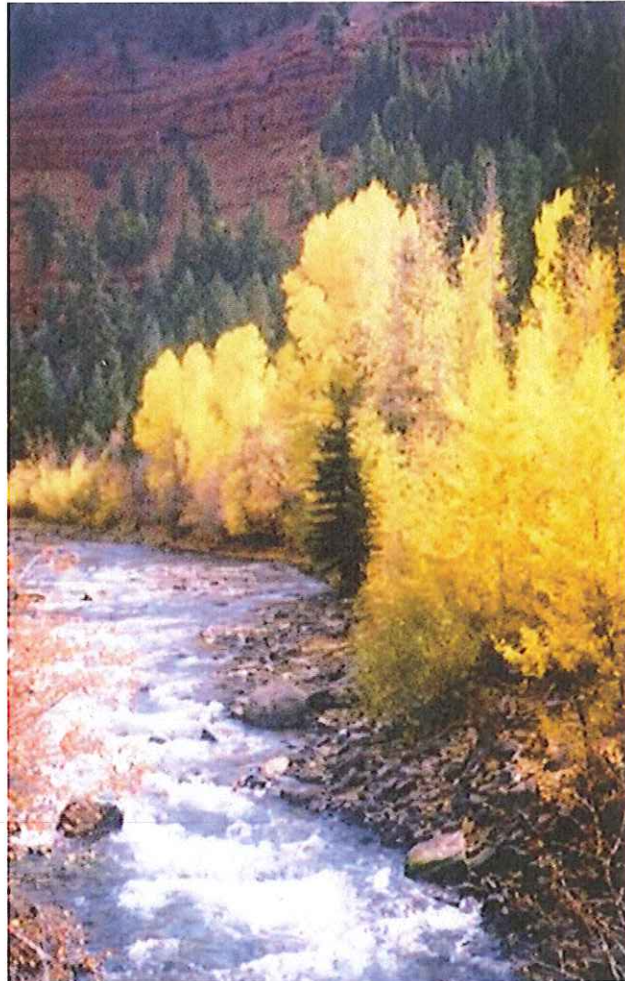


Draft Evaluation of
Proposed and Existing
**AREAS OF CRITICAL
ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**

for the
**Uncompahgre
Planning Area**

JUNE 2010



**Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 South Townsend Avenue
Montrose, Colorado 81401**

ACEC IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE EVALUATIONS

10. SAN MIGUEL RIVER ACEC

Status: Existing

General Location: San Miguel River and adjacent lands, from approximately Placerville, CO to Horsefly Creek, including Saltado Creek and Beaver Creek.

Acreage: 22,841

Significance: The ACEC preserves the high quality riparian vegetation resources, habitat for many bird species, and the scenic value of the corridor.

Description: The San Miguel River ACEC was designated through amendment of the San Miguel RMP in 1993. It protects high quality native riparian communities that are mainly due to the undammed San Miguel River and its intact hydrology. Such communities are becoming increasingly rare in Colorado.

The ACEC has been designated as an Important Bird Area by Audubon Society. This site represents the finest protected Southwest Canyon Riparian Habitat (SWCR) in the United States (with the exception of Arizona's San Pedro SWCR), and it provides breeding sites for a wide variety of species and primary migratory routes for nearly all of the West's songbirds. More than 300 bird species have been observed at the site. The expanding black phoebe population, which has been moving up the San Miguel River, reached the lower end of the original ACEC in 1999. The river also has yellow-billed cuckoo habitat.

Values Assessed: Botanical: *Riparian Vegetation*
Scenic

Relevance Criteria Considered: 1, 2, and 3

Importance Criteria Considered: 1, 2, and 3

RELEVANCE CRITERION		YES/ NO	RATIONALE FOR DETERMINATION
#	Description		
1	A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).	Yes	The ACEC has scenic values; the Unaweep Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway runs along the river. VRI Class 2.
2	A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).	Yes	The area is designated as an Important Bird Area by Audubon. It also has yellow-billed cuckoo (federal candidate and BLM sensitive species) habitat and a black phoebe (rare) population.

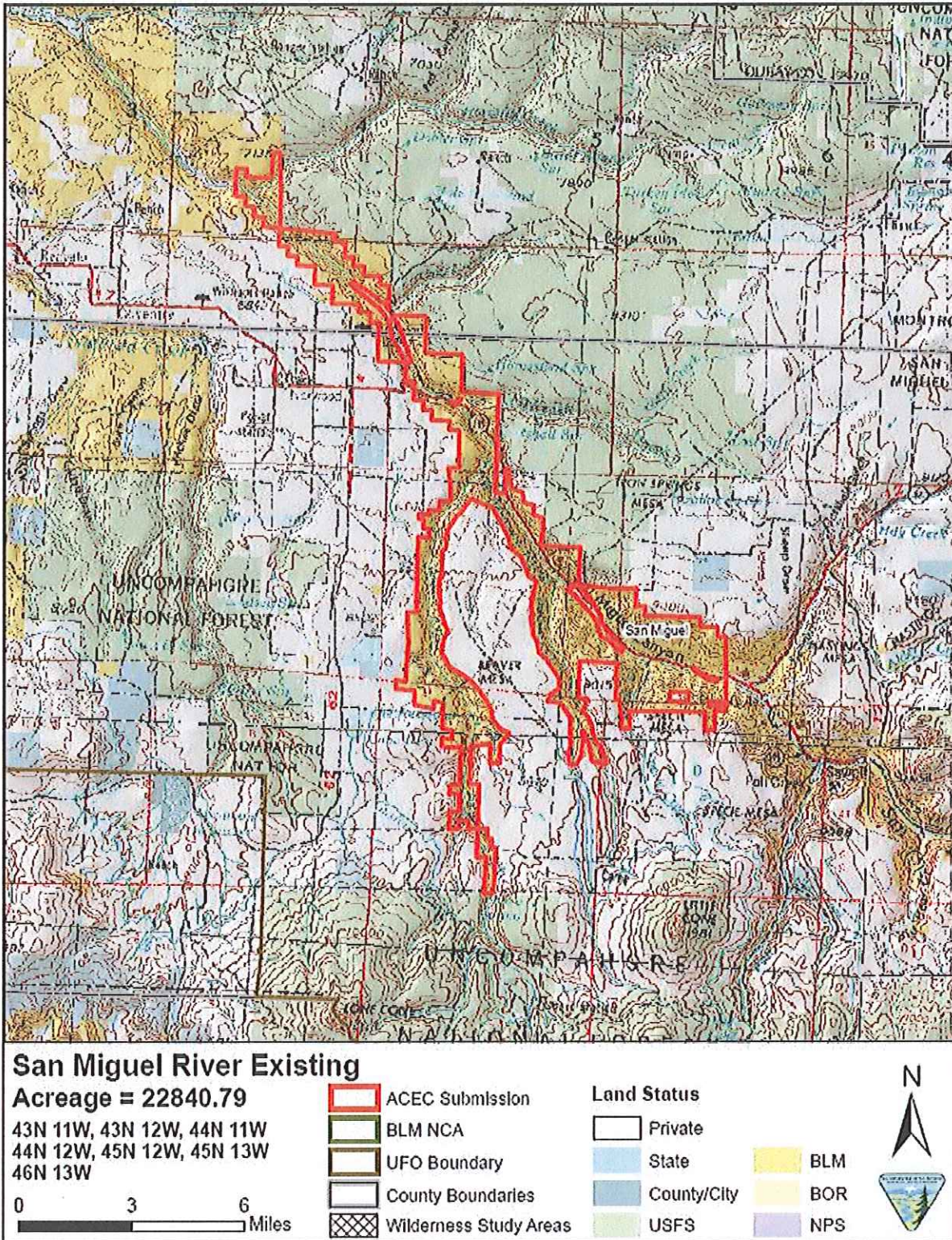
ACEC IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE EVALUATIONS

RELEVANCE CRITERION		YES/ NO	RATIONALE FOR DETERMINATION
#	Description		
3	A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).	Yes	There are exemplary and highly diverse riparian communities supported by the naturally functioning San Miguel River.

IMPORTANCE CRITERION		YES/ NO	RATIONALE FOR DETERMINATION
#	Description		
1	Has more than locally significant qualities, which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.	Yes	High biodiversity significance at a global level for the riparian vegetation communities, and a designated Important Bird Area of national importance.
2	Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.	Yes	Exemplary and extensive riparian communities, now rare in Colorado (since dams control most rivers). Vulnerable to invasive weeds, which are threats to native ecosystems.
3	Has been recognized as warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.	Yes	Already an ACEC. High priority riparian area. One of two free flowing rivers in Colorado (undammed). TNC designation as endangered landscape

ACEC IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE EVALUATIONS

ACEC Map 10 - San Miguel River ACEC (Existing)



II. SAN MIGUEL RIVER PROPOSED ACEC EXPANSION

Status: Existing, with proposed addition

Proponent: BLM, Trout Unlimited

General Location: San Miguel River and adjacent lands, from approximately Deep Creek to the powerline about one-half mile upstream of Montrose County Rd 90, including Saltado Creek, Beaver Creek, and a portion of Leopard Creek.

Acreage: 35,181

Significance: The ACEC preserves the high quality riparian vegetation resources, habitat for many bird species, and the scenic value of the corridor.

Description: The San Miguel River ACEC is an existing ACEC. It was designated through amendment of the San Miguel RMP in 1993. It protects high quality native riparian communities that are mainly due to the undammed San Miguel River and its intact hydrology. Such communities are becoming increasingly rare in Colorado.

The proposed expansion would extend protection to additional areas that have been recognized by the BLM and the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) as having high biodiversity significance. The CNHP has proposed the San Miguel River at Cottonwood Creek as a Potential Conservation Area which hosts skunkbrush/coyote willow riparian shrubland, narrowleaf cottonwood/skunkbrush riparian woodland, and coyote willow/mesic graminoid riparian shrubland, all of which are good to excellent examples of these community types.

The original ACEC has been designated as an Important Bird Area by Audubon Society. This site represents the finest protected Southwest Canyon Riparian Habitat (SWCR) in the United States, with the exception of Arizona's San Pedro SWCR. It provides breeding sites for a wide variety of species and primary migratory routes for nearly all of the West's songbirds. More than 300 bird species have been observed at the site. The expanding black phoebe population, which has been moving up the San Miguel River, reached the lower end of the original ACEC in 1999.

Values Assessed: Botanical: *Riparian Vegetation*
Scenic

Relevance Criteria Considered: 1, 2, and 3

Importance Criteria Considered: 1, 2, and 3

ACEC IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE EVALUATIONS

RELEVANCE CRITERION		YES/ NO	RATIONALE FOR DETERMINATION
#	Description		
1	A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).	Yes	The ACEC has scenic values. The Unaweeep Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway follows the river downstream from Placerville. The San Juan Skyway is follows the river upstream from Placerville. VRI Class 2 rating.
2	A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).	Yes	The area is designated as an Important Bird Area by Audubon. It also has a Canada lynx (threatened species) movement corridor, Colorado River cut-throat trout (BLM sensitive species), yellow billed cuckoo (Candidate and BLM sensitive species) habitat, and a black phoebe (rare) population.
3	A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).	Yes	There are exemplary and highly diverse riparian communities supported by the naturally functioning San Miguel River. An important wetland area is also in the proposed ACEC.

IMPORTANCE CRITERION		YES/ NO	RATIONALE FOR DETERMINATION
#	Description		
1	Has more than locally significant qualities, which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.	Yes	High biodiversity significance at a global level, and a designated Important Bird Area of national importance. Part of national and state scenic and historic byway system.
2	Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.	Yes	Exemplary and extensive riparian communities, now rare in Colorado with dams controlling most rivers. Vulnerable to invasive species, which are threats to native ecosystems. High water quality in the area.
3	Has been recognized as warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.	Yes	The existing ACEC needs some expansion to extend protection to additional significant riparian communities.

ACEC IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE EVALUATIONS

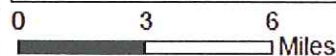
ACEC Map II - San Miguel River Proposed ACEC Expansion



San Miguel River Expansion Nominated

Acreage = 35181.36

42N 10W, 43N 10W, 43N 11W, 43N 12W,
44N 11W, 44N 12W, 45N 12W, 45N 13W,
46N 13W, 46N 14W



- ACEC Submission
- BLM NCA
- UFO Boundary
- County Boundaries
- Wilderness Study Areas

Land Status

- Private
- State
- County/City
- USFS
- BLM
- BOR
- NPS

