

Wayland, Joshua

From: Groves, Kristy L -FS <kgroves@fs.fed.us>
Sent: Friday, May 10, 2019 5:57 PM
To: Wayland, Joshua
Cc: Little, Tera -FS
Subject: Response of Resource Concerns for Uinta Basin Railway
Attachments: VQO Hwy191.pdf; UnitaRailwayResourceConcernsResponse.pdf; SIO_Hwy191.pdf; Migratory_Bird_list.doc

Josh, I have attached our response of resource concerns that the STB should be looking at the Uinta Basin Railway. Let me know if you have any questions.

Kristy



Kristy Groves
District Ranger
Forest Service
Ashley National Forest

p: 435-781-5203
f: 435-781-5215
kristy.groves@usda.gov

85 West Main St
Duchesne, UT 84021
www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

This electronic message contains information generated by the USDA solely for the intended recipients. Any unauthorized interception of this message or the use or disclosure of the information it contains may violate the law and subject the violator to civil or criminal penalties. If you believe you have received this message in error, please notify the sender and delete the email immediately.



File Code: 1950
Date: May 10, 2019

Joshua Wayland
Surface Transportation Board
c/o ICF
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

Dear Joshua,

This letter is in response to your request for preliminary information related to the proposed rail line brought forward by the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition. At this time only the Indian Canyon Route crosses Forest Service lands.

Below I have listed the resources that may be potentially affected by the rail line proposal where it crosses Forest Service lands on the Ashley National Forest:

- **Roadless Area impacts** – the entirety of the Indian Canyon Route is proposed within roadless area 0401011 that was designated under the 2001 Roadless Rule on the Ashley National Forest. Impacts to roadless character would have to be addressed. The connected actions for construction and maintenance would also be subject to the 2001 Rule and would need to be addressed. Approval of the roadless clearance process for infrastructure was retained at the Regional Office level.
- **Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species** – The following sensitive plant species have not yet been identified in the Hwy 191 corridor, but could exist there since the geology and soils they are found in are similar in this location: Goodrich Blazingstar (*Mentzelia goodrichii*) and Low Greenthread (*Thelesperma caespitosum*).

There are no threatened or Endangered wildlife species in this area. However, Forest Service sensitive species will need to be considered.

○ FS Sensitive Species

- peregrine falcon, northern goshawk, boreal owl, great gray owl, flammulated owl, three-toed woodpecker, greater sage grouse, spotted bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, common loon, trumpeter swan, pygmy rabbit, bald eagle, bighorn sheep, and wolverine.

- **Management Indicator Species** – Below is a list of Ashley National Forest Management Indicator Species. A table is attached to this letter that lists those migratory birds that will also need to be considered.

○ Ashley MIS



- Golden eagle, red-naped sapsucker, warbling vireo, Lincoln's sparrow, song sparrow, white-tailed ptarmigan, elk, deer, northern goshawk, sage grouse.
 - Migratory Birds – see the attached table.
- **Scenic Byway and Visuals** – Highway 191 south is a designated Scenic Byway.
- **Soils and Hydrology** - Soil Erosion and Slope Stability Concerns

Indian Canyon's topography with its steep ridge side slopes is composed of the Green River Formation. Ridge slopes have bands of highly skeletal (rocky) soils, rock outcrop, and bands of loose regolith/soils. The highest erosion problems correspond to the areas where soils are low in rock content and very high in salts, particularly calcium carbonate. The calcareous nature adds to the lack of soil structure and acts like silt, which is the most erosive soil texture fraction. The plant canopy cover and low root content adds to erosion caused by summer thunderstorms and any human-caused disturbance.

Storm events could result in mass wasting (flow events) and impair watersheds by adding to the TDS content. Evidence of these should be noted so further investigation of stability concerns can be looked for. Mass wasting can occur when materials are saturated from normal precipitation events.

- **Archeology and National Historic Preservation Act** - The project proponent will need to complete an archaeological file search with both the Ashley National Forest and the Utah Division of State History. The Forest can provide GIS data for heritage site locations and previous surveys. Approval of the survey methods would be needed.
- **Compliance with the Land Management Plan** – The Ashley National Forest is currently undergoing Forest Plan Revision.

Current Forest Plan - The Indian Canyon Route is within management areas n, d, and f in the current Ashley National Forest Plan. A review of the activities, as currently proposed, indicates that if the decision occurs under the current forest plan I believe we may need an amendment, but that would depend on the exact location of the railway. The area around Highway 191 on the south unit is mapped as retention on a ¼ mile on either side of the highway and as partial retention beyond that, see attached map.

- **Retention (R)** – The Retention (R) VQO provides for management activities that are not visually evident. Under Retention, activities may only repeat form, line, color and texture that are frequently found in the characteristic landscape. Changes in qualities of size, amount, intensity, direction, pattern, etc., should not be evident.” (USDA FS, 1974).
- **Partial Retention (PR)** - Under the Partial Retention (PR) VQO, management activities are to remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

Activities may repeat form, line, color, or texture common to the characteristic landscape but changes in their qualities of size, amount, intensity, direction, pattern, etc., remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. Activities may also introduce form, line, color, or texture, which are found infrequently or not at all in the characteristic landscape, but they should remain visually subordinate to the visual strength of the characteristic landscape. (USDA FS, 1974).

- The management are prescriptions for n, d, and f relating to scenic resources are:
- n: VQOs as inventoried
- d: VQOs variable to meet range resource needs expect in highly sensitive.
- f: VQOs as inventoried standards

Revised Forest Plan -

The new Scenery Management System - Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO) for the Forest Plan Revision maps the SIOs around Highway 191 as High and Moderate depending on the view from 191, map is attached.

The proposed Forest Plan Revision includes a number of guidelines that refer to scenic resources. The guidelines that would pertain to railroad construction are below.

01 Scenic deviations that are visible in some areas of the Ashley National Forest should generally be subordinate to the surrounding natural landscape and diminish over time.

04 Components of new projects other than vegetation management, such as facility installation or road construction, should meet the assigned scenic integrity objectives within 2 years after completion of all activities associated with the project to reduce significant visual deviations from the surrounding landscape.

05 New landscape modifications such as timber harvesting on lands not suitable for timber production or construction of facilities, should meet or exceed the assigned scenic integrity objectives as seen from anywhere with areas assigned as scenic integrity objective of very high or high, and as seen from mapped concern level 1 and 2 travel ways and viewpoints. The scenic integrity objectives serve as thresholds of allowable visual dominance by landscape modifications over the valued scenic resources and allowable deviation from the desired scenic resource.

I don't believe that we would need a plan amendment for the revised forest plan pertaining to the effects of the proposed railroad on scenic resources if any rehabilitation work is completed in 2 years after the project is completed. We will begin NEPA on the new Forest Plan this year with the intent to complete it by next year.

Other permits or approvals needed:

The Forest Supervisor would have to authorize any amendments to the Forest Plan. Temporary

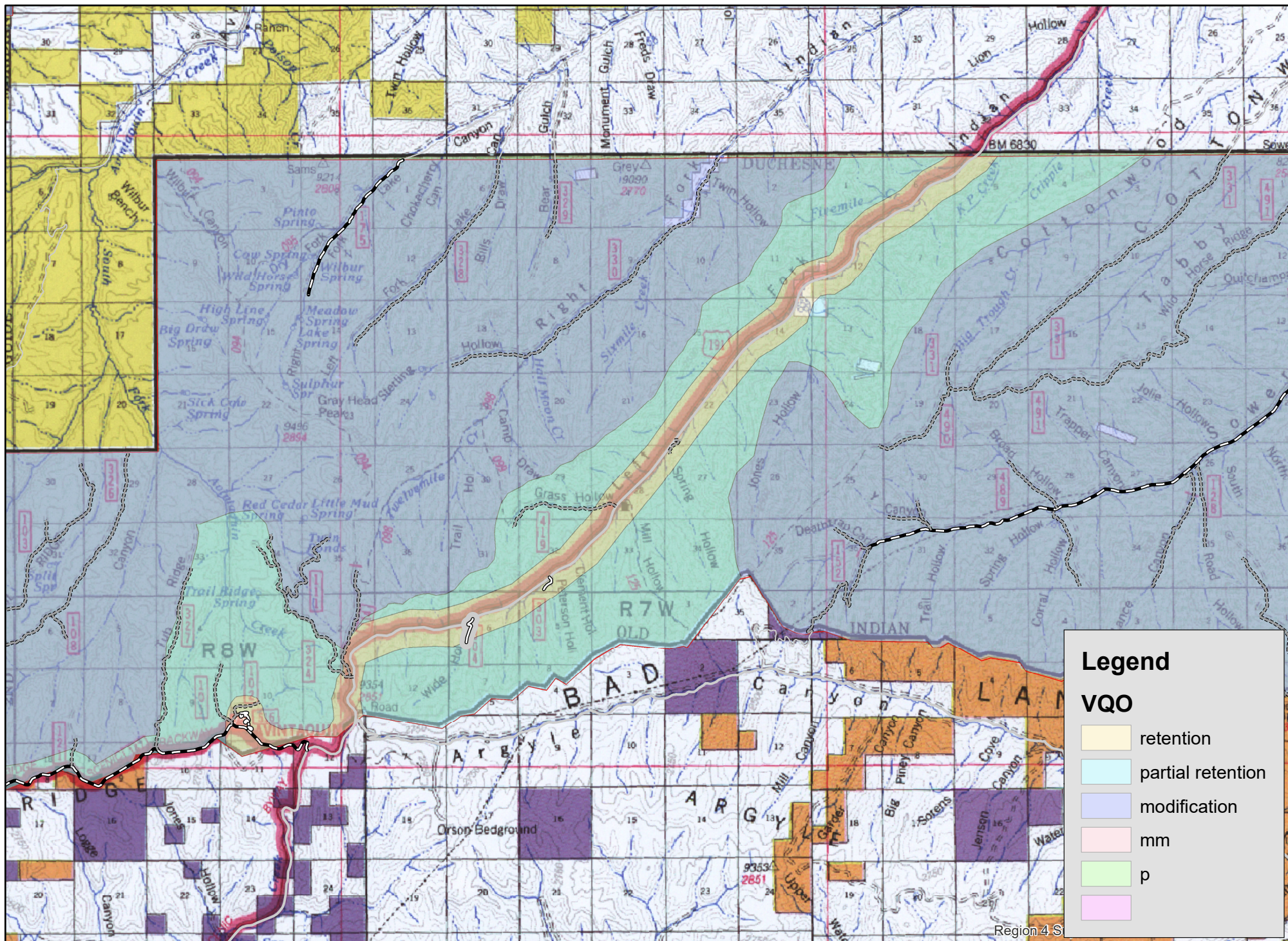
use permits would be needed for various surveys including wetlands delineation, archeology surveys, geophysical surveys etc. The proponent would need to apply for and obtain a railroad ROW permit to cover all expected activities including access, construction, maintenance and operation.

Sincerely,



KRISTY GROVES
District Ranger

Migratory Bird table
Maps for Visuals



US Fish & Wildlife Service list of Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) in Bird Conservation Regions 10 & 16, and Utah Partners in Flight (PIF) Priority Species - their status in the project area.

Species	BCR 16	BCR 10	PIF	Occurrence in Project Area	Basis for Occurrence Determination
American Avocet	X		X		
Bald Eagle	X	X			
Black Rosy-Finch	X	X	X		
Black-necked Stilt			X		
Black-throated Gray Warbler			X		
Brewer's Sparrow	X	X	X		
Broad-tailed Hummingbird			X		
Brown-capped Rosy Finch	X				
Burrowing Owl	X				
Calliope Hummingbird		X			
Cassin's Finch	X	X			
Flammulated Owl	X	X			
Golden Eagle	X				
Grasshopper Sparrow	X				
Greater Sage-Grouse			X		
Juniper Titmouse	X				
Lewis's Woodpecker	X	X	X		
Loggerhead Shrike		X			
Olive-sided Flycatcher		X			
Peregrine Falcon	X	X			
Pinyon Jay	X				
Prairie Falcon	X				
Sage Sparrow		X	X		
Sage Thrasher		X			
Three-toed Woodpecker			X		
Veery	X				
Virginia's Warbler			X		
Williamson's Sapsucker		X			
Willow Flycatcher	X	X			
American White Pelican			X		
Black Swift		X	X		
Bobolink			X		
Ferruginous Hawk	X	X	X		
Gray Vireo	X		X		
Long-billed Curlew	X	X	X		
McCown's Longspur		X			
Mountain Plover	X		X		
Snowy Plover	X				

Swainson's Hawk		X			
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	X	X	X		
Abert's Towhee			X		
Bell's Vireo			X		
Bendire's Thrasher	X				
Chestnut-collared Longspur	X				
Gambel's Quail			X		
Grace's Warbler	X				
Gunnison Sage-Grouse	X		X		
Lucy's Warbler			X		
Sharp-tailed Grouse			X		
Upland Sandpiper		X			
White-headed Woodpecker		X			

2008 Birds of Conservation Concern List & 2002 PIF Priority Species List