

LAZYMAN INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREA

SUBUNIT E – Center Portion

Blackhall Meadows north and upper drainages of West Fork of Colorado Gulch

May 17, 2026



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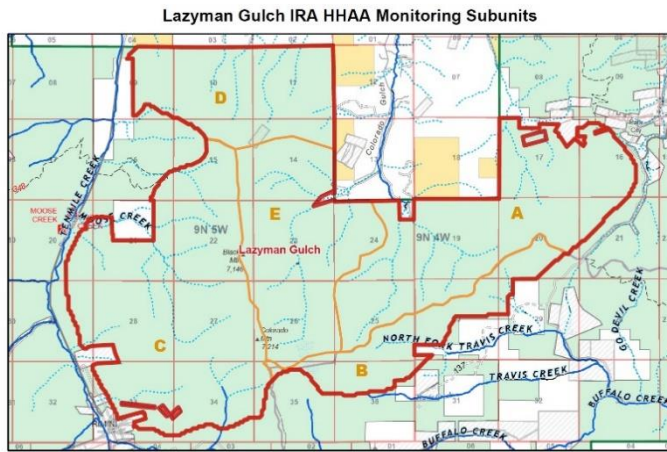
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Subunit E: Center Area includes West Fork Colorado Gulch and Blackhall Meadows north



Headwaters of the West fork of Colorado Gulch, beginning in Blackhall Meadows, constitute the center of the Lazyman IRA. This area has been monitored for at least 80 years, since the 1940's, by current and past generations HHA members' families.

Blackhall Meadows, flanked by Colorado and Black Mountains, is an iconic feature of the IRA.

Figure E01. Map of Subunit E, Lazyman IRA.

The following descriptions summarize other documents detailing two illegal incidents, one of which began in 2009 and extended through 2014. The other occurred recently, in 2026. One field survey describing the hydrological condition of upper West Fork Colorado Gulch, including Blackhall Meadows was conducted for the HHA monitoring effort for Subunit E of the Lazyman IRA.

[Field Reports](#) provide photos, waypoints, maps, and narratives in the following documents: Blackhall Meadows-Upper Colorado Gulch Hydrology Report; Incident: Hunting Camp involving illegal trails and semi-permanent structures; Incident: Illegal two-track cleared for motorized use into the heart of the Inventoried Roadless Area to access a spring for development of a stock tank.



Figure E02. Blackhall Meadows – head of West Fork Colorado Gulch. Red Mtn center right.



Figure E03. Aerial view of Colorado Gulch portion of Lazyman IRA with Colorado and Black Mountains identified. (Google Earth)



Figure E04. Looking north-northeast into Colorado Gulch and the heart of the Lazyman Inventoried Roadless Area, with the Helena Valley in the distance.

July 19, 2023 Blackhall-Upper Colorado-L. Buffalo - Hydrology Survey Report by Gary Ingman

Blackhall Meadows and Colorado Gulch survey was performed on July 19, 2023, by Gary Ingman (retired hydrologist), Doug Powell, Dennis Milburn and Paul Ferry. Ingman filed the following report.

“We left town at 8:30 am and returned at 7:00 pm (42 volunteer man hours). We walked into BHM from the trailhead, encountering a newly constructed banked bicycle out-curve feature on the trail about a half mile from the trailhead. Doug documented the feature and reported it to the HLCNF.

“We surveyed the lower BHM area noting lots of amphibians (adult and larval frogs) in the wetlands and seeps before the meadows. There is evidence of historical hydromodification in and adjacent to the meadows, including channeling flows from springs and seeps to a constructed pond system, presumably for hay irrigation and possibly placer mining of the outlet stream (Little Buffalo Gulch). There is evidence of placer dredging along the meadow’s outlet, Little Buffalo Gulch (revegetated dredge piles with LPP and a channelized stream). There are remnants of irrigation ditches across the meadows, and an apparent east to west oriented tile drain running much of the length of the meadows, presumably for irrigation purposes. The Lazyman IRA boundary does not start before the hydrologic divide where the meadows begin draining northward into Colorado Gulch.



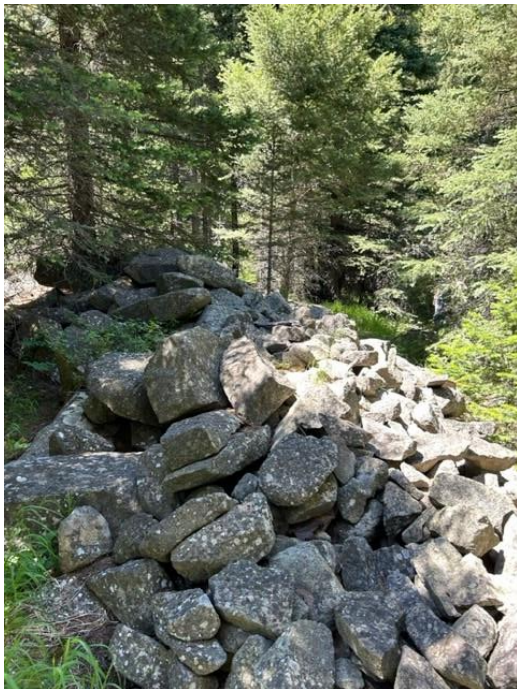
Figure E05. Channel avulsion. Figure E06. Colorado Gulch – historical hydromodification channeling of spring flows to a constructed pond, presumably for hay irrigation.

“We descended Colorado Gulch. The spring emergence headwaters of Colorado Gulch are fenced as a cattle enclosure but the gate was open and the fence dilapidated. Doug knows the

history of this fencing by the MT Conservation Corp (?). There is developed livestock water a short distance downstream along the creek (tank and piping, evidence of electric fencing).

“There are a number of historical cabin remnants in the upper CG drainage, presumably associated with historical mining activity.

“It is apparent that Colorado Gulch was intensively placer mined with extensive rock/boulder removal and stacking of rocks from the main stream channel. Doug Powell described remnants of a former trolley system and buckets to relocate rock. This activity has not significantly affected the hydrology of this stream system, which is naturally steep gradient, incised, and a Rosgen A channel type.



“The historical rock work continued downstream for some distance. The stream drains granitic geology and all step pools and low gradient areas are inundated with granite sand bedload. The water is clear.

“Some distance downstream, Doug pointed out where a series of beaver dams used to exist but have since breached and drained. The former dam terraces are still apparent and the stream has avulsed to the east side of the valley in an entrenched setting. The downcut/headcut is only 50-75 yards long but was a significant sediment source when the breach occurred. The channel depth is perhaps 8-10 feet deep in a localized area (photos).

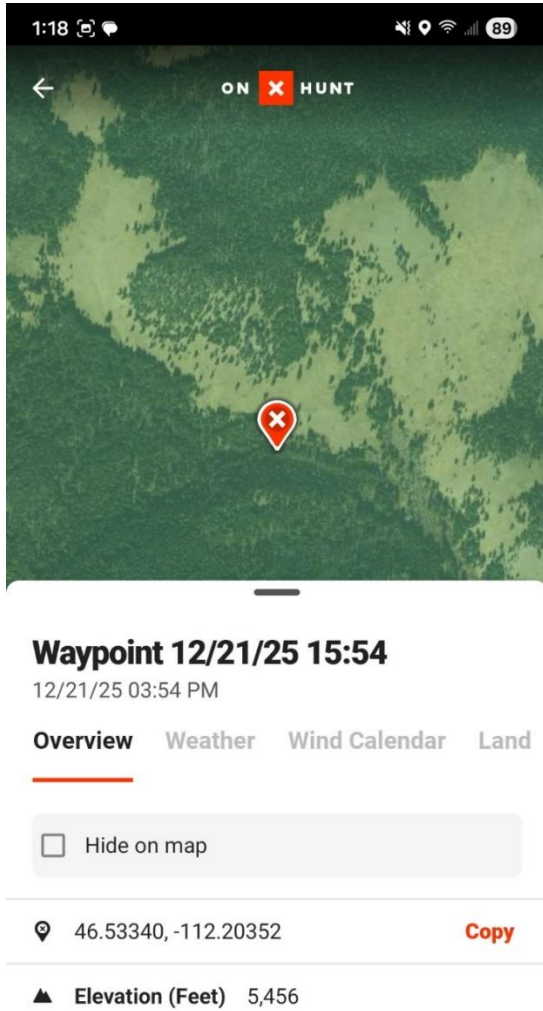
Figure E07. Historic, extensive placer mining activity in Colorado Gulch – rock and boulder removal and stacking.

“Doug says he remembers an extensive beaver dam complex in this area not too many years ago. He mentioned the beavers were trapped out and the breach occurred possibly only 4-5 years ago. The stream is recovering from this event and the affected reach is localized. Colorado Gulch is a tributary to Tenmile Creek, which is listed as water quality-impaired for sediment. Treatments on CG within the Lazyman IRA could benefit TMDL-related restoration efforts to sediment impairment in Tenmile Creek. We did not survey downstream from this general area.

“Travis Creek road leading to the Blackhall Meadows parking lot is eroding and causing substantial sedimentation to the North Fork of Travis Creek, and therefore needs attention.”

December 2025 Stock Tank Spring Development and Motorized Access - Upper Colorado Gulch

An RV Ranch worker stated he is applying for a permit to access a stock tank and use an excavator to do so. The proposal is within the Lazyman Inventoried Roadless Area.



Location (46.53340, -112.20352) of stock tank is depicted by a red X in Figure E08.

The ranch worker stated they are applying for a permit to build a temporary road and then would rehab it, in order to improve a stock water tank. They are working with a grazing specialist from the Helena Ranger District (Heidi) on the upgrade to the spring tank in the Lazyman IRA. He said they are required to excavate a large hole 12 feet deep for collection of water. He indicated the only way to do this is with an excavator. Doug told him there should be a better way to work on the spring without using an excavator.

Dennis Milburn and Lois Olsen installed the original spring tank in Lazyman using mules in the mid 1980's.

Figure E08. Location of proposed stock tank spring development.



Figure E09 . Stock tank currently on site.

The existing tank still holds water and show no sign of leakage.



Figure E10 . Existing tanks are in good condition. 46.53340 -112.20352

Figure E11. Spring intake culvert is full of silt.

This spring site can be improved using basic hand tools. Black Mountain Retreat land is shown in the lower right-hand corner of Figure E12.

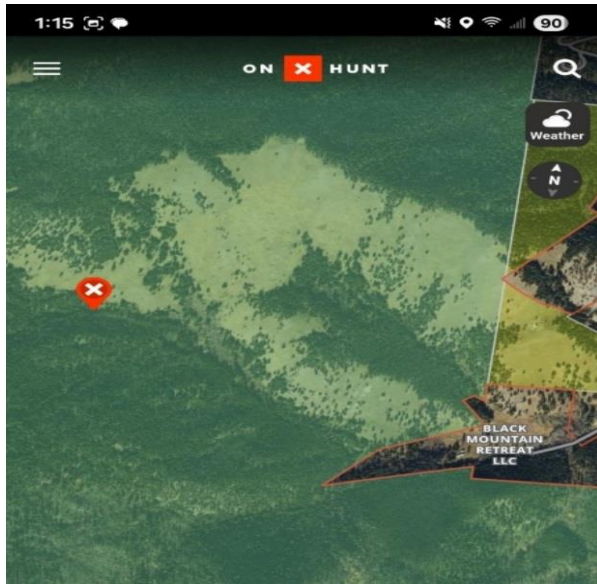


Figure E12. Spring tank site marked with a red X shown within context of larger landscape and in relation to Black Mountain Retreat property.

Trail was cleared for one-half mile using a side-by-side in August 2025, from the Black Mountain Retreat property, leading towards the spring tank in a NW direction up the draw.



Figure E13 . Trail has been cleared into the IRA using a side-by-side from private land. 46.52930 -112.19373



Extending about ½ mile, a two-track route has been cleared using a side-by-side vehicle as noted by tracks leading to the proposed spring/tank site. While clearing the route, the side-by-side drove through a stream and a damp meadow.

Figure E14. Side-by-side tracks damage to wet area 46.53244 -112.19901

The opportunity was taken to reduced the two-track down to a single-track trail by pulling in debris, and setting the phylon non-motorized sign back to where it was originally installed in the center of the gate between the border of the Forest Service and Black Mountain Retreat land.

Motorized use into the IRA from the Black Mountain Retreat has been occurring over the past three years for the purpose of cutting and hauling out fire wood. Tracks in the snow indicated use of a vehicle and tractor.



Figure E15. Motorized tracks into the IRA from the Black Mountain Retreat

Helena Hunters and Anglers is concerned that any permits allowing motorized use into the Lazyman IRA would degrade the integrity of the roadless land.

HHA Inquiries/Offers/Recommendations:

1. Motorized use into the IRA from the Black Mountain Retreat has been occurring over the past three years for the purpose of cutting and hauling out fire wood. Tracks in the snow indicated the use of a vehicle and tractor. Is there an application from the RV Ranch (or any of its employees) to the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest to access the springs near the head of Colorado Gulch?
2. HHA is available to assist in sign placement or distribution of educational materials describing what activities are allowed in an Inventoried Roadless Area.
3. HHA would like to see signage on the boundary of the IRA that tells the public that they are entering an IRA. Certain allowed and not allowed uses could be itemized.
4. The stock tank/spring development need not involve an excavator. Simple maintenance of the tanks and the site would suffice.

2009 – 2014 Upper Colorado Gulch - Hunting Camp Structures and Trail Construction

New unauthorized trails being constructed on Colorado and Black Mountains were discovered beginning in 2009, and the illegal activity continued through 2010 despite efforts to block the trails with debris. Then in 2013, HHAA member Doug Powell discovered a heavily disturbed area (Fig. 16) from which many excavated trails emanated (Fig. 17). In what appeared to be a hunting camp, large trees had been cut off at about 10 feet high, limbed and used for support posts for tent rails, corrals, fences, gates (Fig. 18), toilets (Fig. E19), wooden tent floors (Fig. E20), water troughs and water line in creek (Fig. E21 and E22), bridges (Fig. E23 - 25), and hitching rails (Fig. E26). Streams and meadows were impacted by pack stock (Fig. E27). Wildlife had to have been affected (Fig. E28).



Figure E16. Hunting camp with substantial disturbance to trees, soil, and water.



Figure E17. Trail cut into the ground and cleared of trees and rocks.



Figure E18. Corrals, fences, gates, cut-off large trees and trash at hunting camp. Lone cow in center.



Figure E19. Toilet built into trees.



Figure E20. Tent floors built with dimensional lumber, supported by tops of large trees cut off leaving 10' stumps.



Figure E21. Water trough could serve two corrals divided by pole fencing attached to large tree.



Figure E22. Water was piped from nearby creek to water trough.



Figure E23. Long wooden expanse placed along illegal trail crosses stream riparian area.



Figure E24. Shorter bridge than Figure E23.



Figure E25. Wooden planks put into a boggy area.



Figure E26. Hitching rails attached to large damaged trees, where horses have churned the ground.



Figure E27. Pack stock watering site trampled stream banks and surrounding meadow.



Figure E28. Elk in meadow. Disturbance from the presence of the camp itself, as well as activity at the camp, would certainly have impacted a variety of wildlife.

With construction of miles of trails, the landscape where the illegal hunting camp activity occurred, had an effect on hundreds if not thousands of acres (Fig. E29).

With information from locals and determination on the part of HHAA to rectify this situation, both the HLCNF and MFWP were called upon to investigate. Ultimately citations were issued by the Forest Service and much of the camp infrastructure was removed. Finally, in January 2015, HHAA was able to express our appreciate to the HLCNF for their diligence in bringing this case to a close (CampRemoval Thx Posewitz to Avey).

Although resolving this situation took six years, HHAA is gratified knowing that we were able to help maintain the wild character of the Lazyman IRA. We intend to keep our shoulder to the wheel.



Figure E29. View from Black Mtn looking southeast to Blackhall Meadows. Colorado Mtn on right.