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Rim Rock Run may be converted to a night race

Action would address concerns of residents living near Colorado National Monument

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By Deborah Frazier

Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

The controversial Rim Rock Run can't be moved out of Colorado National Monument, but the 23-mile competition could be run at night to

avoid daytime road closure, the race coordinator said.

The fifth annual race was conducted in November by order of Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, who overruled the park superintendent's decision to stop it. Rick Frost of the regional park service office said concerns range from safe driving to access for emergency vehicles during the five-hour run. About 250 racers completed the course this year.

Public hearings on future races were conducted Tuesday, Wednesday

and Thursday.

Several race critics want the event stopped, or at least moved out of the national monument. Babbitt ordered the route be changed in 1998.

"It wouldn't be the Rim Rock Run if we ran it somewhere else," said Katie Hill, race coordinator. "But we could change the time. It's possible we could run it at midnight on a full moon night."

At the hearings, area residents protested the race's closure of the

only road through the park to their homes. All the comments will be used to write an environmental assessment, due out in January.

"I feel that the concerns about closing the road will be weighed more heavily than the economic advantages of the run," said Hill.

The race's security costs were about \$1,250, far lower than the \$12,000 originally estimated by the park service. The Mesa National Bank paid the bill so race proceeds could be used for Mesa State Col-

lege's women's track team.

The National Parks and Conservation Association sent a representative to each of the three meetings last week to stress that competitive sports events were not compatible with the park's mission of protection and preservation.

"We've got thousands of rims and millions of rocks in Colorado," said Mark Peterson, the NPCA's regional director. "Why can't we have the Rim Rock Run be run somewhere else?"