BLM Seeks Input on Revised Historic Preservation Agreement

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Bureau of Land Management is soliciting input from tribes, State Historic Preservation Offices, and its field offices on revisions to a programmatic agreement governing activities on federal lands that could affect historic properties. The revisions clarify the BLM’s responsibilities for consultation with tribes on activities that could affect religious or cultural properties.

The programmatic agreement was signed in 1997 between the BLM and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers. The agreement guides BLM’s planning and decision making as it affects historic properties as defined under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The law requires BLM to consider, plan for, protect, and enhance historic properties and other resources that may be affected by its actions.

Among other things, the draft revised programmatic agreement emphasizes the requirement for the BLM to consult with tribes in order to obtain their views on the potential effects of actions on resources of significance to tribes and resolution of any adverse effects stemming from those actions. The proposed revision requires tribal consultation on BLM-State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) protocols for alternative NHPA consultation among BLM and SHPOs under the agreement. It also adds the BLM national tribal coordinator to the BLM Preservation Board that advises the BLM on policies and procedures for NHPA implementation.

“When examining proposals for activities on the public lands, we must be mindful of our unique relationship with the tribes and carefully consider their views and concerns,” said BLM Director Bob Abbey. “Through consultation and with a spirit of mutual respect and understanding, we can help preserve treasured resources on public lands for generations to come.”

Comments on the draft revised programmatic agreement are due November 1, 2010, and can be submitted electronically to Robin Burgess, Ph.D., BLM’s Preservation Officer (robin_burgess@blm.gov) or by mail to Richard C. Hanes, Ph.D., Division Chief of Cultural, Paleontological Resources and Tribal Consultation, Bureau of Land Management, 1849 C Street, NW, (Mail Stop-204LS), Washington, DC, 20240.

The BLM manages more land - more than 245 million acres - than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about $1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

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