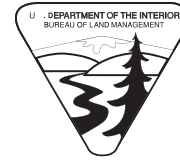


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ARIZONA Planning Bulletin #4



Ironwood Forest National Monument
Proposed Resource Management Plan and
Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS)

Bureau of Land Management • Tucson Field Office

SEPTEMBER 2011



Ironwood Forest National Monument
Proposed Resource Management Plan and
Final Environmental Impact Statement
(PRMP and FEIS)

PRMP/FEIS is Now Available

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is pleased to announce that the Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS) for the Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM) is now available. The PRMP/FEIS can be accessed at http://www.blm.gov/az/env_docs/library/mps/mps.htm. Printed copies or a CD version of the document can be obtained by contacting the Tucson Field Office at 520.258.7200 or by e-mail at AZ_IFNM_RMP@blm.gov.

Copies of the document also are available for review at the following public libraries: Geasa-Marana Branch Library in Marana, Arizona; Joel D. Valdez Main Library and the Nanini Branch Library in Tucson, Arizona; and Casa Grande Public Library in Casa Grande, Arizona.



Public Involvement Activities Since the Publication of the Last Bulletin

BLM has continued to work on the comprehensive land use plan for managing public land in the IFNM, which was established by Presidential Proclamation 7320 in June 2000. Extensive public involvement efforts have been undertaken over the course of the planning process, including numerous public meetings and workshops as well as collaboration with interested public, relevant agencies, and tribes. Three planning bulletins have been produced to inform the public about the progress of the plan development.

The last planning bulletin was published in March 2007 to announce the publication of the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). During the 90-day public review period for the Draft RMP/EIS, BLM hosted five public meetings: two were held in the Tucson area, one in Sahuarita, one in Chandler, and one in Sells, Arizona. A brief presentation was given at each meeting and public comment was encouraged. The comments received during the public review period, which ended on May 30, 2007, were gathered and analyzed by BLM to produce the current document.

Brief Summary of the Alternatives

Four alternatives including the proposed alternative were analyzed by BLM over the course of the planning process. They are briefly summarized as follows:

Alternative A

Under Alternative A, the No Action alternative, management of public land within the IFNM would continue according to the management prescriptions currently adopted in prior plans. Certain modifications to management prescriptions, which are required under the Proclamation and have been implemented already, would continue.

Alternative B

The management theme for Alternative B is preservation; this alternative has the most restrictive management strategy with respect to access and uses in the IFNM. Under Alternative B, the types of allowable uses and the intensity of those uses are restricted to provide the strongest reasonable protection for objects of historic, scientific, and aesthetic interest within the IFNM.

Alternative C

Alternative C incorporates elements from each of the other alternatives to strike a balance between long-term conservation of public lands and resources within the IFNM, and uses that have traditionally taken place on the land within the monument, such as grazing and recreation. Alternative C provides a high level of resource protection in sensitive areas, with opportunities for public use allowed outside those areas. Alternative C is BLM's proposed alternative.

Alternative D

The management theme for Alternative D is access; this alternative emphasizes the maintenance of existing public access to monument lands and resources.

Key Issues Identified by the Public on the Draft RMP/EIS

BLM received more than 10,000 comment letters on the Draft RMP/EIS. Letters were submitted by individuals, businesses, and user groups representing diverse interests. A large proportion of the comments received focused on recreational target shooting, livestock grazing, travel management, and vegetation.

Recreational Target Shooting

As a result of comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS regarding recreational target shooting, BLM conducted a detailed study to determine if it was practical to designate specific areas within IFNM for recreational shooting. Based on the analysis, only two sites were determined to be potentially suitable. Designation of these sites while prohibiting dispersed recreational shooting in the remainder of IFNM is evaluated.

Livestock Grazing

Several comments were received regarding reclassification of certain livestock grazing allotments. Under Alternative C in the Draft RMP/EIS, two grazing allotments, Tejon Pass and Morning Star, would have been reclassified as perennial allotments from their current status as ephemeral allotments. As sufficient baseline data were not available for a thorough evaluation of this change in the Draft RMP/EIS, BLM is conducting additional monitoring to determine forage capacity. Therefore, the decision to reclassify these allotments is being deferred, resulting in the proposed plan incorporating the “no action” alternative for these two allotments.

Travel Management

Public comments on travel management required some minor changes to the alternatives to close certain routes and open other routes to motorized use, resulting in minor changes to the number of routes designated for various uses.

Vegetation

Many comments received from the public suggested that native plants be used as the first priority for all restoration projects. Comments also suggested that non-intrusive, non-native plants be used in limited, emergency situations where they may be necessary to protect the resources or when taking no action would further degrade the resources. These suggestions have been addressed in the PRMP/FEIS.

Other Modifications from the Draft RMP/EIS to the PRMP/FEIS

Beyond addressing the key issues described above, several other issues identified by the public during the public comment period were modified in the PRMP/FEIS as follows:

- Information is included in the PRMP/FEIS to explain that the Proclamation identifies objects of the monument that are to be protected; these objects include drought-adapted vegetation; rugged mountain ranges; view of the Sonoran Desert; Ironwood trees; habitat for threatened, endangered, and rare wildlife and vegetative species; and archaeological objects of scientific interest. Protection of the monument objects is defined as maintaining the objects over time, such that any human-caused change or impact on the known biological, geological, and archaeological monument object(s) would be undetectable or measurable only in small and localized areas

and the integrity of the object(s) would be conserved for future generations. This information has been included in the PRMP/FEIS to further explain selection of Alternative C as the management that would provide protection of monument objects, without unnecessary restrictions on public uses and access within the IFNM.

- Under all alternatives, surface-disturbing activities such as motorized use could result in disturbance of cultural resources. As a result, BLM conducted additional cultural resource surveys along roads that would be designated open for motorized use under Alternative C from the Draft RMP/EIS. Results of these additional surveys are included in the PRMP/FEIS.
- In addition to Alternative B in which no cultural sites would be allocated for public use, it was decided Cocoraque Butte would not be allocated to public use with Alternative C and D because of the significance of the resources identified in this area and the need to protect those objects of the monument.
- The change in utility corridor designation from the Draft RMP/EIS to the PRMP/FEIS is that no utility corridors would be designated. Comment review and the BLM’s objective to protect monument objects as specified in the Proclamation and Secretarial Order 3308 of November 15, 2010, provide a basis for this modification.
- Under Alternative C in the Draft RMP/EIS, BLM proposed acquisition of mineral estate not be a factor in surface estate acquisitions within the IFNM. This has been revised in the PRMP/FEIS to propose that BLM would not acquire surface estate unless mineral estate can be acquired concurrently (or is already federally owned).
- Explanations of management goals and objectives identified in the Summary Comparison of Impacts tables were revised to provide clarity and quantification. These tables were also revised to correctly categorize a number of actions listed under “Implementation-Level Decisions” in the Draft RMP/EIS.



Next Steps

A Notice of Availability (NOA) is being published in the Federal Register to advise the public of the availability of the PRMP/FEIS for review. Upon publication of the NOA, a 30-day Protest Period will begin to accept public comment.

How you can review the PRMP/FEIS:

- Access the BLM project website at: http://www.blm.gov/az/env_docs/library/mps/mps.htm.
- Contact the Tucson Field Office at 520.258.7200 to obtain a CD.
- Visit one of the following libraries to review a printed copy of the document.



List of Libraries

Geasa-Marana Branch Library

13370 North Lon Adams Road
Marana, AZ 85653
520.594.5255

Hours of Operation:

Tuesday/Thursday	10:00 am – 6:00 pm
Wednesday	10:00 am – 7:00 pm
Friday	10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Saturday	9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Sunday/Monday	Closed

Joel D. Valdez Main Library

101 North Stone Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85701-1501
520.594.5500

Hours of Operation:

Monday-Wednesday	9:00 am – 8:00 pm
Thursday	9:00 am – 6:00 pm
Friday	9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Saturday	10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Sunday	1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Nanini Branch Library

7300 North Shannon Road
Tucson, AZ 85741-2137
520.594.5365

Hours of Operation:

Monday-Thursday	10:00 am – 8:00 pm
Friday	10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Saturday	9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Sunday	1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Casa Grande Public Library

449 North Dry Lake Street
Casa Grande, Arizona 85122
520.421.8710

Hours of Operation:

Monday-Thursday	9:00 am – 7:00 pm
Friday	9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Saturday	Closed
Sunday	1:00 pm – 5:00 pm