

Chapter 3. Draft Planning Criteria

Planning criteria are constraints or ground rules that guide and direct the development of the plan. They ensure that plans are tailored to the identified issues and that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided. The criteria may be adjusted during RMP development based on management concerns and the results of the overall public scoping process. Preliminary planning criteria for the Rio Puerco RMP Revision are as follows.

- The RMP Revision will be in compliance with FLPMA, NEPA, and all other applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
- Land use decisions in the RMP Revision will apply to the surface and subsurface estate managed by the BLM.
- For program-specific guidance for decisions at the land use planning level, the process will follow the BLM's policies in the Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601.
- Broad-based public participation and collaboration will be an integral part of the planning process.
- BLM staff will strive to make decisions in the plan compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, and federal agencies and local American Indian tribes, as long as the decisions are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law and regulations applicable to public lands.
- In the RMP Revision, the BLM will recognize the state's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife. The BLM will consult with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.
- The RMP Revision will recognize valid existing rights.
- The RMP Revision/EIS will incorporate, where applicable, management decisions brought forward from existing planning documents.
- BLM staff will work cooperatively and collaboratively with cooperating agencies and all other interested groups, agencies, tribal entities, and individuals.
- The BLM and cooperating agencies will jointly develop alternatives for resolution of resource management issues and management concerns.
- Areas with special or unique resource values will be evaluated for potential administrative designations, including Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wild and Scenic Rivers, or other appropriate designations.
- Any free-flowing river and its associated land corridor found to be eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System will be addressed in the RMP Revision/EIS by developing alternatives for protective management.
- Wilderness Study Areas will continue to be managed under the BLM's Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review (IMP) until Congress either designates all or portions of the WSAs as wilderness or releases the lands from further wilderness consideration. The BLM no longer has the authority to designate additional WSAs through the RMP Revision process, nor manages any lands other than existing WSAs in accordance with the Wilderness IMP. Areas with wilderness characteristics, however, will be considered in the RMP Revision as described in Appendix C of the Land Use Planning Handbook. Any recently acquired lands will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.
- Forest management strategies will be consistent with the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.
- Fire management strategies will be consistent with the Albuquerque District Fire Management Plan (2004)
- In the RMP Revision, the BLM will consider public welfare and safety when addressing hazardous materials and fire management
- GIS and metadata information will meet Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) standards, as required by Executive Order 12906. All other applicable BLM data standards will also be followed.
- The planning process will provide for ongoing consultation with American Indian tribal governments and strategies for protecting recognized traditional uses.
- Planning and management direction will focus on the relative values of resources and not the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or economic output.
- In the plan, the BLM will consider the quantity and quality of non-commodity resource values.
- Where practicable and timely for the planning effort, the best available scientific information, research, and new technologies will be used.
- Actions must comply with all applicable regulations and must be reasonable, achievable, and allow for flexibility while supporting adaptive management principles.
- The Economic Profile System (EPS) will be used as one source of demographic and economic data for the planning process. EPS data will provide baseline data and contribute to estimates of existing and projected social and economic conditions.