



### Moab RMP and Monticello RMP

## Public Scoping Review

### What is Public Scoping?

Public scoping is a process designed to meet public involvement requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The cooperative process includes soliciting input from interested agencies, organizations, and individuals on issues, concerns, needs, and resource use, development, and protection opportunities. The information obtained is used to define the relevant issues that will be resolved in a broad range of alternative plans. The environmental impacts of these alternatives will be addressed in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The process is an excellent method to open dialogue with the general public about management of the public lands and for the agency to evaluate the concerns of those who have an interest in the area.

The Utah BLM's Moab and Monticello Field Offices are in the process of preparing Resource Management Plans. The plans will involve approximately 4.4 million acres of public lands and resources in San Juan and Grand Counties, UT. The Moab FO (1.8 million acres) includes all of Grand County and the northern third of San Juan County. The Monticello FO (2.5 million acres) includes the remaining portion of San Juan County.

### Solicitation and Compilation of Public Comments

In the first Planning Bulletin (June 30, 2003) for the Moab and Monticello Resource Management Plans (RMPs), citizens were invited to attend one of six public meetings and submit information, issues, and concerns during the scoping period. The scoping period was from June 4, 2003, to January 31, 2004. Comments received after January 31, 2004, will be considered during the Alternative Development phase but will not be included in this Scoping Report. By law, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is required to hold a minimum 30-day scoping period. This period was extended to 211 days because of the high interest in public lands for the Moab and Monticello planning areas.

Six public meetings were held in Blanding, Grand Junction, Green River, Moab, Monticello, and Salt Lake City. An open house format for the first half of the meetings encouraged individuals to have one-on-one conversations with BLM specialists and submit comments on index cards. During the second half of the meetings, the public participated in small group discussions. Each discussion group had a facilitator to ensure interaction and equal participation, and a scribe to capture the comments on flip charts. Thoughts from 321 registered individuals resulted in 1,250 individual comments recorded. The "Comment Cruiser," a vinyl-wrapped vehicle with the official RMP logo art, also made scheduled stops in 12 locations gathering over 200 comments.

The majority of comments were received through email, letter, and fax. Those who commented were asked to address issues specifically for the Monticello Field Office (FO), the Moab FO, or both. By the end of the comment period, 6,138 comment letters were received. The number of comments identified in the letters totaled 19,437.

## Issues

The purpose of this bulletin is to summarize the issues identified as a result of the public scoping process. Public comments received during the scoping period were placed in one of three categories:

- Issues to be addressed in the plan;
- Issues addressed through policy or administrative action; or
- Issues beyond the scope of the plan.

### Issues to be addressed in the Plan

**Issue 1. How can increased recreation use, especially motorized vehicle use, be managed while protecting natural resource values?** Recreation in southeastern Utah has grown in popularity in recent years. With popularity comes demand for a variety of recreation opportunities including OHV use, climbing, mountain biking, hiking, camping, base jumping, and equestrian use, to name a few. With the number of visitors growing, recreation is expanding further into the backcountry, while resource and user conflicts are becoming more common. OHV use needs to be managed, including identifying areas to be restricted or closed for the protection of other resource values.

#### *Related Issues:*

- Which areas should be designated as open, limited or closed to OHV use, and which routes should be designated within the limited category?
- What types of recreation travel should be available on designated routes and under what limitations?
- Where could adaptive management be applied in response to unacceptable resource impacts?
- How should recreational uses be managed to limit conflicts with other recreational users?
- How should camping, human waste, fires, and wood collection be managed?
- Where should special recreation management areas (SRMAs) be designated?
- How can conflicts with other resource uses be reduced?
- What management actions should be implemented to mitigate damage caused by recreational uses, including vehicles, on other resources and sensitive areas, especially riparian areas?
- How should recreation in the planning area be managed to ensure public health and safety?
- Where and under what circumstances should permitted recreation uses be available?
- What types of recreational facilities and uses should be available, and what limitations should be required?
- Where can the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) be applied?
- How will areas be managed for visual resources?

### **Issue 2. What areas will be available for mineral development and what restrictions will be imposed?**

Historically, wages within the mineral industry were higher than most other wages; thus, an important aspect of the local economy. Mineral development can potentially affect other resources. Projected trends for energy and mineral development will consider historical data. Energy and mineral development will be analyzed in the context of the need for protection of other resources.

#### *Related Issues:*

- How can conflicts be reduced between mineral development and increasing recreation?
- Where can mineral development occur while protecting other resources?

**Issue 3. What areas should have special designations such as areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) and wild and scenic rivers (WSRs)?** FLPMA and BLM policy require the BLM to give priority to designation and protection of ACECs during the land use planning process. The Wild and Scenic River Act directs federal agencies to consider the potential for including water courses into the National Wild and Scenic River system during the land use planning process.

*Related Issues:*

- What management prescriptions will be applied to areas with special designations?
- What resources need the protection of special designations?
- Should existing special designations be modified?

**Issue 4. How can resources such as watershed, wildlife, and vegetation be protected, maintained, or restored?** Resource uses (grazing, mineral development, OHV use, and recreation) can affect the natural function and condition of the watershed. Plant communities provide habitat for wildlife as well as forage for domestic animals. A healthy cover of perennial vegetation stabilizes the soil, increases infiltration of precipitation, prevents runoff, provides clean water to adjacent streams, and minimizes noxious weed invasion.

*Related Issues:*

- What watersheds may require special protection?
- What water sources are not meeting water quality standards and how can the water quality be improved?
- What restrictions could be placed on resource uses in identified areas to maintain the existence, promote the recovery, or prevent the listing of threatened and endangered species?
- How should wildlife corridors and unfragmented and critical wildlife habitat be protected or improved?
- How should relict plant communities and hanging gardens be managed?
- How should vegetation be allocated to provide forage for grazing animals and wildlife?
- What areas should be available for fuelwood harvesting?
- Where and with what appropriate methods can noxious weeds be eradicated?
- How should resource uses be managed during drought?

**Issue 5. Are there areas where grazing should not be available due to resource conflicts?** The Secretary of the Interior, through the BLM, manages approximately 264 million acres of public rangelands throughout the western United States. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 guide the BLM's management of livestock grazing on public lands. The objectives for grazing administration regulations are to "promote healthy sustainable rangeland ecosystems; to accelerate restoration and improvement of public rangelands to properly functioning condition; to efficiently and effectively administer domestic livestock grazing; and to provide for the sustainability of the western livestock industry and communities that are dependent upon productive, healthy public rangelands" (43 CFR 4100.0-2).

*Related Issues:*

- Are there areas where class or numbers of livestock should be changed?
- Are there specific allotments where management practices should be changed?
- How should grazing be managed in riparian areas?
- How should grazing be managed during times of drought?

**Issue 6. How can riparian/wetland areas be managed to protect, maintain, and restore their proper functioning condition?** Riparian areas support a unique mixture of trees and shrubs, providing vital habitat for wildlife, aquatic species, and plants. Both the density and diversity of plant and wildlife species is normally higher in riparian areas than on adjacent uplands. Healthy riparian areas also reduce the impact of flooding, filter sediment, stabilize banks, store water and recharge groundwater during floods and rainstorms. These areas can also filter sediment and nutrients from surface run-off from adjacent lands. Resource uses such as grazing, mineral development, recreation, and OHV use can affect the natural function and condition of riparian and wetland areas.

*Related Issues:*

- How should riparian systems be managed to maintain or improve the quality of habitat for fish, wildlife (especially migratory birds), plants, and invertebrates?
- How should resource uses be managed to protect riparian areas?

**Issue 7. How can cultural resources be protected from visitation as well as impacts from other resource uses (recreation, grazing, mineral development, etc.)?** Moab and Monticello are both known for their high density of cultural resources, many of which have yet to be documented or recorded. For Native Americans, these resources provide a direct link to their past, and they request that these resources be protected.

*Related Issues:*

- What management practices (i.e. timing, method of development, and location) can be applied to resource uses in order to protect cultural resources?
- Where can cultural resources be used for scientific, educational, recreational, and traditional purposes by Native Americans?

**Issue 8. What lands within the planning area should be identified as targets for acquisition, disposal, or withdrawal?** As mandated by Sec. 106 (a)(1) of FLPMA (43 USC 1701), public lands are retained in federal ownership, the exception being those public lands that have future potential for disposal (i.e., sale and exchange), as described under Sec. 203(a) and Sec. 206 of FLPMA (43 USC 1713; 1716). Public lands have potential for disposal when they are isolated and/or difficult to manage. Lands identified for disposal must meet public objectives, such as community expansion and economic development. The preferred method of disposal is land exchange. Other lands can be considered for disposal on a case-by-case basis. Disposal actions are usually in response to public request or application that results in a title transfer, wherein the lands leave the public domain. Public land cannot be effectively administered without legal and physical access. Methods used to acquire legal rights that meet resource management needs include negotiated purchase, donation, exchange, and condemnation. A withdrawal means withholding an area of public land from settlement, sale, location, or entry for the purpose of limiting activities in order to maintain other public values.

**Issue 9. Where is fire desired or not desired, and in what areas could fire be utilized as a management tool for vegetative treatments?** Drought and beetle infestation in southern Utah has caused hazardous fuel loading, increasing the threat of wildfires. Areas of pinyon die-off and dry grasslands have created areas of higher risk for fire hazard, and could require treatment. A fire management plan will be developed that addresses high-risk areas, fire prevention, prescribed burns, rehabilitation and restoration, hazardous fuels reduction, and the protection of life and property.

*Related Issues:*

- Where will fire be utilized to eradicate noxious weeds and invasive species?
- Where should the natural fire regime be reestablished?
- What developed areas should be protected from wildland fire?
- What post-fire restoration practices are acceptable?

### **Issues Addressed through Policy or Administrative Actions**

Policy or administrative actions include those actions that are implemented by the BLM as a standard operating procedure, because law requires them, or because they are the policy of the BLM. Administrative actions do not require a planning decision to implement. The following issues can be addressed by administrative actions:

- Compliance with existing laws, regulations, and policies (FLPMA, NEPA, Endangered Species Act, Antiquities Act, Clean Air Act, National Historic Preservation Act, etc.).
- Education, enforcement/prosecution, vandalism, and volunteer coordination.
- Consistency with existing federal, state, and local plans.
- Management of cultural resources that includes up to date inventories, non-disclosure of sensitive sites, proposed cultural sites for the National Register of Historic Places, and Native American consultation.
- Management of existing Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) under the Interim Management Policy (IMP).
- Inventory of riparian and wetland areas. Use monitoring to help protect these resources.
- Recreation management improvements including a comprehensive signage system and maps.
- Administration of existing leases, permits, and other authorized uses.
- Valid existing rights.
- Monitoring wildlife and biodiversity.
- Monitoring air quality.
- Mitigation measures for site-specific projects.
- Controlling noxious weeds.

- Making rangeland and wildlife improvements.
- Establishing utilization levels to maintain rangeland health.
- Eligibility standards for specially designated areas.
- Protection of threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.
- Coordination with local, state, and federal agencies.
- Cooperation with user groups.
- Analysis of impacts (including socio-economics) are not part of the Plan and are addressed in the DEIS.

### **Issues beyond the scope of the plan**

Issues beyond the scope of the plan include all issues not related to decisions that would occur as a result of this planning process. In short, they include decisions that are not under the jurisdiction of the Moab and Monticello FOs or are beyond the capability of the BLM to resolve as part of the planning process. Issues identified in this category are as follows:

- Settlement of RS 2477 claims.
- New wilderness proposals.
- Eliminating grazing, mineral development, and OHV use on all public lands.
- Activities and uses beyond the jurisdiction of the BLM.
- Changing existing laws, policies, and regulations.
- Availability of funding and personnel for managing programs.
- Considering alternative energy sources as substitutes for activities related to mineral development.

For more details, see the Scoping Report for the Moab and Monticello RMPs on the websites at [www.moabrm.com](http://www.moabrm.com) and [www.monticellorm.com](http://www.monticellorm.com).