

# Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Planning Newsletter #3



## The Planning Process Continues with a New Contractor

It has been almost a year since the last planning newsletter for Canyons of the Ancients National Monument was published. During this time, a new contractor was retained to assist the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in developing the Monument's first Resource Management Plan and associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The initial planning contractor was let go, due to performance issues. Although this change in contractors slowed the planning process, we are now moving forward as expeditiously as possible!

The new contractor is Ecology and Environment, Inc. (E&E), a national consulting firm with an office located in Boulder, Colorado. To provide better familiarity with the Monument and surrounding communities, E&E has included three regional firms on its team: Ecosphere Environmental Services of Durango, Colorado; Alpine Archaeological Consultants of Montrose, Colorado; and Dunmire Consulting of Cahone, Colorado. Another subcontractor, addressing paleontology (i.e., study of fossils) issues in the Plan is Dr. Rod Scheetz of Provo, Utah. Both Ecosphere and Alpine have previous experience working in the Monument.

On June 27, the E&E project manager attended a meeting of the Monument Advisory Committee to help him get up to speed on the project. E&E officially began its work on the project with a kickoff meeting at the Anasazi Heritage Center on July 5th. On July 6, representatives of the BLM and U.S. Forest Service hosted a Monument field trip attended by the core members of the E&E project team. The tour included stops at the Sand Canyon Trailhead in McElmo Canyon, a proposed oil and gas drilling site south of McElmo Creek, various archaeological sites in the area, a Kinder-Morgan Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) processing and compressor facility, an abandoned CO<sub>2</sub> location in the process of reclamation, and the Sand Canyon Pueblo. The field trip was followed by a tour of the Anasazi Heritage Center's extensive collection of archaeological artifacts (approximately 3.3 million items). E&E personnel then visited the Escalante Pueblo and, the next day, drove to Lowry and Painted Hand Pueblos in the Monument and several sites in Hovenweep National Monument.



*Steve Kandell (center), Monument Planner, discusses planning issues at the Sand Canyon trailhead.*

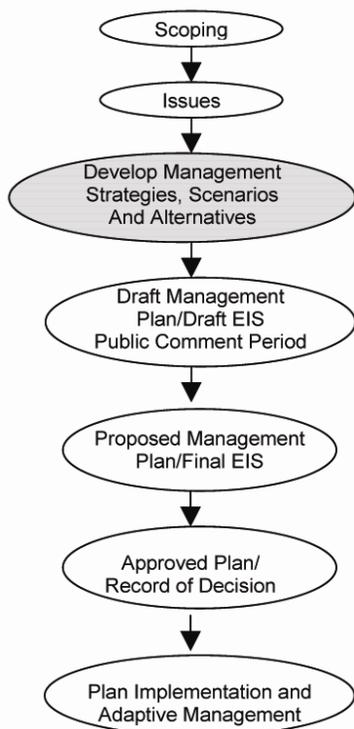


*A portion of the Painted Hand Pueblo complex, one of the most visited cultural sites within the Monument.*

### Where We Are in the Process

As described in Newsletter #1, the preparation of a Resource Management Plan for the Monument is required by, and will be completed in accordance with, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The previous Plan for BLM land within the Monument was completed in 1985, 15 years before the Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation. A Resource Management Plan is a major federal action affecting the environment as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which therefore requires BLM to prepare an EIS to evaluate and disclose impacts to the cultural, biological, physical, and human environments that could potentially result under the various planning alternatives.

The planning process overview flowchart (below left) summarizes the major steps in the BLM planning process. We have completed the *Scoping* and *Issues* steps and are nearing completion of the *Management Strategies, Scenarios, and Alternatives* step.



**Scoping Comments by Resource Category**

Mineral Resources	25.6%
Transportation Network	25.3%
Off Highway Vehicles	12.4%
Wilderness and Special Areas	12.4%
Cultural and Paleontological Resources	7.4%
Soils, Water, and Air	7.2%
Visitor Use	6.5%
Wildlife and Fisheries Management	1.0%
General Recreation	0.7%
Visual Resource Management	0.6%
Rangeland Management / Grazing	0.5%
Riparian Resources	0.1%
Law Enforcement	0.1%
Lands and Realty	0.1%
Forestry Management	0.03%
Fire Management	0.01%

Newsletter #2 described the results of the *Scoping* process. Scoping describes the process by which federal agencies ask the public for help in determining the “scope” of issues to be addressed in the planning process. The scoping comments table (above right) shows that more than one-half of the public comments dealt with mineral resources or transportation, while another one-fourth dealt with off highway vehicles (OHVs) or wilderness and other special resource areas.

While these are clearly the issues about which the public is the most concerned, the table does not mean that the other items are not important. Indeed, public comments made it clear that the first four topics are of concern in large part because of their potential to adversely impact other Monument resources (e.g., cultural, biological, physical, and recreational).

Newsletter #2 listed 16 proposed planning criteria for the Monument, based on the results of the *Scoping* process, input from the Monument Advisory Committee, and the experience of the Monument Planning Team. Newsletter #2 requested public comments on the 16 planning criteria. BLM received a few public comments on the proposed planning criteria. The final criteria are attached at the end of this newsletter.

## The Next Steps in the Process

The mandate for management of the Monument is the protection of objects (i.e., cultural, biological, geological, scientific) as set forth in the President's Proclamation. This distinguishes the Monument from other areas managed by BLM. No management alternative may run counter to that mandate. In addition, the Resource Management Plan and its EIS, and the process by which they are developed, must comply with other laws and regulations (e.g., Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act).

In developing a proposed set of Monument management actions, both the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and NEPA require that BLM consider a reasonable range of alternatives in addition to "no action" (i.e., continuing current management practices). BLM anticipates evaluating three alternative management scenarios in addition to no action. These alternatives will represent a range of different options for managing Monument resources, land uses, and land areas. Depending on comment and input from the Monument Advisory Committee and cooperating agencies, BLM's preferred alternative may involve combining some of the alternative components. In other words, the preferred alternative may not be one of the analyzed alternatives but a different combination of their components.

The E&E team will shortly begin preparing the *Purpose and Need* and *Affected Environment* portions of the Draft Plan and EIS. These sections are based primarily on existing information and can be started without the alternatives having been finalized. BLM is nearing completion of a background document—the *Analysis of the Management Situation*—which E&E will use as the starting point in describing existing resources and management of the Monument. Typically, the *Affected Environment* section of the Plan and EIS supplements the Analysis of the Management Situation with information available from a variety of federal, state, and local governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, the scientific literature, and other sources.

## Schedule

Because of the lengthy process of terminating the previous contract and selecting a new contractor (E&E), a new project schedule is being developed. Specifics of what is achievable, and when, are being discussed within BLM and with E&E. Much of the project schedule is driven by mandatory time periods for public review/comment on both the Draft and the Final Plan and EIS documents, and by the number and complexity of revisions that may be required to incorporate public, Monument Advisory Committee, and cooperating agency input.

While BLM is unable to establish a firm schedule at present, we are aiming to have planning documents available to the public in the following general timeframes:

- Analysis of the Management Situation – Summer 2005
- Draft Resource Management Plan/EIS – Spring 2006
- Proposed Resource Management Plan /Final EIS – Fall 2006
- Record of Decision (ROD) – Winter 2006-2007

## Neighboring Planning Efforts

Major planning efforts continue for the National Park Service's Hovenweep National Monument and BLM's Monticello Field Office in Utah. Four separate parcels or about 400 acres of Hovenweep are surrounded by Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. The Park Service has completed its draft range of alternatives and is currently working on developing a preferred alternative for the Hovenweep National Monument general management plan. This plan will provide a general framework to guide long-term park management decisions.

BLM's Monticello Field Office abuts the entire western boundary of Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, and this office is also currently revising its resource management plan. The Monticello Office is also working on completing a draft range of alternatives and expects to distribute their Draft Resource Management Plan and EIS in March 2006. Canyons of the Ancients National Monument planning staff continue to consult with both of these entities on the development of their plans. Consultation will continue throughout their respective planning processes to ensure

coordination on a number of overlapping planning issues (e.g., transportation). For more information on these planning efforts, please visit their websites (which may be temporarily unavailable) or call them directly at:

Hovenweep National Monument: <http://planning.nps.gov/plans.cfm> or 435-719-2100

BLM Monticello Field Office: <http://www.monticellormp.com> or 435-587-1500

## Monument Advisory Committee

The Monument Advisory Committee met on June 27 at the Dolores Public Lands office due to roof replacement at the Anasazi Heritage Center. The main purpose of the meeting was to update the Committee on the status of the planning process, discuss Committee business (e.g., vacant Committee member positions, electing new officers), and to present findings from the *Reasonable, Foreseeable Development: Oil, Natural Gas, and Carbon Dioxide in Canyons of the Ancients National Monument* (RFD) document.

The Committee consists of eleven members living in, or within reasonable proximity to, southwestern Colorado. It includes representatives from both the Montezuma and Dolores County Boards of County Commissioners, two tribal/pueblo representatives, two cultural resources representatives, a livestock grazing permittee, a fluid minerals development representative, a private landowner and two members at large. The purpose of the Committee is to provide recommendations to the BLM concerning the development and implementation of the Plan.

One of the Committee's main accomplishments to date has been submittal of recommendations to assist BLM in developing management alternatives. These recommendations have been very helpful and reflect a broad representation of public and Committee input. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for September 6, 2005 (9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.) at the Heritage Center. Committee meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for public input.

## The Four Corners Landscape

Escalante Pueblo (below), located on a hilltop behind the Heritage Center, a pleasant ½-mile stroll on an accessible hard-surface trail. The sweeping vista from Escalante Pueblo and the trail includes a breathtaking view across Lake McPhee toward the La Plata Mountains. Hesperus Peak, the highest point in the La Platas, is one of the four Sacred Mountains of the Navajo (the "mountain of the north"). Other reference points visible from the hilltop and still significant to Native Americans today include the San Juan Mountains, Mesa Verde, Sleeping Ute Mountain, and Canyons of the Ancients in Colorado; the Abajo and La Sal mountains in Utah; and the Chuska and Carrizzo mountains in Arizona.

Escalante Pueblo was occupied in the early AD 1100s. Its location, like many other Ancestral Puebloan sites, may have been selected because of its visual connection with the surrounding landscape. The pueblo is named after Father Silvestre Velez de Escalante, a Spanish missionary-explorer who passed through the area in 1776 as part of an expedition seeking a northern route from Santa Fe (New Mexico) to Monterey (California).



## Final Planning Criteria

The following is a list of the final planning criteria for the Monument. These will guide and direct the development of the Plan and EIS. More specifically, the criteria will determine how the planning team will approach the development of alternatives and, ultimately, the selection of a preferred alternative:

1. The Plan will establish the guidance upon which the BLM will manage the resources and values in the Monument. The Monument Plan will supersede the existing 1985 San Juan/San Miguel Plan and will be integrated with provisions of existing management plans and policies for adjacent lands (e.g., Montezuma Comprehensive Plan).
2. The planning process will include an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and culminate with the issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD).
3. The Plan will be completed in compliance with the Federal Land Management and Policy Act (FLPMA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and all other applicable laws, regulations, executive orders, and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) policies.
4. The Plan will meet the requirement of the Monument Proclamation to protect the objects of geological, archaeological, historical, and biological value within the Monument.
5. The Monument Planning Team will work collaboratively with the State of Colorado, Montezuma and Dolores Counties, tribal governments, cooperating agencies, municipal governments, other Federal agencies, the Monument Advisory Committee, and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals.
6. Decisions in the Plan will strive to be compatible with existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, tribal, and federal agencies to the extent that they are in conformance with Federal law and regulation.
7. The planning process will involve Native American tribal governments and will provide strategies for protecting recognized traditional uses.
8. The Plan will meet the requirement of the Proclamation to not enlarge or diminish the jurisdiction of the State of Colorado with respect to fish and wildlife management.
9. The Plan will incorporate the Colorado BLM Guidelines for Recreation Management. It will set forth a framework for managing recreational activities in order to provide for the enjoyment and safety of the visiting public consistent with the Proclamation.
10. The lifestyles of area residents, including the activities of hiking, grazing and hunting, will be considered in the Plan.
11. Any lands or interests therein located within the planning area boundary, which are acquired by BLM, will be managed consistently with the Plan, subject to any constraints associated with the acquisition.
12. The Plan will meet the requirement of the Proclamation to prepare a transportation plan that addresses the actions, including road closures to travel restrictions, necessary to protect the scientific and historic resources of the Monument. Furthermore, as required under the Proclamation, motorized and mechanized vehicle use off road will be prohibited, except for emergency or authorized administrative purposes.
13. The Plan will not address Monument boundary adjustments or proposals to change the Proclamation.
14. The Plan will recognize valid existing rights within the Monument and review how valid existing rights are verified. The Plan will also outline the process the BLM will use to address applications or notices filed after completion of the Plan on existing claims or other land use authorizations.
15. The Plan will emphasize the scientific and historic resources of the Monument. It will also identify opportunities and priorities for research and education related to the resources for which the Monument was created. In addition, it will describe an approach for incorporating research into management actions.
16. The management of livestock grazing is governed by existing laws and regulations. The Plan will incorporate the BLM Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing in Colorado. The Plan will layout a strategy for ensuring proper grazing practices are followed within the Monument.

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## Anasazi Heritage Center

The Anasazi Heritage Center serves as headquarters for Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. The Heritage Center is a museum interpreting the history and culture of the Monument, the Trail of the Ancients Scenic and Historic Byway, and the Four Corners region. The Center's hands-on Discovery Area, interactive computer programs, education programs, permanent exhibits and films explore archaeology, local history, and Pueblo, Ute, and Navajo lifeways. Current special exhibits include Navajo textiles and "Ancient Images and Pueblo Perspectives" about the Lowry Pueblo murals. The museum shop has books, teaching guides, videos, and educational materials about the ancient and more recent history of the Four Corners area.

Before visiting the Monument, visitors should go to the Heritage Center for information on road conditions and places of interest based on their desired experience. The Monument's planning website (<http://www.blm.gov/rmp/canm/index.html>) may be temporarily unavailable to the public. In the interim, or for those without internet access, copies of planning documents may be viewed at the Heritage Center.

The Anasazi Heritage Center is located on Colorado Highway 184, about 3 miles west of Dolores and 10 miles north of Cortez. It is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week. For more information call 970-882-5600.

