

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

Bureau of Land Management
US Department of the Interior

Livestock Grazing Plan Amendment EIS NEWSLETTER #5 - Alternatives Selected for Detailed Study June 2016

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for your interest in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument's Livestock Grazing Monument Management Plan Amendment (MMP-A) and associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is preparing the MMP-A/EIS with assistance from several cooperating agencies.

We asked for your comments during the scoping period from December 2013 to January 2014, and again in January 2015. Then we developed preliminary draft alternatives and then further refined them using feedback from the public and stakeholders, as well as the State of Utah, Kane and Garfield counties, American Indian tribes, and the National Park Service. The BLM and cooperating agencies completed review of the preliminary alternatives, and have developed five distinct alternative grazing management strategies that will be analyzed in detail in the EIS. The alternatives consider different scenarios for managing livestock and improving land health in the planning area. They are briefly summarized here, and more information is available on the Monument's Livestock Grazing Plan Amendment website at <http://blm.gov/pgld>.

We wanted to make sure we heard what the public was saying, so we included two opportunities for public input. We've heard a full range of ideas related to livestock grazing: from closing the entire area for grazing to opening the entire area for grazing. BLM is required by law to use the best available science and policy to make decisions that are in the interest of all citizens of the United States.

We are not seeking further feedback at this time; however, the public will have an opportunity to comment when the draft EIS is released, currently planned for the end of 2016. The draft EIS will also provide analysis of each alternative.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Staszak
Monument Manager
Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

The BLM is an agency in the US Department of the Interior that manages approximately one-quarter billion acres – more than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. Approximately 27 million acres of BLM administered lands make up the collection of National Conservation Lands, also known as the National Landscape Conservation System. These include BLM

**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, and National Scenic and Historic Trails. The mission of the National Conservation Lands is to conserve, protect, and restore these nationally significant landscapes that are recognized for their outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values.

Planning Area Defined

The planning area includes all public lands within Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) and public lands for which GSENM has livestock grazing administration responsibility. These include BLM-administered lands within GSENM and other public lands in parts of both the BLM Kanab and Arizona Strip Field Offices as well as lands managed by the National Park Service (NPS) in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (Glen Canyon).

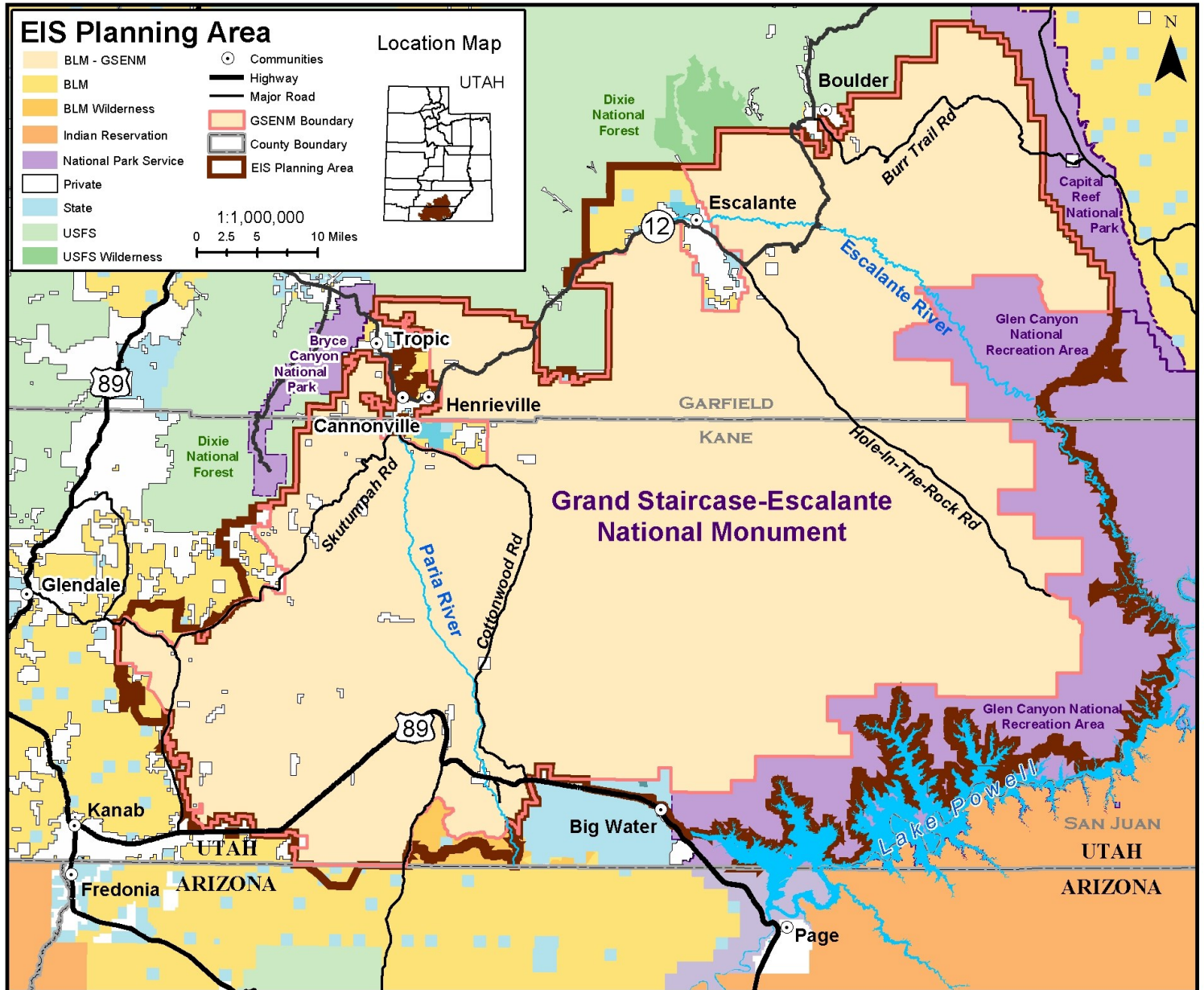
Agencies that have agreed to help manage the study include the NPS, the State of Utah, Garfield County, Kane County, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. These cooperators have been working closely with BLM on every aspect of the study, including the alternative development process.

Cooperating Agencies Established

While the BLM has overall responsibility for the MMP-A/EIS, a number of other federal and local agencies have significant interest in this project. Several agencies and American Indian tribes were invited to participate as cooperating agencies.

Common Acronyms and Abbreviations

- AUM - Animal Unit Month
- BLM - Bureau of Land Management
- EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
- FLPMA - Federal Land Policy Management Act
- Glen Canyon - Glen Canyon National Recreation Area
- GSENM - Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument
- MMP - Monument Management Plan
- MMP-A - Monument Management Plan Amendment
- NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act
- NPS - National Park Service



History & Background: What's Happened So Far?

Project Purpose and Need Defined

The plan amendment is focused on management of livestock grazing in and around GSENM. The plan will identify lands both available and unavailable for grazing. The amendment will also provide clearer guidelines for allotment management, prescribe the amount of forage available for livestock, and provide direction for other grazing practices as required by law and rule.

This plan amendment also intends to provide both BLM and ranchers the flexibility to adapt to new and emerging issues and opportunities for livestock grazing based on new information and monitoring.

Preliminary Alternative Grazing Management Strategies Developed

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that environmental and social impacts of federal actions are carefully examined and federal agencies develop a range of reasonable alternatives that “must be rigorously explored and objectively evaluated.” What constitutes a range of reasonable alternatives depends on the nature of the proposal and the facts in each case. People in this region care a great deal about how livestock grazing is managed, but opinions vary greatly. Studying a range of alternatives allows us to consider various ways to manage grazing and address other resource issues.

When we first started talking with local communities and interested stakeholders, some people called for the BLM to close the entire area to grazing while others wanted to open the entire area to livestock grazing. Because livestock grazing has been central to the local economy for more than 100 years, some people feel very strongly that it should continue uninterrupted, while others think that the protection of the natural, cultural and recreational resources of GSENM should take precedence over livestock grazing.

BLM’s overarching guidance, the Federal Land Policy Management Act, requires the BLM to balance livestock grazing with other uses. The alternatives selected for detailed study in the EIS reflect a range of opinions and approaches and were developed in consultation with the public and local governments.

Preliminary Alternatives Refined Through Public Input

Scoping is a public process that helps to frame the issues to be addressed through the EIS as well as the range of alternatives that might resolve those issues. Public scoping meetings and workshops were held in December 2013 and January 2014, and we



asked for additional input on the preliminary alternatives a year later. Public comments have been analyzed and included in the *Preliminary Alternatives Comment Report*. This report is available as a hardcopy at the BLM Office in Kanab (669 S. HWY 89A, Kanab, UT 84741) or in Escalante at the Interagency Visitor Center (755 W. Main, Escalante, UT, 84726). It is also available on the Monument project website at <http://blm.gov/pgld>.

Most comments BLM received related directly to livestock grazing and forage. We also heard concerns about impacts on soils, effects on the local economy and lifestyle of long-time ranchers, compatibility of grazing with recreation, and concerns about natural, biological, and cultural resources. Some people expressed concerns about GSENM “Objects ” (as identified in the Monument’s Proclamation), Glen Canyon “Values and Purposes,” noxious weeds and non-native invasive plants, historic and prehistoric resources, paleontological resources, public health and safety, tribal interests and American Indian religious concerns.

Over the past two and a half years, BLM has received a great deal of information from local residents and other stakeholders, including scientific studies, which are contributing to this effort.

Alternatives to be Studied in Detail in the EIS

Descriptions and comparisons of the preliminary alternatives were published in December 2014. The finalized alternatives are the same or very similar to the preliminary set. The five alternatives to be analyzed in detail in the EIS are briefly summarized here.



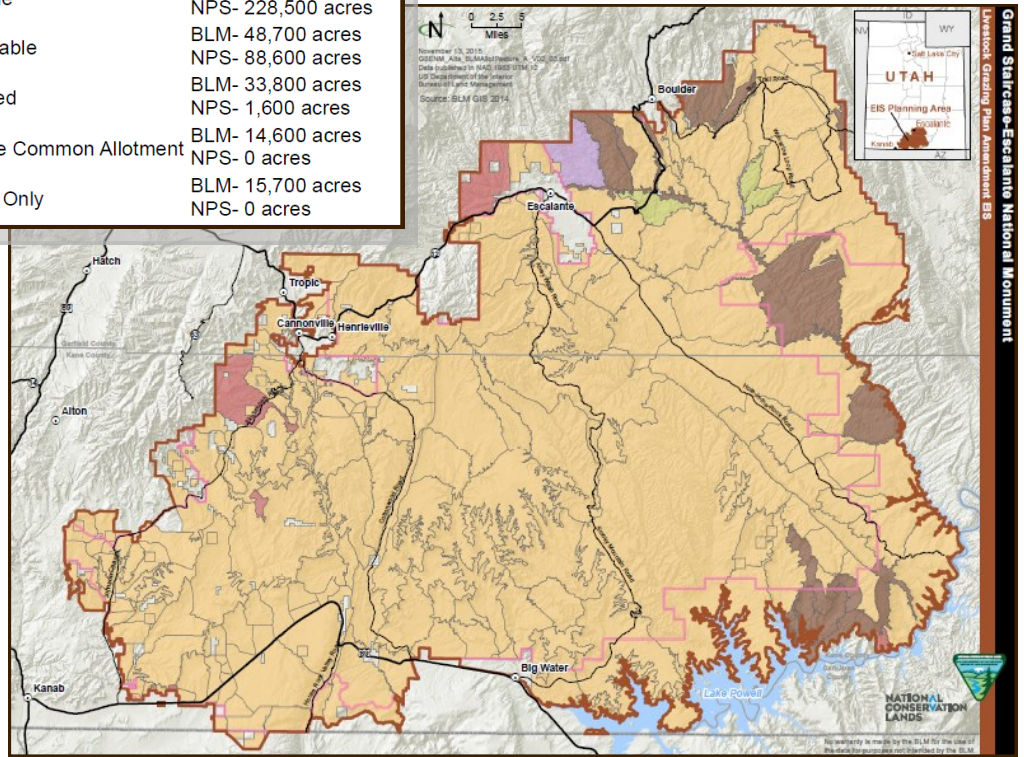
Changes and refinements that have occurred over the past year are **bolded** for comparison. The main changes have been made to Alternative C, which includes a greater initial reduction in livestock grazing than the preliminary alternative.

The five alternatives represent a broad range of options for analysis of impacts. For example, the acreage available for livestock grazing ranges from 0 to approximately 2,135,300 acres, and the associated animal unit months (AUMs) range from 0 to approximately 107,955. Areas closed to grazing for a variety of environmental and social reasons range from approximately 106,900 acres to 2,242,000 acres.

Alternative A

Alternative A is the “no action” alternative required to be analyzed by NEPA. Alternative A would continue the current management direction and level of grazing intensity contained in the 2000 Monument Management Plan, the four BLM Management Framework Plans, and the 1999 Grazing Management Plan for Glen Canyon. Livestock grazing would continue at current permitted levels and areas currently closed to livestock grazing would remain unavailable to grazing.

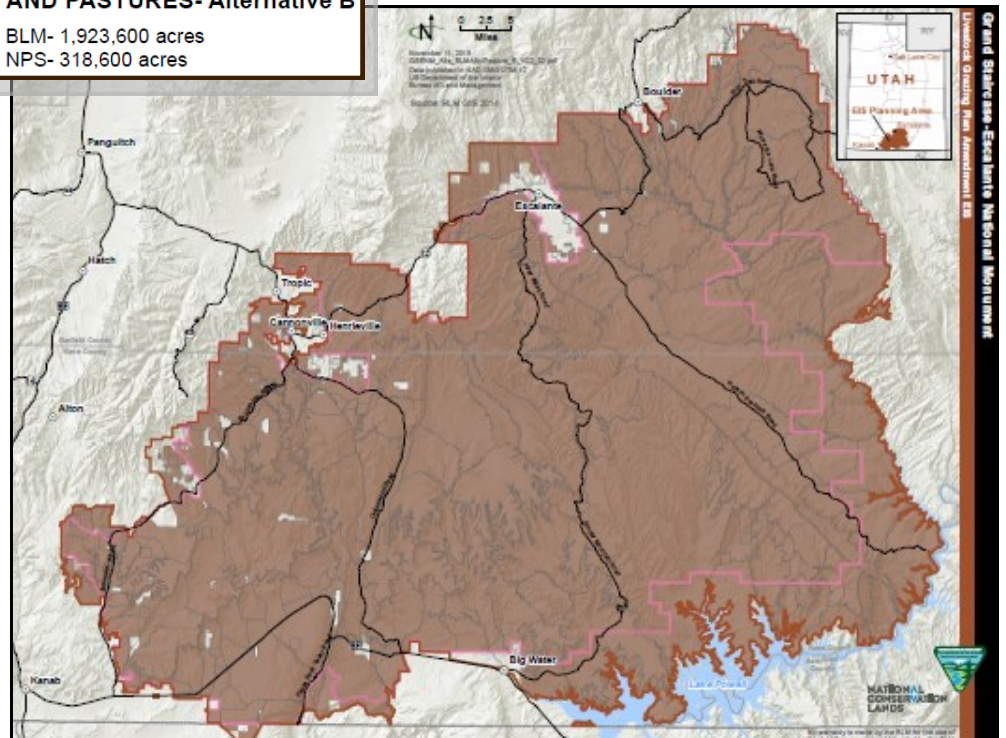
ALLOTMENTS AND PASTURES- Alternative A	
Available	BLM- 1,810,600 acres NPS- 228,500 acres
Unavailable	BLM- 48,700 acres NPS- 88,600 acres
Unallotted	BLM- 33,800 acres NPS- 1,600 acres
Reserve Common Allotment	BLM- 14,600 acres NPS- 0 acres
Trailing Only	BLM- 15,700 acres NPS- 0 acres



Alternative B

Alternative B was developed in response to public comments that suggested most or all of GSENM and Glen Canyon be closed to grazing due to perceived impacts on natural ecosystems, cultural resources, and recreation experiences. Under Alternative B, all livestock grazing would be discontinued in the planning area. Permittees would receive a two-year notification that livestock grazing would be discontinued and provided federal compensation for improvements within the allotments.

ALLOTMENTS AND PASTURES- Alternative B	
Unavailable	BLM- 1,923,600 acres NPS- 318,600 acres

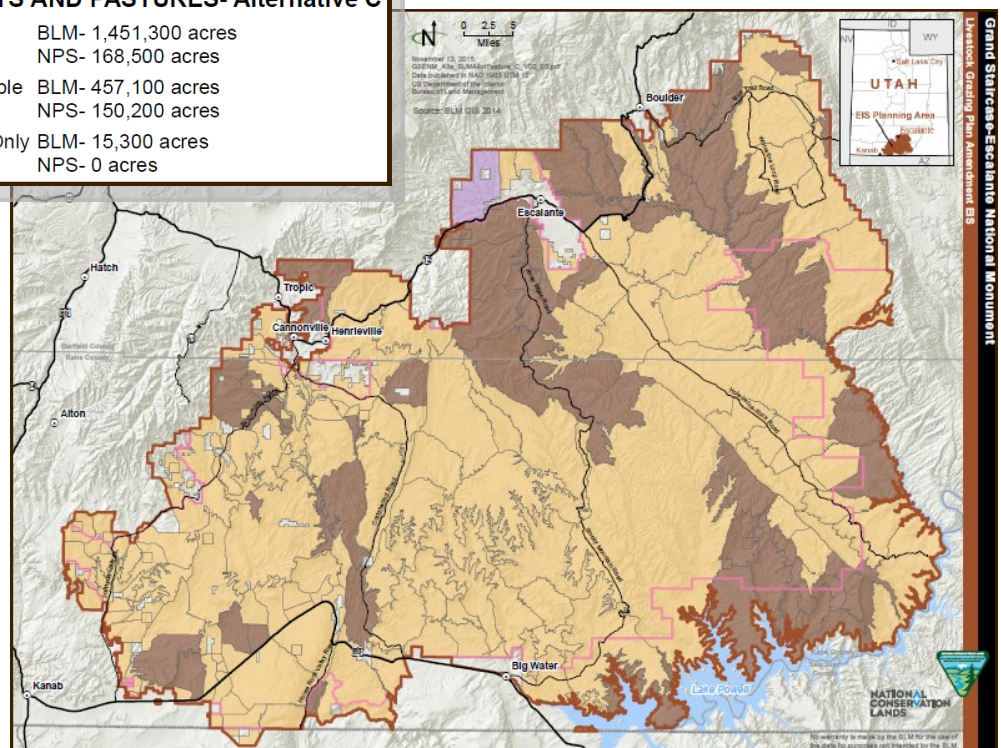




Alternative C

Alternative C was developed in response to public and stakeholder comments received during scoping. This alternative would reduce the total acres available for livestock grazing and the amount of forage allocated to livestock compared with current management. **The updated Alternative C includes more closures than those identified in the preliminary alternative. Initially, BLM would implement several large closures to address resource concerns in areas that do not meet rangeland health standards, have sensitive soils or biological soil crusts, and present major recreation conflicts. After the initial closures, a process of voluntary relinquishments or retirements would occur over time to achieve the objectives of this alternative.** These objectives include restoring areas that are not meeting rangeland health standards; establishing ungrazed reference areas for research, conserving sensitive Monument objects like biological soil crust, riparian areas, and native and special status species; protecting significant historic and prehistoric resources; preserving water quality; and reducing recreation conflicts. Alternative C would go beyond BLM’s regular rangeland health standards by establishing additional criteria to manage livestock grazing. The alternative provides a mechanism to establish larger ungrazed “reference areas” over time in order to study ecosystem recovery in the absence of livestock grazing. This alternative would prioritize native species diversity, and thus, existing rangeland seedings would be restored for ecosystem health with a preference for locally derived native species. Areas that are currently unavailable and unallotted for grazing would remain that way. This alternative would resolve some conflicts by closing several high use recreation areas to livestock grazing.

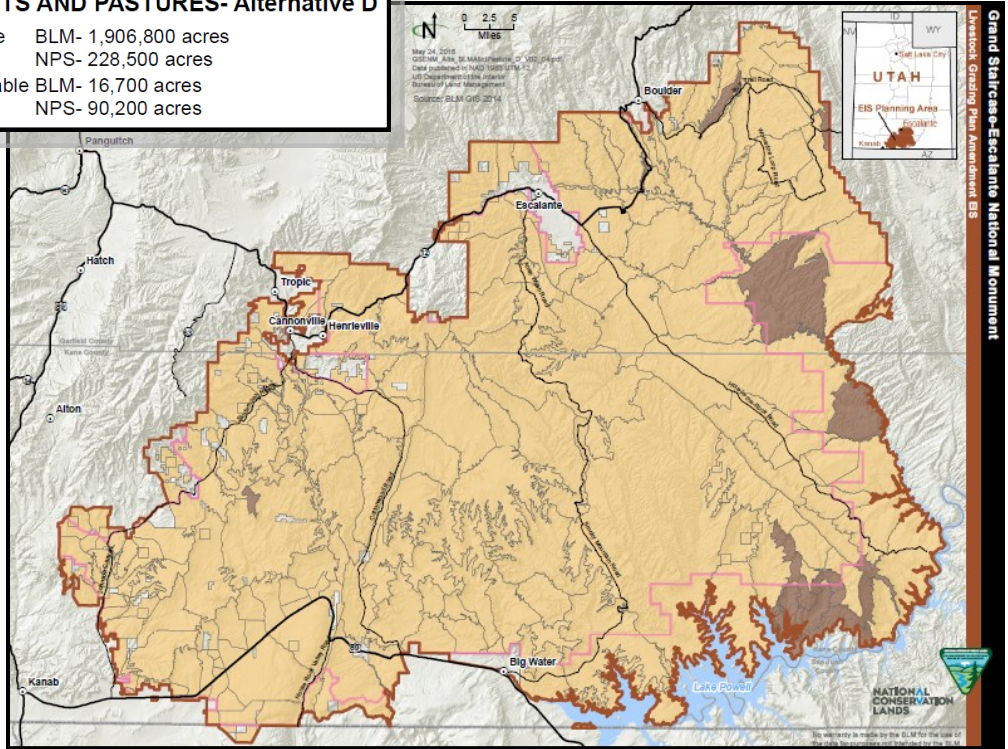
ALLOTMENTS AND PASTURES- Alternative C	
Available	BLM- 1,451,300 acres NPS- 168,500 acres
Unavailable	BLM- 457,100 acres NPS- 150,200 acres
Trailing Only	BLM- 15,300 acres NPS- 0 acres



Alternative D

Alternative D prioritizes the historic and cultural importance of the livestock industry while still supporting multiple uses. This alternative would promote rangeland health by developing additional range improvements. Public and local government comments emphasizing the importance of grazing to local communities helped develop this alternative. Alternative D would restore existing rangeland seedings **utilizing both native and non-native seed mixes and allow for additional rangeland seedings** using native seed and a variety of treatment methods and other range improvements to increase forage. Areas where livestock grazing conflicts exist would be addressed with a site specific solution (e.g., fencing or adjustment to season of use). More acres would be available and more forage would be allocated for livestock grazing (AUMs) compared with current livestock grazing levels.

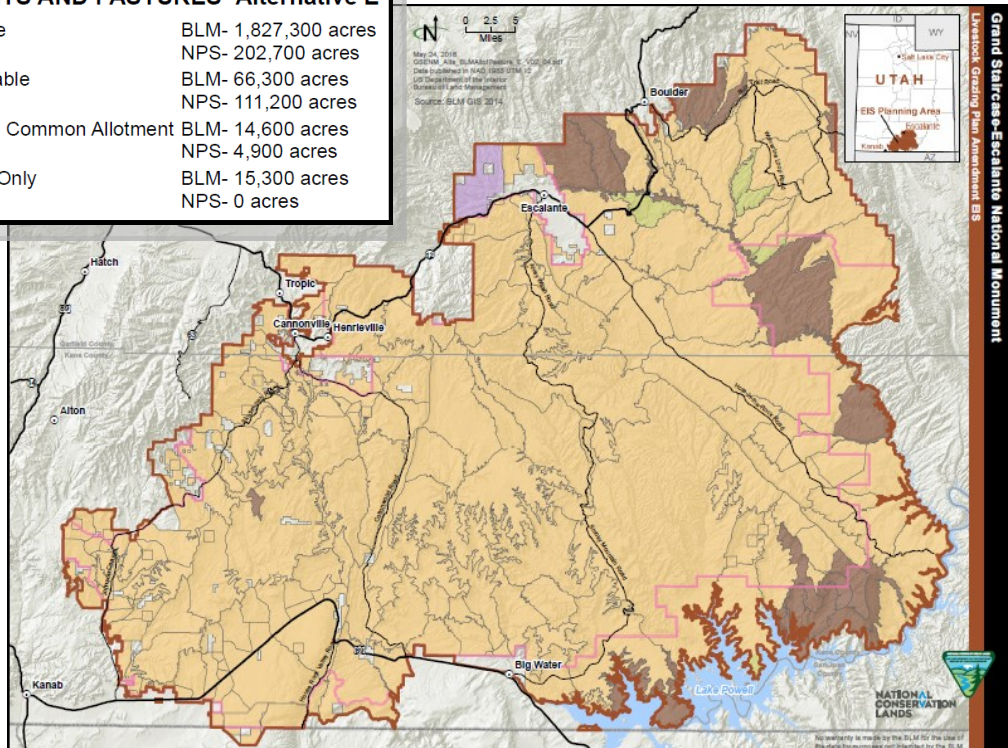
ALLOTMENTS AND PASTURES- Alternative D	
Available	BLM- 1,906,800 acres NPS- 228,500 acres
Unavailable	BLM- 16,700 acres NPS- 90,200 acres



Alternative E

Alternative E emphasizes sustainable use through livestock management designed to ensure that rangeland health standards are achieved. Most closed areas would remain unavailable except for two currently unavailable areas that would be made available. Some currently un-allotted areas would be made unavailable. Compared with current management, slightly fewer acres would be available for grazing and less forage allocated to livestock. Existing seedings would be restored for the purposes of ecosystem health and for forage production. Some livestock/recreation conflicts would be reduced by changing the season of use for livestock or limiting their access. Public and stakeholder comments largely contributed to developing this alternative.

ALLOTMENTS AND PASTURES- Alternative E	
Available	BLM- 1,827,300 acres NPS- 202,700 acres
Unavailable	BLM- 66,300 acres NPS- 111,200 acres
Reserve Common Allotment	BLM- 14,600 acres NPS- 4,900 acres
Trailing Only	BLM- 15,300 acres NPS- 0 acres



Evaluating Alternatives

These five alternatives will be analyzed in detail based on the physical, biological, economic, and social impacts of each one. The assessment will use the best available scientific data, comparative research, technical expertise, professional judgment, and socioeconomic information provided by stakeholders.

Factors that must be considered in the assessment of livestock grazing alternatives include:

- GSENM Proclamation-identified scientific and historic objects
- Resources and values for which Glen Canyon was established (public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment, scenic, scientific and historic features)
- Vegetation, including riparian vegetation, noxious weeds, or non-native plants
- Soils, including biological soil crusts
- Local custom and culture
- Regional economy
- Recreation
- Public health and safety

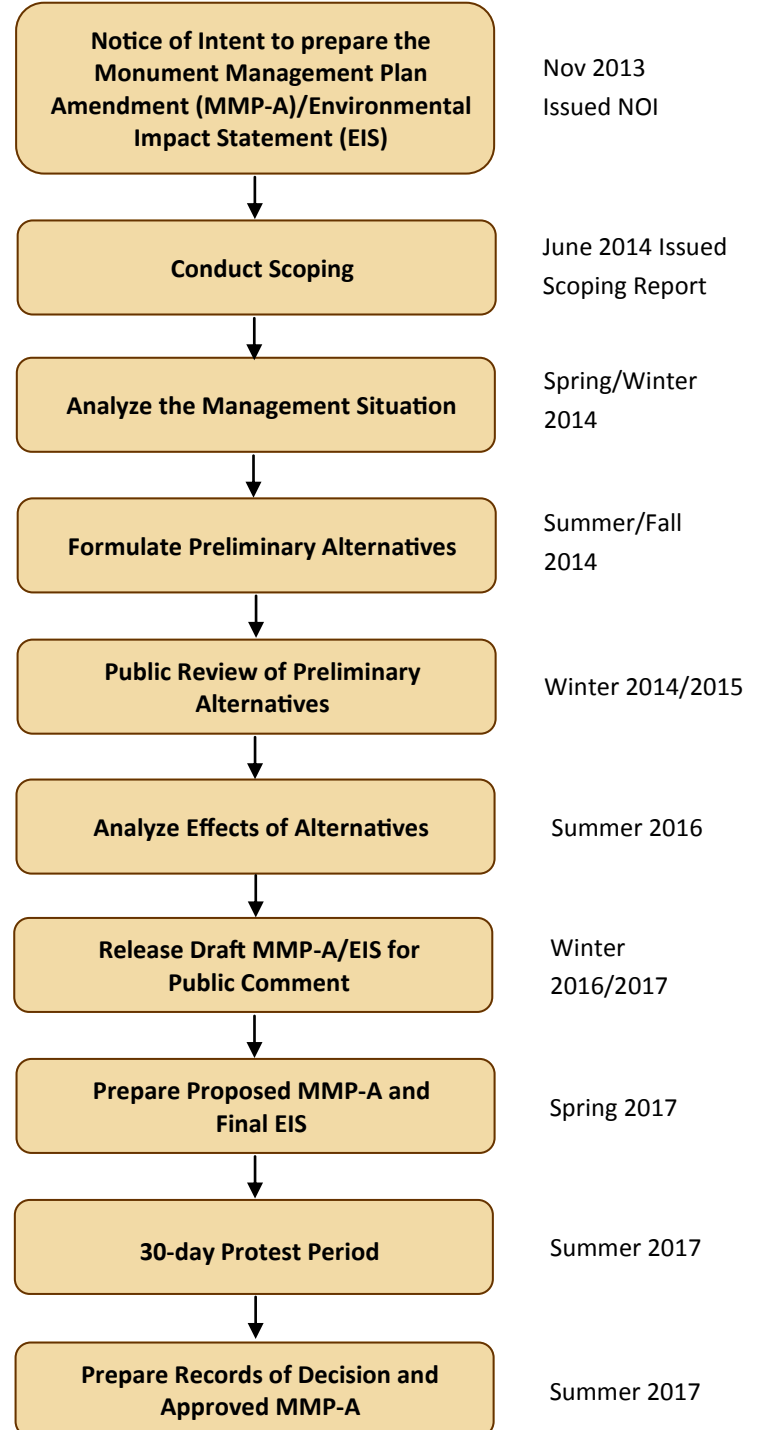
The impacts of changing climate and forage availability will be analyzed. BLM is also assessing impacts on water resources, air quality, fish and wildlife, special status species, cultural and paleontological resources, visual resources, wild and scenic rivers, tribal interests, and wilderness characteristics. BLM will look at the direct, indirect (future consequences), and cumulative (in combination with all other activities in the planning area) impacts of each alternative on these resources.

What's Next?

We expect to publish the Draft MMP-A/EIS by the end of 2016. BLM will announce its availability for public review and comment. BLM will also host public meetings to present the results, answer your questions, discuss the details, and hear your comments. You will have 90 days to provide comments. Public comments will be addressed in the Final MMP-A/EIS that will be completed after public review of the draft. The Final MMP-A/EIS will be the basis for the records of decision detailing the grazing management approach to be implemented. BLM will issue a record of decision for the BLM lands within the planning area, and NPS will issue a record of decision for lands within the planning area in Glen Canyon.



Livestock Grazing Plan Amendment Process





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For more information, visit
the BLM's project website:
<http://blm.gov/pgld>

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