

Follow up Q&A from BLM short information submission Bears Ears

1) On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 8:31 AM, Bowman, Randal <[randal\\_bowman@ios.doi.gov](mailto:randal_bowman@ios.doi.gov)> wrote:

Nikki, one followup question does BLM have more than one process for designating wilderness study areas, or were all done by administrative review, recommendation to the President and transmittal to Congress? I've tried to find this on your web site with no luck.

Answer: Hi Randy,

The BLM designated nearly all its WSAs under the authority of either sections 202 or 603 of FLPMA (a handful were also designated by Congress). Sec. 603 of FLPMA directed the BLM to inventory its lands and, within 15 years of the law's enactment, identify parcels that met the definition of "wilderness" as described in the Wilderness Act of 1964. In carrying out Sec. 603, the BLM broke the process into three phases: inventory, study, and reporting. The BLM completed the wilderness inventory phase by 1980. Between 1980 and 1991, BLM performed the study phase, which consisted of Bureau staff comparing a WSA's wilderness values to other land uses and coming up with a recommendation as to whether a given WSA was suitable to be managed as wilderness. Per Section 603, the study phase included the U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Bureau of Mines conducting surveys to determine the mineral values (if any) present in the WSA's. The recommendation phase consisted of BLM submitting its recommendations to the President, which it did by sending statewide wilderness reports to the President in 1991. The President, in turn, sent recommendations to Congress in 1993. Settlement of the lawsuit, *Utah v. Norton*, clarified that BLM will not designate new WSAs. The BLM WSA's are managed to protect wilderness characteristics until Congress decides whether or not they should be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System as wilderness areas.

Nikki Moore

Acting Deputy Assistant Director, National Conservation Lands and Community Partnerships

On May 22, 2017, at 11:33 AM, Bowman, Randal <[randal\\_bowman@ios.doi.gov](mailto:randal_bowman@ios.doi.gov)> wrote:

Thanks, that is the information I was looking for. Could you have someone check on which of those sections were used for those in Bears Ears and Grand Staircase areas, and then have that shown on the future reports?

Answer: Yes will do! Nikki Moore

2) Question An additional question, on item 3 re WSAs

"3. There are ~48,800 acres within 4 areas (Dark Canyon, Mancos Mesa, Nokai Dome East and Grand Gulch) that are carried forward in the 2008 Monticello Approved RMP for protection of their wilderness characteristics. Mancos Mesa, Nokai Dome East and Grand Gulch are unavailable for oil and gas leasing. Dark Canyon is available subject to a no surface occupancy

stipulation that cannot be waived, excepted or modified. All 48,400 acres are managed as avoidance areas for rights of way (ROW)."

Why are some areas unavailable for leasing, and why is the "no surface occupancy" stipulation unchangeable?

Answer:

The answer in that question is regarding lands with wilderness characteristics that are managed as "natural areas" (i.e., for protection of wilderness characteristics). These are not WSAs (even though most are adjacent to WSAs and have similar names).

These decisions were made in the Monticello RMP, with substantial public input into the selected alternative. I can pull the full supporting documentation, but would need you to advise the level of detail that is necessary.

Regards,

Allison Ginn, National Conservation Lands Program Lead, BLM Utah State Office

#### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL REQUESTED BY DOI ECONOMISTS FOR LARGE DATA CALL BEARS EARS – ANSWERS WILL BE REFLECTED IN THEIR REPORT

Thank you for all of the information you and your colleagues have amassed and shared with us on Bears Ears National Monument. We appreciate the time you all have taken to respond to our data call as well as all of the supplemental documents you provided. We have some follow up and clarification questions below. I can set up a call at your convenience to talk through the questions if that is easier than responding via email. Just let me know what your preference is if you would like me to set up a call, please let me know who to include on the invite.

Oil & Gas:

1. Is there any information about the area that the proposed San Juan Master Leasing Plan would have encompassed? It is our understanding that it would have overlapped with at least part of what is now Bears Ears National Monument (BENM).
2. Is it possible to provide information on why acres nominated for leasing for O&G within what is now BENM were not included in quarterly lease sales? Is there any sense of levels of interest in lease nominations prior to 2014?
3. Are all existing wells on BENM now abandoned? While the last producing well was drilled in 1984, when did production actually cease on what are now monument lands?

Minerals:

4. What material is being produced at the one commercial mineral materials site?
5. What are the land use decisions that precluded processing of potash prospecting applications prior to designation?

Recreation:

6. While generally visitation increased substantially between FY15 and FY16, a couple of activities in particular increased as a percentage of total visitation. Notably:

- “driving for pleasure” increased from 5,445 visitor days in FY15 (2% of total visitor days) to 33,496 visitor days in FY16 (6% of total visitor days)
- “climbing mountain/rock” increased from 4,132 visitor days in FY15 (1% of total visitor days) to 29,363 visitor days in FY16 (6% of total visitor days)

Is there any insight into what is driving these jumps? I am mostly curious because in FY12 FY15, the top 5 activities by visitor day were consistently camping, backpacking, hiking/walking/running, row/float/raft, and viewing cultural sites; but in FY16, driving for pleasure and rock climbing unseated row/float/raft and viewing cultural sites in the top 5 activities.

7. Is Kane Gulch the only ranger station in BENM? Can visitation to Kane Gulch ranger station be considered a fairly representative proxy for visitation to BENM?

Timber:

8. We have not yet received information on timber production from the Forest Service regarding timber activities in Manti La Sal National Forest. Do you know if commercial timber production is permitted in Manti La Sal NF?

Cultural Resources:

9. What surveys and catalogues have been developed for cultural resources? Maps that have been shared with us indicated that only 9.2% of BENM has been inventoried for archaeological resources. Are there plans to survey the remainder of the monument?

Thanks!

Ann

Ann Miller  
Office of Policy Analysis