

**To:** Ashcroft, Tyler[tashcrof@blm.gov]  
**From:** Ginn, Allison  
**Sent:** 2017-10-05T16:37:53-04:00  
**Importance:** Normal  
**Subject:** Review of Hot Topics List - DD: 10/11  
**Received:** 2017-10-05T16:38:44-04:00  
Utah Hot Topics Oct 2017 Draft.docx

Tyler-

Ed and Mike have meetings with Congressional staff in D.C. later this month. We have not been asked to prepare any handouts or formal presentations, but would like to ensure that these hot topics are accurate and current.

Please let me know if you suggest any edits to the following "Hot Topics":

**Bears Ears National Monument:** Following Bears Ears National Monument's designation – per direction in its proclamation – BLM reached out to the State of Utah including the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA), San Juan County, USFS and the Tribes named in the Proclamation to discuss current actions and potential opportunities to work together on projects in the Monument. The BLM Canyon Country District Manager, Monticello Field Office Manager and Utah State Office Project Manager have attended meetings with Manti-La Sal National Forest representatives at the invitation of the Bears Ears Commission to respond to questions.

On April 26, President Trump signed an executive order mandating Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to lead a review of monuments created since 1996 that comprise at least 100,000 acres. In the June 10 Interim report, Secretary Zinke recommended that the monument needs to be “right-sized” and focused on expanding the role for Tribes, referencing “co-management”. A final recommendation is pending.

The BLM meets regularly with San Juan County Commissioners, who have been adamant that no monument management planning should occur. Due to increasing visitation, BLM has been initiating project level activities to enhance visitor services such as improving camping facilities, trailheads and interpretive sites, and stabilizing cultural resource sites. While project level work is continuing, no actions have been taken to initiate monument management planning.

I'm also attaching the full list for your information - if you think we're missing any other major info, please let me know.

Thanks!

Regards,

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195



## BLM Utah Hot Topics October 2017

**Greens Hollow Coal Lease by Application:** The Jan. 2017 Greens Hollow coal lease sale offered 55.7 million tons from the 6,175-acre federal coal tract under lands managed by the Manti-La Sal and Fishlake National Forests in Sevier and Sanpete counties. BLM received a bid from Canyon Fuel Company, LLC – based out of Grand Junction, CO – in the amount of \$22.85 million, or \$3,700.15 per acre. BLM issued the lease in March 2017, which went into effect in April 2017; the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) has not approved a mine plan for this lease and will be making a determination if additional NEPA will be required.

**Alton Coal Mine Lease by Application:** In 2004, Alton Coal Development, LLC submitted a Lease by Application (LBA) to expand its existing private mineral estate surface coal mine to federal mineral estate. A tract delineation, scoping, publication of a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and supplemental EIS were completed. The proponent asked to divide the LBA into two tracts in response to Secretarial Order 3338; the request was withdrawn after Secretarial Order 3348 was issued. The final EIS and its Federal Register Notice package are being reviewed and refined for publication.

**San Rafael Desert Master Leasing Plan:** The proposed San Rafael Desert Master Leasing Plan (MLP) would consider amending leasing decisions in the 2008 Price and Richfield Field Office Resource Management Plans – intended to resolve protests for four parcels that been sold (but not issued) and 16 lease suspensions in the planning area. A Notice of Intent to initiate scoping for the proposed MLP's environmental assessment published in the Federal Register in May 2016. The BLM worked with cooperating agencies to develop draft alternatives released for public comment in Dec. 2016. The BLM has publicly stated its intent to prioritize available resources to align with Departmental and Administration priorities for leasing, development and inspection. Recreation and environmental groups generally favour MLPs and have been vocal about moving forward with the San Rafael Desert MLP. Local counties are generally opposed to MLPs.

**Monument Butte Area Oil and Gas Project Record of Decision:** In Sept. 2016, the BLM signed the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Monument Butte Area Oil and Gas Project in the Uinta Basin, authorizing infill drilling for up to 5,750 new wells to aid in the secondary recovery of oil and gas resources in the area. The development plan includes 119,743 acres of an existing

O&G production area with more than 3,000 wells on federal, state and private land. The project expects to generate between 540-600 million cubic feet of natural gas and 335 million barrels of oil over the next 20 years. Total employment would peak at 500 jobs during build-up and sustain 40-50 jobs over the project's lifetime. About \$73.6 million in taxes would be paid to Uintah and Duchesne counties; about \$138.7 million would be paid to the state. Eleven environmental and health advocacy groups appealed the decision to the IBLA in April 2017.

**Greater Chapita Wells Oil and Gas Infill Drilling Project:** The proposed action is in Uintah County and includes expanding 960 existing pads and constructing 233 new pads to accommodate infill drilling for 2,808 wells, which would result in up to 1,900 acres of surface disturbance. Centralized liquids gathering systems are proposed to minimize air emissions. A draft EIS is expected to publish in fall 2017; the Federal Register Notice package is currently with ASLM.

**Enefit American Oil Company Research Development & Demonstration Oil Shale Lease Extension:** In July 2017, the BLM granted a five-year extension of Enefit American Oil Company's oil shale Research Development & Demonstration (RD&D) lease on 160 acres in the Uintah Basin. Earth Justice filed an appeal after the extension was granted.

**Daneros Uranium Mine Plan Modification:** The Monticello Field Office completed an environmental assessment on a mine plan modification proposal at the Daneros uranium mine in western San Juan County. Energy Fuels, Inc. seeks to expand existing facilities at the Daneros mine, construct new facilities at two previously mined sites (Bullseye and South Portal Areas), improve access roads and install up to eight ventilation shafts. The proposed modification would result in 46 acres of surface disturbance over 20 years. Total production is expected to increase from 100,000 tons in seven years to 500,000 over 20 years. The mine is adjacent to Bears Ears National Monument and currently not in operation due to the low market values for uranium. Access to the mine is on state and county roads that traverse the Monument. The Decision Record is pending.

**La Sal Uranium Mines Complex Plan Modification:** The Moab Field Office completed an environmental assessment on a mine plan modification proposal to the Pandora, La Sal, Beaver Sharft and Snowball uranium mines in northern San Juan county. Energy Fuels Resources, a subsidiary of Energy Fuels, Inc., seeks to expand the existing Pandora mine, install ten ventilation shafts and drill 132 exploration holes on BLM lands spread across three phases of the 20-year life of the mine. The BLM and the USFS analyzed the combined effects of these mining activities in EA. Both Agencies conducted public scoping, held public meetings, and placed the EA out for a 30-day public comment period. The Moab Field Office has completed its analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the project and is preparing to release a FONSI and Decision Record by fall 2017.

**Enefit American Oil ROW EIS Project:** The proposed action for the Enefit American Oil ROW project involves five rights-of-way traversing public lands into private lands, a water supply line, natural gas supply line, oil product line, electric power line, and to upgrade an existing road in support of oil shale development on private lands. The draft EIS comment period was held from April 2016 to June 2016. The Federal Register Notice for the final EIS is expected to publish Dec. 2017.

**Deer Creek Pipeline ROW Project:** In July 2017, BLM approved a right-of-way across BLM lands in Emery County to construct and install a buried water pipeline for the Deer Creek Mine. The pipeline crosses US Forest Service (1.8 miles), BLM (1.2 miles) and private lands (2.6 miles), for a total of 5.6 miles. It will convey mine drainage and facilitate proper water treatment, which is a condition of the mine closure (active coal mining was completed in 2014). The environmental assessment was prepared jointly with the Manti-La Sal National Forest (USFS), and both agencies held multiple public comment periods. The USFS' proposed decision was objected by HEAL Utah and the Sierra Club. Following the USFS' administrative review, the EA was revised to address concerns before both agencies issued final decisions. The BLM decision has been appealed to IBLA by HEAL Utah and the Sierra Club.

**Utah Test and Training Range:** The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2017 was signed into law Dec. 2016. Sections 3001-3004 impose significant requirements for BLM Utah – intended to expand the Utah Test and Training Range and enhance mission safety. Key requirements include forming a community advisory group, developing a Memorandum of Agreement, temporary closures of 703,621 acres of BLM lands, a large land exchange and a mineral withdrawal.

**Washington County Northern Transportation Route/Red Cliffs National Conservation Area:** The 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act (OPLMA) established the Red Cliffs NCA and required the BLM to consider a northern transportation route in the Dec. 2016 St. George Resource Management Plan. The Record of Decision (ROD) for the St. George RMP established the subject lands as an avoidance area for right-of-ways. Due to anticipated future transportation needs, Washington County is requesting BLM move forward with the process to designate lands for a transportation route through the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (NCA). The subject lands for the northern portion of the corridor are within the NCA, containing critical habitat for the federally-listed Mojave Desert Tortoise as well as outstanding scenic values. OPLMA also directed travel management planning efforts to consider the subject route, along with other existing routes and trails develop and establish a travel and transportation network in Washington County. BLM is currently working on an environmental assessment for a Travel Management Plan (TMP) and anticipates releasing the EA for public review in summer 2018. The TMP will not resolve the Northern Corridor designation issue as it is outside the scope of the TMP effort. Color Country District and the St. George Field Office are working closely

with Washington County to develop a road map for a plan amendment to the St. George RMP to address the Northern Corridor transportation route.

In May 2016, Congressman Stewart introduced H.R. 2423 – Washington County, Utah, Public Lands Management Implementation Act – which would reverse the RMP decision and designate a right-of-way for the Northern Corridor.

**Cedar City RMP Revision:** The BLM’s Washington Office is reviewing the draft RMP for the Cedar City Field Office, which administers 2.1 million acres of public lands in Iron and Beaver counties. The field office will continue operating under two land-use plans established in the 1980s until the RMP revision is complete. The RMP was delayed to incorporate Greater Sage-Grouse plans.

**Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Livestock Grazing Plan Amendment:** The Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument is amending its 1999 Monument Management Plan to adequately address livestock grazing decisions. This planning effort will result in decisions about which lands should be available for livestock grazing, how much forage could be available for livestock and specific best management practices for grazing management on the Monument. The planning decision may impact up to 2.1 million acres and includes lands in the Kanab and Arizona Strip field offices, as well as lands managed by the National Park Service in a portion of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area where GSENM administers livestock grazing. Although grazing-use levels have varied considerably from year to year due to factors like drought, no reductions in permitted livestock grazing use have been made as a result of the Monument’s designation nearly 20 years ago. Draft alternatives were put out for public comment in Dec. 2014 and revised based on public comment. Updates were provided to the public in June 2016. The draft EIS is under Washington Office review.

**Eastern Lake Mountains Recreational Target Shooting Closure Plan Amendment:** The Salt Lake Field Office is publishing an interim supplementary rule to permanently prohibit target shooting within a 2,004 acre closure area, as authorized in the Decision Record for the Eastern Lake Mountains Target Shooting Resource Management Plan Amendment. Since 2012, the Salt Lake Field Office has restricted target shooting in the area for public safety and resource protection under temporary closure orders. To meet some of the target shooting demands, the BLM transferred 160 acres of public land to Utah County to develop the Soldier Pass Shooting Range in the southeastern Lake Mountains area. Utah County has arranged for the National Guard to begin construction. The new shooting range will be located less than three miles from the current closure area. Salt Lake Field Office staff collaborated with Utah County, City of Saratoga Springs, Utah County Sheriff, SITLA, the rock art community and target shooting community on this land use plan decision.

**Wild Horse and Burro Program:** While the current appropriate management level (AML) of animals established in Utah land use plans is currently set at 1,956 wild horse and burros, the current population exceeds the AML by 284 percent – an excess of 3,592 animals. As of March 2017, there were 5,215 wild horses and 313 burros on public lands in Utah. In an effort to reduce numbers on the range, BLM-Utah removed 608 animals in FY16. In FY17, 937 horses were removed and 150 mares were treated with a fertility control vaccine. A total of 184 wild horses and burros were adopted in FY16. Our FY17 adoption number is estimated to be over 250 animals. Three different events in FY17 involved 40 youth volunteers in the gentling and training of wild horses before placing them into private care. Utah is the only BLM state conducting research involving neutering wild stallions. This research project is being conducted in the Conger Herd Management Area. Horses were removed from these areas in FY16 and animals were returned with radio collars and GPS trackers. The neutering will occur in Nov. 2017 along with additional removals. This research project is being conducted in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey and Colorado State University.

**Recapture Canyon ATV Trail:** The Monticello Field Office processed an application from San Juan County for an 11.6 mile right-of-way across public lands in Recapture Canyon for an ATV trail. Following extensive outreach to the public and coordination with the county, tribes, stakeholders and consulting parties, and a detailed environmental analysis evaluating six alternatives, a Decision Record was signed in April 2017.

The State of Utah, San Juan County, and Balance Resources have appealed the decision, although the BLM approved the use of a system of trails at the north end of the canyon near Recapture Dam and above the canyon on the west rim for ATV and full-size vehicle use. A total of 6.8 miles of motorized trail has been designated, including 5.6 miles specifically for ATVs and 1.2 miles to accommodate full-size vehicles. The new designation enhances the already extensive network of motorized trails including more than 31 miles of ATV-specific trails with just over 2,800 miles available for motorized use in the BLM Monticello Field Office area.

**Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative:** The Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI), established in 2003, is a partner-driven effort to conserve, restore and manage ecosystems. Since FY06, 1,985 WRI projects have been completed or are in progress. Approximately 1.6 million acres have been treated – including over 400 miles of stream that have been restored to proper functioning condition. In FY16, BLM completed treatments on approximately 71,000 acres that benefited greater sage-grouse – including mechanical vegetation treatments and seeding – and contributed over \$80 million to the WRI. Additionally, BLM contributed \$8.3 million in funding, with over \$2 million matched by the State of Utah and NGO partners. In FY17, BLM-Utah contributed \$10.5 million in funding.

**Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Effort:** BLM is implementing the Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments for 14 land-use plans in Utah. This includes coordinating habitat improvement projects throughout the state with Watershed Restoration Initiative partners. Thus far in FY17, 41,441 acres have been treated, more than any other state with Greater Sage-Grouse habitat. The State of Utah is currently working on a state-level rule making effort that addresses mitigation in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat. The BLM worked with the state in designing the State's process to enable the BLM the best opportunity to apply the State's mitigation approach on public lands. BLM, USFS and the State developed a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for multi-agency Greater Sage-Grouse conservation efforts. These agencies continue to adjust the MOU to reflect the needs of Greater Sage-Grouse conservation in the state, including addressing the State's draft mitigation rule.

**Transcontinental Railroad Grade:** The BLM is considering a proposal to nominate the Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR) in Box Elder County as a National Historic Landmark. The CPRR was part of the Transcontinental Railroad – completed in 1869 – and played a pivotal role in the socioeconomic and sociopolitical development of the American West in the late 19th century. Due to minimal development of the area, visitors can drive along the railroad grade and experience a landscape similar to those travelling by railroad in the 1800s. This stretch of the CPRR is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Historic Landmark designation would enhance the visibility and awareness of the CPRR, but would not place additional restrictions on the land.

**Travel Management Planning:** Over the next ten years, BLM is slated to develop approximately 20 travel management plans to designate off-highway vehicle routes on public lands in Utah. In May 2017, the federal courts approved the “SUWA v. Burke” settlement agreement, which involved challenges to six of BLM Utah's Resource Management Plans (RMP) and Travel Management Plans approved in 2008. In addition to preserving the 2008 RMP decisions, the settlement agreement commits five BLM-Utah field offices to developing 12 travel management plans over eight years and across less than 50% of the area covered under the 2008 plans. BLM is also slated to develop travel management plans to meet the commitments or requirements established in the Greater Sage-Grouse plan amendments, the Washington County Lands Bill (P.L. 111-11), and the Presidential Proclamation that established Bears Ears National Monument. BLM is currently developing a statewide Programmatic Agreement with dozens of stakeholders to clarify the travel management plans' conformance requirements with the National Historic Preservation Act. BLM expects to finalize the agreement by the end of the calendar year.

**National Historic Preservation Act Efforts for Oil and Gas Leasing:** BLM and the Utah State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) are in the preliminary stages of developing a two-party protocol to clarify the agency's responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act

(NHPA) for quarterly oil and gas lease sales. In 2016, BLM deferred multiple parcels from a quarterly oil and gas lease sale because multiple consulting parties and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation disagreed with BLM and SHPO's NHPA findings for how the lease sale would affect cultural resources. BLM expects to finalize the agreement in summer 2018.

**Cerberus Museum Collection:** The BLM Utah State Office continues to be responsible for the short and long-term management of archaeological artifacts forfeited to the U.S. Government resulting from the 2009 Operation Cerberus Action law enforcement investigation. Numerous individuals in the Four Corners region were prosecuted for the illegal looting and black market sale of archaeological resources from the public lands. The collection includes approximately 46,000 individual artifacts. BLM is collaborating with archaeological and museum professionals in each of the Four Corner states to determine the most appropriate long-term disposition of the collection.

**Respect and Protect Campaign:** In 2016, BLM launched the "Respect and Protect" public awareness campaign in partnership with the non-profit organization Tread Lightly!, which aims to eliminate looting and vandalism of archaeological, paleontological and other natural resources from public lands in Utah. To date, the campaign has included the development and marketing of public service announcements in print, online, social media and billboards across the state. BLM is currently developing a Memorandum of Understanding with 14 other federal and state agencies, as well as non-profit organizations to outline how the campaign's message will be consistently disseminated across the state.

**Utah Site Stewardship Program:** In 2016, BLM established a partnership with the non-profit organization Friends of Cedar Mesa to create a statewide Site Stewardship Program aiming to increase the number of volunteer citizen stewards responsible for monitoring at-risk cultural resource sites on public lands in Utah. To date, a program coordinator has been hired, a volunteer training manual has been developed and significant progress has been made on developing a custom mobile application to streamline on-the-ground documentation efforts and facilitate consistent recording of monitoring data across the state.

**Utah Project Archaeology Program:** In 2016, BLM established a partnership with Southern Utah University to develop a Utah Project Archaeology Program. The program coordinator works to develop and disseminate heritage education lesson plans through teacher trainings, and both formal and informal educational settings that meet Utah's K-12 core curriculum standards.

**Cedar Mesa and Monticello Field Office Initiatives:** Each year, the Monticello Field Office issues over 10,000 permits – including permits issued to San Juan River rafters and Cedar Mesa backcountry users. The BLM has been working to stabilize sensitive cultural sites, install protective fences, and provide interpretive information at some of the more frequently visited



sites. The BLM has also initiated several cultural resource related projects including cultural resource inventories in high-use areas, a Class I Inventory, an Ethnographic Study and a Cultural Landscape Assessment.

**Bears Ears National Monument:** Following Bears Ears National Monument’s designation – per direction in its proclamation – BLM reached out to the State of Utah including the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA), San Juan County, USFS and the Tribes named in the Proclamation to discuss current actions and potential opportunities to work together on projects in the Monument. The BLM Canyon Country District Manager, Monticello Field Office Manager and Utah State Office Project Manager have attended meetings with Manti-La Sal National Forest representatives at the invitation of the Bears Ears Commission to respond to questions.

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### **Fire Management Program:**

#### **2017 Fire Weather Forecast**

- From Nov. 1 through early February, Utah received significant precipitation; however, the state is still below average.
- In March, the Great Basin received a significant precipitation, but temperatures have persisted above average.
- April, May, and June weather patterns were dry with above average temperatures.
- The July and August forecasts favor lower temperatures and precipitation.
- We are currently in a neutral El Nino Southern Oscillation pattern that will evolve over the fire season into an El Nino pattern.
- With current data, an extreme fire season is not expected.

#### **BLM-Utah Wildfire Resources**

***Staff***

- Permanent - 150 employees
- Seasonal - 90 employees
- Hotshot Crews - Bonneville Hotshots
- Camp Crews - 13 crews employed 160 youth. The crews are based out of the six counties surrounding Richfield (age range 16-19).

***Equipment***

- Engines - 41
- Dozers - 2
- Water tenders - 6

***Aerial Resources***

- 2 Exclusive use Helitack Platforms
- 2 Exclusive use Air Attack platforms
- 4 Single Engine Air Tankers

***Partnerships***

BLM-Utah received \$85,000 from the National Interagency Fire Center in FY17 for the Local Cooperator Assistance Program. Rural Fire Departments (RFD) and Volunteer Fire Departments (VFD) are typically the first responders to wildfires throughout Utah. These funds are dedicated to providing instructors, education and training materials to the RFDs/VFDs to improve firefighting tactics in Utah's sage-steppe ecosystems.

***Community Assistance***

BLM is committed to wildfire mitigation and reducing wildfire impacts to communities throughout Utah. Approximately \$50,000 will be dedicated to a Community Assistance Agreement for wildfire mitigation work. Over the next five fiscal years, BLM anticipates adding up to \$100,000 each year.

**Law Enforcement:** BLM's law enforcement program operates under a zone structure with three law enforcement zones identified throughout Utah. Each zone has a law enforcement supervisor who reports to a District Manager. At full staff, there are 17 uniformed Rangers in Utah (including supervisors). Over the past two years, the law enforcement program has entered into contracts for patrol/dispatch services with the following County Sheriff departments:

- Juab County (Patrol): \$49,989/year

- Emery County (Patrol): \$37,296/year
- Kane County (Patrol): \$33,486/year
- Wayne County (Patrol): \$10,000/year
- Uintah County (Patrol): \$20,000/year
- Washington County (Dispatch): \$3,000/year

Every year, multiple significant incidents occur on public land where BLM law enforcement is called to assist the local sheriff or police departments. These include fatalities on public land, assisting with accident investigations, search and rescue operations and working as part of a law enforcement team on interagency operations. As a result of this, sheriffs in the state are realizing the value of the BLM law enforcement in their counties and have requested to deputize some law enforcement rangers. Currently, deputation agreements are being initiated in Uintah and Juab Counties.