

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS) have prepared a Draft Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft Plan/DEIS) to provide direction for managing three distinct planning areas. The planning areas are the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument (Parashant, jointly managed by the NPS and BLM), the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (Vermilion, BLM only), and BLM-administered lands outside the monuments but within the Arizona Strip Field Office (Public Domain). The Draft Plan/DEIS analyzes the environmental effects resulting from implementation of the alternatives.

One Draft Plan/DEIS will be prepared for all three planning areas, but there will be four Records of Decision: one for the Vermilion, one for the Public Domain, and two for the Parashant (one for the NPS and one for the BLM). This Executive Summary only addresses the Grand Canyon-Parashant portion of the planning effort.

The Arizona Strip Field Office of the BLM and the Lake Mead National Recreation Area portion of the Parashant have local jurisdiction over their respective lands within the planning area. The Monument consists of approximately 800,000 acres of BLM land and 208,000 of NPS land. While largely remote and sparsely inhabited, adjoining communities include Page, Arizona; Kanab, Hurricane, and St. George, Utah; and Mesquite and Bunkerville, Nevada.

This Draft Plan/DEIS was prepared under the authorities of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) for BLM and the Organic Act of 1916 and the Redwoods Act of 1978 for the NPS. The Draft Plan/DEIS was prepared in accordance with the BLM planning regulations, title 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1610.2(f)(3), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations, title 40 CFR 1502.9(a) and NPS Director's Order 2 (Park Planning).

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Parashant was established through Presidential Proclamation 7265 on January 11. The Proclamation calls for the NPS and BLM to manage the monument cooperatively and prepare agreements to share whatever resources are necessary to properly manage the monument. A Management Plan is needed for the Monument to protect monument objects consistent with the proclamations.

ISSUES

A planning issue is a major issue, controversy, or dispute regarding management of resources on BLM and NPS lands that can be addressed in a variety of ways. The BLM and NPS initiated formal public scoping on April 24, 2002. Broad public participation including ten formal public scoping meetings held during May and June 2002 resulted in over 2,000 written comments. The planning team analyzed and categorized these comments into five significant issues and also identified two important management concerns that need to be addressed. As a result, this Draft

Plan/DEIS primarily focuses on the five issues and two management concerns and the decisions needed to resolve them. These issues and concerns are:

Issue 1: How will transportation and access be managed?

Transportation and access emerged from the scoping process as the primary issue for the public and it is closely tied to the other issues addressed. A network of routes currently exists throughout the monument. Some people believe closing a number of routes and limiting vehicular access would provide the best protection of monument values. Others think all existing routes should remain open for recreational use. Baseline Route inventories of the monument were completed and used as baseline data for proposing route designations in this document. This issue is likely to be controversial because the environmental groups want to see fewer roads open to the public, and the pro-access community wants to see no roads closed.

Issue 2: How will wilderness characteristics be protected?

A number of individuals and groups voiced their concern of protecting wilderness characteristics in the Planning Area, specifically in the monuments. Following recent BLM guidance for assessing wilderness characteristics (naturalness, solitude, and outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation), the BLM and NPS have proposed various options for where, how, and how much these characteristics may be protected within the Planning Area. This issue is likely to be controversial because the environmental groups originally submitted a detailed plan for additional proposed wilderness and wilderness study areas, and they expect this plan to address their concerns. Some of the Cooperating Agencies and pro-access communities are concerned because they believe there is no authority to provide protection of wilderness characteristics outside of designated and proposed wilderness.

Issue 3: How will monument resources be protected?

The proclamations designating the monuments identified an array of scientific and historic objects to be protected. There are various ways of achieving this goal and legal mandate, including the maintenance of acceptable existing conditions, educating visitors, restricting access, setting research priorities, and the restoration of degraded environmental conditions. Options for protecting monument resources are identified and assessed in this document.

Issue 4: How will livestock grazing be addressed, particularly on the monument?

A number of people identified livestock grazing as an issue during scoping. Comments ranged from eliminating all livestock grazing in the monuments to supporting all grazing activities in the Monument. Those in the middle supported eliminating livestock grazing only in environmentally sensitive areas. Possible options to modify current grazing activities are presented in this Draft Plan/DEIS.

Issue 5: How will people's recreational activities be managed?

Visitors use the Monument for a variety of recreational activities including exploring, sightseeing, hiking, backpacking, camping, hunting, OHV use, and mountain bike riding. Given growth projections for communities in the southwestern U.S. and the increased use of public lands for recreational pursuits, visitor activities are recognized as potentially having profound environmental effects on the Monument. The BLM and NPS assessed these effects, along with potential user conflicts, to propose appropriate management actions over these activities to ensure protection of monument resources while allowing for quality visitor experiences in remote settings.

Management concern 1: How will degraded ecosystems be restored?

Restoration of degraded ecosystems is an important management concern. Disruption of the natural fire regime has caused the degradation of ecosystems within the Monument (e.g., grasslands are being overrun by shrubs; ponderosa pine and pinyon-juniper forests are unnaturally dense; and riparian and other sensitive areas have been invaded by non-native, noxious weeds). The use of techniques such as mechanized thinning and prescribed fire can help restore degraded ecosystems. The range of options is detailed in this Draft Plan/DEIS.

MANAGEMENT UNITS

Four management units were developed to guide future management actions and to aid in understanding the wide range of differing land uses in the monument. These management units are Front Country, Passage, and Back Country. The uses range from urban-influenced experiences adjacent to the local communities to remote, isolated experiences a few hours drive from those same communities. These management units respond to the wide range of preferences expressed by the public, including views on the method and degree to maintain or improve resource conditions and the range of experiences offered.

ALTERNATIVES

NEPA regulations and the BLM and NPS planning regulations require the formulation of a reasonable range of alternatives that seek to address the identified issues and management concerns. The BLM and NPS developed five alternatives for the Planning Area, including the "No Action" and "Preferred" alternatives.

Each alternative varies in both context and intensity of management action and each is comprised of a set of land use allocations and the management actions needed to implement the alternative. Each alternative is evaluated to ensure that it would be consistent with all applicable laws and regulations; BLM and NPS policy and guidelines; and the monuments' purpose, significance, and mission statements. The alternatives must also be responsive to the issues and meet the established planning criteria. Each alternative is a complete land use plan that provides a framework for multiple use management of the full spectrum of resources, resources uses, and programs present in the planning area.

ALTERNATIVE A: NO ACTION

Alternative A describes the continuation of the management of the monument under the Arizona Strip RMP (1992, for the BLM portion of the Parashant) and the Lake Mead GMP (1986, for the NPS portion of the Parashant), as modified by Interim Management Policy (BLM IM-2000-062 and BLM/NPS Addendum to that IM) which implemented the management specifications presented by the monument proclamations and provided temporary guidance until this Plan is completed. Alternative A serves as a baseline for comparison with the other alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B places an emphasis on minimal human use/influence, and proposes the fewest miles of open roads and trails. It focuses on natural processes and other unobtrusive methods for ecosystem restoration, resource management, and scientific research; more protection and enhancement of remoteness and primitive recreation; and the least amount of motorized recreation opportunities.

ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C represents an attempt to balance resource protection and human use/influence. It proposes a moderate amount of open roads and trails; a combination of natural processes and “hands-on” techniques for ecosystem restoration, resource management, and scientific research; and a mix of motorized and primitive recreation opportunities.

ALTERNATIVE D

Alternative D places an emphasis on maximum appropriate human use/influence and the widest array of visitor experiences. It includes the most miles of open roads and trails; focuses on “hands-on” techniques for ecosystem restoration, resource management, and scientific research. As such, it offers fewer remote settings and the most motorized, least primitive recreation opportunities.

ALTERNATIVE E: PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative E emphasizes minimal human influence and use in the southern and more remote sections of the Planning Area, and more human use/influence in the northern areas and locations adjacent to local communities. It attempts to balance human use/influence with resource protection. Where appropriate, it proposes a combination of management actions including the continuation of natural processes, more hands-on restoration treatment methods, and protection of the remote settings that currently exist in the Planning Area, while allowing for human use and influence.

PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN DECISIONS

PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN DECISIONS FOR PARASHANT

The BLM and NPS would manage the Parashant to protect the monument objects and resources as identified in Presidential Proclamation 7265 and emphasized in the purpose, significance, and mission statements. Table 1 shows the acres and percentages of the four management units proposed under the five Alternatives for Parashant. Table 2 summarizes the route designations by alternative. Table 3 shows the acres of the existing designated and proposed wilderness areas and areas that would be managed for wilderness characteristics under each alternative.

Management Unit	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Community Interface	NA	0%	0%	0%	0%
Front Country	NA	9%	9%	9%	9%
Passage	NA	4%	19%	25%	24%
Back Country	NA	87%	72%	66%	67%

Route Designation	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Open	1,804 miles	694 miles	1,362 miles	1,594 miles	1,474 miles
Administrative Use Only	61 miles	725 miles	278 miles	113 miles	198 miles
Closed and Rehabilitated	N/A	446 miles	225 miles	158 miles	193 miles

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Table 3: Parashant Designated and Proposed Wilderness Areas and Areas Managed for Wilderness Characteristics					
Area	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Designated Wildernesses	95,159 acres				
Proposed Wilderness (NPS only)	188,121 acres				
Lands Managed for Wilderness Characteristics	NA	411,367 acres	226,400 acres	140,991 acres	210,549 acres

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