

ABSTRACT

The Proposed Plan/FEIS for the Arizona Strip Field Office, the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and BLM Portion of Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, and a Proposed General Management Plan/FEIS for the NPS Portion of the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument (Proposed Plan/FEIS) describes and analyzes five alternatives for managing 3,323,067 acres of BLM and NPS administered land in northwestern Arizona, north of the Grand Canyon. Information provided by the public, Cooperating Agencies, other agencies, and organizations, and BLM and NPS personnel have been used in preparing this Proposed Plan/FEIS.

Alternative A is the No Action alternative and represents continuation of current management. Alternative B emphasizes minimal human use/influence, and potentially provides the fewest miles of open roads and trails and least resource development. Alternative C represents an attempt to balance resource protection and human use/influence. Alternative D emphasizes maximum appropriate human use/influence and the widest array of recreation opportunities. It potentially includes the most miles of open roads and trails. Alternative E, the Proposed Plan, 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 communities. It attempts to balance human use/influence with resource protection.

Major issues addressed in the Proposed Plan/FEIS include management of access, management of areas having wilderness characteristics, protection of natural and cultural resources, management of livestock grazing, and recreation.

Area and length figures throughout this document are based on the best available Geographic Information System (GIS) data at the time of publication. These figures are based on the Universal Transverse Mercator Zone 12 projection referencing the North American Datum of 1983. Analysis and calculation have been made on various GIS layers which may or may not correspond to each other. Differences in area or length correlations between the various calculations in this document are due to minor discrepancies between GIS layers. GIS data layers used in this FEIS may be found at http://www.az.blm.gov/LUP/strip/strip_plan.htm.

HOW TO PROTEST BLM DECISIONS IN THIS PROPOSED PLAN/FEIS

The Draft Plan/EIS was the last phase in the planning process for the public to comment. In accordance with 43 CFR 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the planning process and believes they will be adversely affected by this plan may protest the proposed plan. The protest may raise only those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process.

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) announcement in the *Federal Register* that this Proposed Plan/FEIS is available begins a 30-day Protest period. For specific information on filing a protest on BLM decisions, see the Dear Reader letter in this document.

The NPS does not have a formal process for protesting the NPS decisions in the Proposed Plan/FEIS. If there are significant omissions or new information on an issue raised previously, we encourage you to write the Superintendent, no later than 30 days after the EPA Notice of Availability is published in the *Federal Register*. See specific information and address in the Dear Reader letter in this document.



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
345 East Riverside Drive
St. George, UT 84790
www.az.blm.gov and www.nps.gov/para



In Reply Refer To:
1610 (AZ 100)

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the Proposed Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Arizona Strip which includes the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and the Arizona Strip Field Office planning areas. This document describes the Proposed Plan and four alternative plans, including no change from current management (the no action alternative), for management of Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-administered and National Park Service (NPS)-administered lands within the Arizona Strip. The plan will establish management goals and objectives for the planning areas, which includes more than 3.2 million acres of public lands north of the Grand Canyon in Arizona. This planning effort will eventually result in four separate Records of Decision (three for the BLM and one for the NPS) in the three planning areas.

We greatly appreciate all who contributed time and expertise to this planning effort - other federal agencies, tribal entities, state and local governments, organizations, and interested individuals. We also thank the ten agencies that worked with us as Cooperating Agencies: Mohave and Coconino counties in Arizona, Washington and Kane counties in Utah, the Kaibab Paiute Tribe, the Towns of Fredonia and Colorado City, Arizona Department of Transportation, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Federal Highway Administration. Public collaboration through the scoping process shaped issues covering access, wilderness, protection of natural and cultural resources, livestock grazing, and recreation; subsequently, public comments on the Draft Plan/EIS aided in refining the Proposed Plan.

The FEIS responds to the comments received on the Draft Plan/EIS, published in November 2005. The changes to the Draft Plan/EIS are identified in the Summary. The preferred alternative, Alternative E, in the Draft Plan/EIS has been refined as a result of public comments. This revision, now called the Proposed Plan, is described in Chapter 2. NPS planning policy requires identification of the environmentally preferred alternative in the EIS. The NPS determined that the preferred alternative (Alternative E) is also the environmentally preferred alternative. BLM planning policy requires identification of the environmentally preferred alternative in the Record of Decision (ROD).

Alternative E, as described in the attached Proposed Plan/FEIS, is the BLM and NPS Proposed Plan and contains both proposed land use planning decisions and more specific proposed project level or implementation decisions. Proposed land use planning decisions include Desired Future Conditions, Land Use Allocations, and Management Actions such as allowable uses and/or restrictions.

The Proposed Plan/FEIS also contains implementation decisions such as the specific Route Designations for the Monuments and the Ferry Swale area. Implementation decisions are not subject to protest at this time under the planning regulations. Instead, they are subject to administrative remedies set forth in the regulations that apply to each resource management program. These opportunities will be identified at a later date in the ROD. These administrative remedies usually take the form of appeals to the Office of Hearings and Appeals or the Interior Board of Land Appeals. For implementation decisions affecting land exchanges and proposed grazing decisions, the regulations provide for an internal agency review, usually a protest to the authorized officer, which must be completed before the decision can be appealed to the Office of Hearings and Appeals. The Proposed Plan distinguishes the implementation decisions from the land use planning decisions.

The Proposed Plan/FEIS also contains NPS decisions regarding management of park resources and visitor uses, in a framework of Desired Future Conditions and Management Actions for the portion of Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument that is part of Lake Mead National Recreation Area. More specific Implementation or Administrative Action decisions are identified for some resources. Decisions regarding land use allocations for proposed wilderness and road access were brought forward from past NPS planning, specifically the 1986 Lake Mead General Management Plan and 1979 Lake Mead Wilderness Proposal, and are incorporated in this Proposed Plan/FEIS for the NPS portion of Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument. An impairment analysis for Monument resources managed by NPS was completed, as required by NPS planning guidelines, where in the professional judgment of the NPS Superintendent, no harm to the integrity of park resources or values nor the opportunities to enjoy them would occur from implementation of the plan. Unlike the Bureau of Land Management, there is no protest or administrative appeals process related to NPS plans. The NPS encourages you to write the Superintendent, Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument identifying a specific issue, so NPS can address your concerns. Comments submitted previously have been considered and addressed in this Proposed Plan/FEIS. If there are significant omissions or new information on an issue raised previously, we encourage you to write the Superintendent within 30 days after the Notice of Availability is published in the Federal Register.

Letters to the Superintendent should include:

1. Your name, mailing address, and telephone number.
2. A statement of the issue(s) of concern.
3. Specifically identify the part(s) of the Proposed Plan that are of concern. To the extent possible, this should be done by reference to specific pages, paragraphs, sections, tables, or maps included in the document.
4. A copy of any documents addressing the issue(s) that you may have submitted during the planning process or a reference to the date the issue(s) were discussed for the record.
5. A concise statement explaining why you believe the Proposed Plan is in error. All relevant facts need to be included in this statement of reasons. The facts, reasons, and documentation are important to help us understand your specific concerns, rather than an expression of general disagreement with the proposed decision.

Letters to the Superintendent should be addressed as follows:

Superintendent
National Park Service
Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument
345 East Riverside Drive
St. George, UT 84790

The BLM's planning process provides an opportunity for administrative review of the State Director's proposed land use plan decisions by filing a protest with the BLM Director; the NPS does not have a formal process for protests (see above). In accordance with 43 CFR 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the planning process and believes they will be adversely affected by this plan may protest the Proposed Plan. The protest may raise only those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process. All protests must be in writing and must be sent to the following address via regular mail or other delivery service. Protests must be postmarked no later than 30 days after the Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability is published in the Federal Register. The exact date will be published in local media and on our website, <http://www.blm.gov/az/news.htm>. Extensions will not be granted.

Protest letters on BLM land use planning decisions must be sent to:

If via US Postal Service:

Director, Bureau of Land Management
Attention: Brenda Williams (WO-210)
P.O. Box 66538
Washington, DC 20035

If via Overnight Express Mail:

Director, Bureau of Land Management
Attention: Brenda Williams (WO-210)
1620 L Street NW
Suite 1075
Washington, DC 20236

E-mail and faxed protests will not be accepted as valid, unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by regular mail or other delivery service postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, the BLM will consider the e-mail or faxed protest as an advance copy and it will receive full consideration. If you wish to provide us with such advance notification, please direct faxed protests to the attention of Brenda Hudgens-Williams, Protest Coordinator, at 202-452-5112, and e-mails to bhudgens@blm.gov.

At a minimum, protest letters must include:

1. The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest.
2. A statement of the issue(s) being protested.
3. A statement of the part(s) of the Proposed Plan being protested. To the extent possible, this should be done by reference to specific pages, paragraphs, sections, tables, or maps included in the document.
4. A copy of all documents addressing the issue(s) that you submitted during the planning process or a reference to the date the issue(s) were discussed for the record.

5. A concise statement explaining why you believe the Proposed Plan is wrong. All relevant facts need to be included in this statement of reasons. The facts, reasons, and documentation are important to help us understand your protest, and that you are not merely expressing disagreement with the proposed decision.

The BLM Director will promptly render a decision on the protests. The decision will be in writing and will set forth the reasons for the decision. The protest decision will be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the Director will be the final decision of the Department of the Interior. The BLM State Director will sign the Records of Decision for the three BLM plans once the protests are resolved.

Public comments and protests, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at Arizona Strip Bureau of Land Management, 345 East Riverside Drive, St. George, Utah during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

If you have questions on the FEIS, please contact:

Arizona Strip BLM and NPS
Diana Hawks, Planning Team
345 East Riverside Drive
St. George, UT 84790

Phone: (435) 688-3266

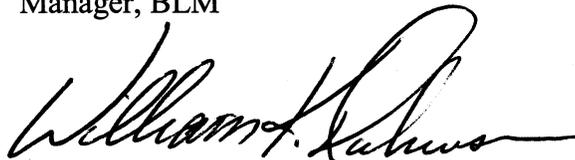
Email: Arizona_Strip@blm.gov

We appreciate your interest and encourage your continued involvement in the planning process.

Sincerely,



Scott R. Florence
Arizona Strip District
Manager, BLM

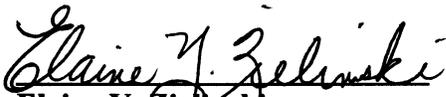


William K. Dickinson
Lake Mead National Recreation Area
Superintendent, NPS

**Proposed Resource Management Plan and
Final Environmental Impact Statement for the
Arizona Strip Field Office,
Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and
Bureau of Land Management portion of the
Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, and a
Proposed General Management Plan for the
National Park Service portion and
Final Environmental Impact Statement for the
National Park Service portion of
Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument**

**Arizona Strip Proposed Plan/
Final Environmental Impact Statement**

January 2007


Elaine Y. Zielinski
Arizona State Director
Bureau of Land Management


Jonathan B. Jarvis
Regional Director, Pacific West Region
National Park Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS) prepared this Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Arizona Strip Field Office (Arizona Strip FO), Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (Vermilion), and BLM portion of Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument (Parashant) and a Proposed General Management Plan (GMP) and FEIS for the NPS portion of the Grand-Canyon Parashant National Monument. This document, referred to as the Proposed Plan/FEIS, provides direction for managing three distinct planning areas: Parashant, Vermilion, and the Arizona Strip FO. Combined, these three planning areas are referred to as the Planning Area or Arizona Strip District. This Proposed Plan/FEIS analyzes the environmental effects resulting from implementation of the No Action Alternative and four action alternatives proposed for managing the Planning Area.

The Arizona Strip District and the Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA) portion of Parashant have local jurisdiction over their respective lands within the Planning Area. Combined, the three planning areas comprise 2,768,205 acres of BLM-administered land (BLM lands) and 208,447 acres of NPS lands within the Arizona Strip, which encompasses the northern portions of Coconino and Mohave counties, Arizona, north and west of the Colorado River. In addition, the Planning Area also encloses 206,808 acres of Arizona State lands, 139,565 acres of private lands, and 41 acres of U.S. Forest Service lands; however, this Proposed Plan/FEIS only covers decisions for BLM and NPS lands within the Planning Area. Private or state lands and non-federal mineral estate within the Planning Area are not covered by the decisions in this Proposed Plan/FEIS.

While largely remote and sparsely inhabited, the Planning Area encompasses a number of small communities in extreme northern Arizona, including Fredonia, Marble Canyon, Colorado City, Centennial, Littlefield, Beaver Dam, and Scenic. These communities are located within the Arizona Strip FO along the three major travel routes: U.S. 89A, Arizona 389, and Interstate 15. Adjacent communities outside the Planning Area include Page, Arizona; Kanab, Hurricane, Big Water, Washington, and St. George, Utah; and Mesquite and Bunkerville, Nevada. Many people from these communities rely on natural resources within the Planning Area for their livelihood as well as many forms of outdoor recreation.

This Proposed Plan/FEIS was prepared under the authorities of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) for the BLM, the Organic Act of 1916 for the NPS, and numerous other statutory authorities. It was prepared in accordance with BLM planning regulations, 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1610.2(f)(3) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations, 40 CFR 1502.9(a). This document was also prepared in accordance with NPS planning guidelines including Director's Order 2 (Park Planning) and Director's Order 12 (Conservation Planning and Environmental Impact Analysis).

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Parashant was established through Presidential Proclamation 7265 on January 11, 2000 and the Vermilion was established through Presidential Proclamation 7374 on November 9, 2000. Individual BLM resource management plans (RMPs) are needed for each National Monument and a NPS general management plan (GMP) is needed for the NPS portion of Parashant to protect Monument objects and the context that supports them in a way that is consistent with the proclamations. A revised RMP is also needed for the Arizona Strip FO. The purpose of this Proposed Plan/FEIS is to develop the RMPs and GMP for the three planning areas that will guide future management of the respective areas. The NPS GMP is expected to guide management for a period of 15-20 years and may be amended, if needed. BLM plans are evaluated at least every five years and are maintained, amended, and revised as needed.

ISSUES

A planning issue is a major issue, subject, concern or controversy 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 eleven formal public scoping meetings held during May and July 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 Proposed Plan/FEIS primarily focuses on the five issues and two management concerns and the decisions needed to resolve them. These issues and concerns are as follows:

Issue 1: How will transportation and access be managed?

Rugged and isolated, the Planning Area is one of the largest, un-fragmented stretches of sparsely developed lands in the contiguous United States. The deep canyons of the Colorado River separate the area from the rest of Arizona. Ground vehicle access from the south is impossible due to the Grand Canyon. Three highways cross the northern boundary of the Planning Area. No paved roads extend into the Parashant or other interior sections of the Planning Area, but a network of unpaved roads of various types and conditions offers access. Only a few higher standard unpaved roads extend from the north into the remote southern regions of the Planning Area.

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 Planning Area. Some people believe closing a number of routes and limiting vehicular access would provide the best protection of Monument objects. Others think all existing routes should remain open for recreational and resource use. Route inventories of the two Monuments, and the Ferry Swale and the Littlefield areas within the Arizona Strip FO were completed and used as baseline data for proposing potential route designations in the Draft Plan/EIS. Inventory included GPS-capture of all route types, such as “reclaiming,” “single-

track,” “tertiary unpaved,” “secondary unpaved,” etc. Inventoried routes represent roads, primitive roads and trails used for a wide variety of motorized and non-motorized modes of travel. Route inventory continues for the Arizona Strip FO, with expected completion in 2007.

Proposed Route Evaluation decisions for the Monuments and the Ferry Swale area are contained in the Proposed Plan/FEIS. The Route Evaluation decisions for the Littlefield area will be presented for public review with the remainder of the routes in the Arizona Strip FO within 3-5 years following the Record of Decision on this EIS.

Issue 2: How will areas with wilderness characteristics be maintained?

A number of individuals and groups voiced their concern about protecting areas with wilderness characteristics in the Planning Area, specifically in the Monuments. Some felt that additional wilderness designations in the Planning Area would be the best way to protect resources, particularly those identified in the Monument proclamations. Others were not in favor of additional wilderness designations because they felt such actions would prevent the majority of visitors from accessing the remote sections of the Planning Area, especially those that enjoy motorized forms of recreation.

Because of the isolation and sparse development of the Planning Area, some roadless, natural-appearing areas remain. The Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984 created eight wilderness areas in the Planning Area covering 265,740 acres. Areas with wilderness characteristics (naturalness, solitude, and outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation) presently occur on the Arizona Strip. The BLM and NPS may maintain or enhance these areas, where they exist. Following recent BLM guidance for assessing and maintaining areas having wilderness characteristics, the BLM and NPS have proposed various options for where, how, and how much these characteristics may be managed within the Planning Area. These options range from no prescriptive management of these areas whatsoever to a commitment to maintain virtually all acres found to possess wilderness characteristics during the assessments. Only Congress has the authority to designate new wilderness areas.

Issue 3: How will Monument and Arizona Strip FO 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 maintaining acceptable existing conditions, educating visitors, restricting access, setting research priorities, and restoring degraded environmental conditions. In addition to Monument resources, there are valuable natural and cultural resources within the Arizona Strip FO in need of protection. Options for protecting both Monument and Arizona Strip FO resources are identified and assessed in this document. Additional Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), for protecting natural and cultural resources in the Arizona Strip FO, are presented in this Proposed Plan/FEIS.

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

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 Planning Area. Others supported eliminating livestock grazing only in environmentally sensitive areas. Possible options to modify current grazing activities are presented in this Proposed Plan/FEIS.

Issue 5: How will recreation activities be managed?

Visitors use the Planning Area for a variety of recreation activities including exploring, sightseeing, hiking, backpacking, camping, hunting, off-highway vehicle (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, ineffective management of visitor activities is recognized as potentially having profound environmental effects on Monument and Arizona Strip FO lands. The BLM and NPS assessed these possible effects, along with potential user conflicts. Planners propose an appropriate recreation management framework that ensures protection of Monument and Arizona Strip FO resources. They also propose targeting several recreation-tourism strategies to produce beneficial outcomes tied to visitor experiences and activities that take place in a variety of natural and community 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 Planning Area (e.g., grasslands are being overrun by shrubs, ponderosa pine and pinyon-juniper forests are unnaturally dense, and Mojave desert, riparian, and other sensitive areas have been invaded by non-native, noxious plants). The selective use of techniques including, but not limited to, mechanized thinning, grazing controls, revegetation with native species, eradication of noxious plants, and use of fire to achieve more natural ecosystem processes can help recover degraded ecosystems. The range of options is detailed in this Proposed Plan/FEIS.

Management concern 2: How will the human factors in the Planning Area be considered?

While the focus of management plans tends to be on the area's natural and cultural resources, the human or social factors must also be considered. While remote and largely uninhabited, the Planning Area surrounds a number of small communities largely dependent upon public lands for deriving certain economic, personal, family, community, and environmental benefits. Other small and mid-sized communities and one urban area located just outside the Planning Area's boundaries are also closely connected to the public lands. Rapid population growth in the region will also affect the natural and cultural resources and associated uses on public lands. Public safety is also a concern. The rapid growth, as well as the issues and concerns of the local inhabitants, are taken into consideration in this Proposed Plan/FEIS.

ALTERNATIVES

NEPA regulations and 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, including the “No Action” and “Preferred” alternatives. The Preferred Alternative, modified in response to public comment, is now the Proposed Plan. Each of the five alternatives varies in both context and intensity of management actions and comprises a set of desired resource or future conditions, special designations, 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 policies and guidelines; the Monuments’ purpose, significance, and mission statements; and the Arizona Strip FO’s 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. The Proposed Plan distinguishes similarities and differences specific to each of the three planning areas: Parashant, Vermilion, and Arizona Strip FO.

Each alternative varies in both context and intensity of management actions and comprises a set of desired resource or future conditions, special designations, 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 policies and guidelines; the Monuments’ purpose, significance, and mission statements; and the Arizona Strip FO’s 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 both Monuments and the Arizona Strip FO under the Arizona Strip RMP (1992, as amended) 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 for Parashant; BLM IM 2002-008 for Vermilion). The Interim Management Policy for both Monuments 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 potentially provides 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 potentially provides 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 recreation opportunities. It potentially includes the most miles of open roads and trails; focuses on “hands-on” techniques for ecosystem restoration, resource management, and scientific research; and offers the fewest remote settings and the most motorized, least primitive recreation opportunities.

ALTERNATIVE E: PROPOSED PLAN

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.

NPS ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The NPS is required to identify an environmentally preferred alternative, which is the alternative that promotes the national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of NEPA. The NPS has determined the environmentally preferred alternative only for NPS lands within the Parashant. The BLM is mandated by the National Monument proclamations to protect objects in the Monuments and thus avoid any adverse impacts that would otherwise “impair” such objects, however, the agency is not required to conduct impairment analysis nor identify an environmentally preferred alternative in the FEIS.

In comparison with the other alternatives analyzed, Alternative E, now the Proposed Plan, best meets the national environmental goals identified in Appendix 4.C, NPS Impairment Analysis. The Proposed Plan provides a high level of protection of natural and cultural resources, while providing for a wide range of beneficial uses of the environment.

PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN DECISIONS

PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN/GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN DECISIONS FOR PARASHANT

The BLM and NPS would manage 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 percentages of the four proposed Travel Management Areas (TMAs) under the five alternatives. Table 2 summarizes the proposed OHV area and route designations. Table 3 shows the acres of existing designated and existing NPS-proposed wilderness areas. Table 4 shows the number of acres that would be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. These four tables summarize decisions proposed by each alternative to resolve the top two public scoping issues regarding access and wilderness. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs; see tables 5 and 14) would be revoked because Monument status now provides protection to the resources of concern or some ACECs are changed to a Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA)

Table 1: Parashant Travel Management Areas (TMAs: Land use Plan (LUP) decisions)

| TMA | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|-------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Rural | NA | 0% | | | |
| Backways | NA | 9% | | | |
| Specialized | NA | 4% | 19% | 25% | 24% |
| Primitive | NA | 87% | 72% | 66% | 67% |

Table 2: Parashant OHV Area Designations and Proposed Route Designations

| Designation | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|---|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| OHV Area Designations (LUP decisions) | | | | | |
| Closed | 285,268 acres | | | | |
| Limited to Designated Routes | 762,688 acres | | | | |
| Route Designations (Proposed Implementation Decisions) | | | | | |
| Open and Limited (including Administrative Use) | 1,754 miles | 1,347 miles | 1,548 miles | 1,642 miles | 1,603 miles |
| Closed and Rehabilitated | 71 miles | 445 miles | 224 miles | 148 miles | 188 miles |

Table 3: Parashant Designated and Proposed Wilderness (existing)

| Area | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Designated Wilderness | 95,150 acres | | | | |
| Proposed Wilderness (NPS only) | 190,478 acres | | | | |

Table 4: Parashant Lands Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics (LUP decisions)

| Area | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|--|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Lands to be Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics | NA | 411,256 acres | 226,394 acres | 140,949 acres | 215,345 acres |

Table 5: Parashant ACECs (LUP decisions)

| ACEC | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|--------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Nampaweap | 535 acres | Monument protection – No ACEC | | | |
| Pakoon | 76,014 acres | 76,014 acres Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA) | 69,083 acres DWMA | Same as Alts B & C | |
| Witch’s Pool | 279 acres | Monument protection – No ACEC | | | |

PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN DECISIONS FOR VERMILION

The BLM would manage Vermilion to protect the Monument objects and resources as identified in Presidential Proclamation 7374 and emphasized in the purpose, significance, and mission statements. Table 6 shows the percentages of the four proposed TMAs under the five alternatives. Table 7 summarizes the proposed OHV area and route designations. Table 8 shows the acres of existing designated wilderness areas. Table 9 shows the number of acres that would be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. No ACECs currently exist in Vermilion and none are proposed due to the level of resource protection provided by Monument status.

Table 6: Vermilion Travel Management Areas (TMAs: LUP decisions)

| TMA | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|-------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Rural | NA | 0% | | | |
| Backways | NA | 2% | | | |
| Specialized | NA | 12% | 31% | 32% | 33% |
| Primitive | NA | 86% | 67% | 66% | 65% |

| Table 7: Vermilion OHV Area Designations and Proposed Route Designations | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Designation | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
| OHV Area Designations (LUP decisions) | | | | | |
| Closed | 89,825 acres | | | | |
| Limited to Designated Routes | 203,862 acres | | | | |
| Route Designations (Proposed Implementation decisions) | | | | | |
| Open and Limited (including Administrative Use) | 460 miles | 385 miles | 454 miles | 470 miles | 450 miles |
| Closed and Rehabilitated | 105 miles | 179 miles | 110 miles | 93 miles | 113 miles |

| Table 8: Vermilion Designated Wilderness (existing) | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Area | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
| Designated Wilderness | 89,825 acres | | | | |

| Table 9: Vermilion Lands Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics (LUP decisions) | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Area | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
| Lands to be Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics | NA | 96,796 acres | 40,345 acres | 0 acres | 37,566 acres |

PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN DECISIONS FOR THE ARIZONA STRIP FO

The BLM would manage the Arizona Strip FO under the concepts of multiple use and sustained yield (FLPMA Sec.302 (a)) and in accordance with the Arizona Strip FO’s significance and mission statements. Table 10 shows the percentages of the four proposed TMAs under the five alternatives for the Arizona Strip FO. Table 11 summarizes the proposed OHV area and potential route designations. Table 12 shows the acres of the existing designated wilderness areas. Table 13 shows the number of acres that would be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. Table 14 lists the proposed ACECs by alternative. In some cases, ACEC boundaries were refined under the action alternatives because of more accurate information on critical habitats and their location since the Arizona Strip RMP (1992).

Table 10: Arizona Strip FO Travel Management Areas (TMA: LUP decisions)

| TMA | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|-------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Rural | NA | 9% | 11% | | |
| Backways | NA | 14% | | | |
| Specialized | NA | 40% | 40% | 41% | 41% |
| Primitive | NA | 37% | 35% | 34% | 34% |

Table 11: Arizona Strip FO OHV Area Designations and Proposed Route Designations*

| Designation | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| OHV Area Designations (LUP decisions) | | | | | |
| Closed | 123,100 acres | 92,648 acres | | | 80,829 acres |
| Limited to Designated Routes | 282,019 acres | 1,888,405 acres | 682,153 acres | 369,582 acres | 1,899,259 acres |
| Limit to Existing Routes | 1,575,140 acres | 0 acres | 1,204,782 acres | 1,511,652 acres | 0 acres |
| Open | 803 acres | 0 acres | 1,481 acres | 7,186 acres | 976 acres |
| *Ferry Swale Area: Route Designations (Proposed Implementation decisions) | | | | | |
| Open and Limited | 52 miles | 48 miles | 53 miles | 54 miles | 54 miles |
| Closed and Rehabilitated | 3 miles | 7 miles | 2 miles | 1 miles | 2 miles |
| *Arizona Strip FO Preliminary Route Network: (Undesignated Sub-regions) | | | | | |
| Open and Limited | 4,964 miles | | | | |
| Seasonal Closures | 8 miles | 13 miles | | | |

*Route evaluations would be made within 5 years of the ROD for all Arizona Strip FO Sub-regions.

Table 12: Arizona Strip FO Designated Wilderness (existing)

| Area | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Designated Wilderness | 80,765 acres | | | | |

Table 13: Arizona Strip FO Lands Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics (LUP decisions)

| Area | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|--|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Lands to be Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics | NA | 46,135 acres | 77,575 acres* | 34,628 acres | 34,942 acres |

*More lands managed to maintain wilderness characteristics are recommended in Alternative C than Alternative B because ACECs provide protection under Alternative B, while less ACEC acreage under Alternative C resulted in a recommendation for more lands to be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics.

| ACEC | Alternative A No Action | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D | Proposed Plan |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Beaver Dam Slope | 51,196 acres | 52,753 acres | 51,984 acres | 51,984 acres | 51,984 acres |
| Black Knolls | -- | 80 acres | 80 acres | -- | 428 acres |
| Buckskin** | -- | 160 acres | -- | -- | -- |
| Clayhole | -- | 7,362 acres | -- | -- | -- |
| Coyote Valley | -- | 776 acres | -- | -- | -- |
| Fort Pearce | 916 acres | 5,498 acres | 5,498 acres | -- | 5,724 acres |
| Grey Points** | -- | 12,881 acres | -- | -- | -- |
| Hurricane Cliffs** | -- | 23,464 acres | -- | -- | -- |
| Johnson Spring | 2,464 acres | 2,058 acres | 1,986 acres | -- | 3,444 acres |
| Kanab Creek | -- | 13,146 acres | 9,211 acres | -- | 13,148 acres |
| Lime Kiln/Hatchett Can** | -- | 11,731 acres | -- | -- | -- |
| Little Black Mountain | 241 acres | 241 acres | 241 acres | 241 acres | 241 acres |
| Lone Butte | -- | 1,900 acres | 1,900 acres | -- | 1,762 acres |
| Lost Spring Mountain | 8,262 acres | 17,744 acres | 4,431 acres | -- | 19,248 acres |
| Marble Canyon | 11,012 acres | 102,141 acres | 11,926 acres | 11,926 acres | 12,105 acres |
| Moonshine Ridge | 5,095 acres | 9,231 acres | 2,575 acres | -- | 9,310 acres |
| Shinarump | -- | 3,619 acres | -- | -- | 3,237 acres |
| Twist Hills | -- | 1,255 acres | -- | -- | -- |
| Virgin River Corridor | 8,075 acres | 2,063 acres | 2,063 acres | 2,063 acres | 2,065 acres |
| Virgin Slope | 39,931 acres | 40,287 acres | 40,206 acres | 40,206 acres | 39,514 acres |
| TOTAL ACRES | 127,192 acres | 308,390 acres | 132,101 acres | 106,420 acres | 150,105 acres |

**These ACECs were presented in the Draft Plan/EIS under Alternative B. Further analysis revealed that the resource values recommended for protection in these ACECs did not meet the relevance and importance criteria.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES FROM THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE TO THE PROPOSED PLAN

In response to public comments, the following major changes were made from the Draft Plan/EIS Preferred Alternative to the Proposed Plan.

Monument Objects

Throughout the Proposed Plan/FEIS, and particularly in the Chapter 2 Decision Tables, clarification of decisions and greater emphasis is placed on the protection of Monument objects.

Management in the National Monuments also differs from management in the Arizona Strip FO in that both Monuments are withdrawn from mineral entry and lands in federal ownership would

be retained under federal ownership, unless it was determined that disposal of a particular parcel would serve the national interest. In accordance with direction in the proclamations for both Monuments, all vehicular travel would be allowed only on designated routes, except for authorized administrative and emergency purposes.

Travel Management

The two OHV Open Areas, one in the St. George Basin, and the other near Fredonia, Arizona, were both decreased in size; St. George Basin OHV Open Area from 6,229 acres to 628 acres and Fredonia OHV Open Area from 952 acres to 348 acres. The OHV Open Area near Fredonia was moved away from the Kaibab Paiute Reservation boundary south of town to an area north of Highway 389 and east of town.

In response to public comments, specific route changes in the Monuments and the Ferry Swale area were made in the Proposed Plan (See Proposed Route Evaluation Maps for the Monuments on the CD accompanying the Proposed Plan/FEIS). In the Proposed Plan for the Parashant, an additional five miles of routes would be closed and rehabilitated, 3 fewer miles of routes open to motorized public use, and an additional 11 miles of limited use routes. In the Proposed Plan for Vermilion, there would be seven more miles of routes closed and rehabilitated, five fewer miles of routes open to motorized public use, and two less miles of limited use routes.

Even though Route Evaluations by alternative for the Littlefield Sub-region were presented in the Draft Plan/EIS, a decision was made not to move forward with these proposed route designations in this Proposed Plan because further field verification revealed more inventory was necessary to obtain an accurate representation of the actual routes in this area. The Littlefield area Route Evaluation Process © will be continued along with the remainder of the Route Evaluation Process © for the Arizona Strip FO and there will be opportunities for public participation and review at that time. The Route Evaluation Process © will be completed within 3-5 years following the RODs for this Proposed Plan.

Wilderness Characteristics

Additional acreage was added to areas with wilderness characteristics on the NPS portion of the Parashant in order to maintain the naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

Any references to VRM Class I for BLM wilderness characteristics areas in the Proposed Plan/FEIS were removed, while NPS lands to be maintained for wilderness characteristics are assigned VRM Class I. Clarifying text was added so that it is clear these areas are not managed in the same manner as designated wilderness.

Visual Resource Management (VRM)

Changes were made in Visual Resource Management (VRM) Classes, primarily changing proposed VRM Class III to Class II, thus increasing the Class II designation area in House Rock Valley near Highway 389 and in the central and eastern portions of Parashant. The change in House Rock Valley was to protect scenic values for the Vermilion Cliffs and surrounding area while the changes in Parashant were in recognition of the fact that vegetation restoration treatments were appropriate management actions in VRM Class II areas.

The VRM decision concerning new projects was clarified to more closely reflect BLM Manual guidance regarding visual design considerations and the contrast rating process. In the VRM section of Chapter 2 a “practicality” criteria (location, feasibility, cost) was added to clarify when “extreme visual contrast created by past management practices or human activities would be minimized.” Language was added to the VRM Appendix, 2.L, to further explain the contrast rating process.

Changes were also made to Table 2.8, Visual Resources, especially under Allowable Uses, to clarify the intent of proposed management of visual values. References in the Proposed Plan to VRM Class I objectives for BLM areas that would be maintained for wilderness characteristics were removed. NPS lands maintained for wilderness characteristics are assigned VRM Class I.

Recreation Management

The Recreation Management Zone benefits, experiences and settings prescriptions were reevaluated, clarified and simplified. A variety of management actions were modified to clarify their intent to support Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), Extended Recreation Management Area (ERMA) or both SRMA/ERMA management objectives.

Back Country Airstrips

Additional language and clarification for back country airstrips was made in various sections of Chapters 2, 3, 4, and to the glossary. Clarification emphasized that back country airstrips on BLM-administered lands would not be closed, unless there is full public notice and consultation with local and State government officials and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). There are no authorized airstrips on NPS lands.

Livestock Grazing

Livestock grazing on the Grand Gulch Wash portion of the Pakoon Allotment (7,982 acres), previously unavailable for grazing would now be available from October 15 to March 15. This change was necessary because construction of 6.5 miles of fence to exclude grazing (per the 1998 RMP Amendment) was not practical or feasible.

Livestock grazing on part of the Pakoon Springs Allotment (17,435 acres), previously available for grazing, would now be unavailable for grazing to enhance protection of desert tortoise. Implementing this action would require approximately 3.1 miles of fence construction.

The Pakoon Springs Forage Reserve was reduced from 33,179 acres to 15,745 acres in the Proposed Plan.

Special Designations: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

The following changes were made to ACECs in response to public comment or because additional information provided more accurate information on cultural resources or special status plant location.

Coyote Valley ACEC (Paradine pincushion cactus) is not designated in the Proposed Plan because recent inventories indicate that the cactus is actually located within Vermilion Cliffs National Monument rather than outside the Monument as shown in the Draft Plan/EIS. Monument status provides protection for this cactus and the ACEC designation is not necessary.

Lone Butte ACEC (Jones' cycladenia) is not designated in the Proposed Plan for the protection of cultural resources because recent inventories indicate cultural values are not significant and Federal laws provide sufficient protection. Lone Butte ACEC is reduced in size from 1,900 acres to 1,762 acres in the Proposed Plan solely for the protection of Jones' cycladenia.

Shinarump ACEC is not designated in the Proposed Plan for the protection of cultural resources because recent inventories indicate cultural values are not significant and Federal laws provide sufficient protection. The ACEC is reduced in size from 3,619 acres to 3,237 acres in the Proposed Plan. Shinarump ACEC is moved 1.4 miles southwest of the location indicated in the Draft Plan/EIS to provide protection solely for Siler pincushion cactus.

Buckskin, Grey Point, Hurricane Cliffs, and Lime Kiln/Hatchett Canyon ACECs were presented in the Draft Plan/EIS under Alternative B as new ACECs. Further analysis revealed that the values in these ACECs, Bighorn Sheep and Cliff milkvetch, did not meet the relevance and importance criteria to be designated as ACECs. They have been removed from consideration under any alternative in Chapter 2, Alternatives.

Because of recent inventories for special status plant species and discussions with the FWS, the following ACEC acreage changes have been made in the Proposed Plan:

Black Knolls - from 80 to 428 acres (Holmgren milkvetch);
Fort Pearce – from 5,500 to 5,724 acres (Siler pincushion cactus);
Lost Spring - from 17,744 to 19,248 acres (Siler pincushion cactus);
Moonshine Ridge - from 9,231 to 9,310 acres (Siler pincushion cactus);
Johnson Spring – from 2,447 to 3,444 acres (Siler pincushion cactus);
Marble Canyon – from 9,852 to 12,105 acres (Brady pincushion cactus); and
Virgin Slope ACEC – from 40,206 to 39,514 acres (desert tortoise).

The following changes in ACEC Management Prescriptions are now in the Proposed Plan: no ACECs would be closed to OHVs; all ACECs would be limited to designated roads and trails; and vehicles would be required to stay on the roadways, with reasonable use of the shoulder allowed for parking or turning around.

Interrelationships (Chapter 2 Text)

The Interrelationship section of Chapter 2 was expanded to better explain the working relationship between BLM, NPS, and AGFD.

In response to comments from Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)-Wildlife Services, a short paragraph was added to the Chapter 2 text under Interrelationships regarding predator control. This section reiterates that animal damage control is the responsibility of APHIS-Wildlife Services and AGFD and emphasizes continued cooperating with these agencies. The decision to target individual predators under Alternative C is no longer the Preferred Alternative. Alternative D was selected for the Proposed Plan because it does not include targeting offending animals and it defers to APHIS-Wildlife Services and AGFD for animal damage control.

Socioeconomics

Additional employment information up to 2005 was obtained to update the socioeconomic tables in Appendix 3.I.

Environmental Impacts

Additional quantification of socioeconomic impacts on grazing was added to Chapters 3 and 4. Additional text was also added to Chapter 4 describing in greater detail the impacts to desert tortoise from various threats including roads, route densities, drought, fire, and livestock grazing.

General

New definitions were added to the Glossary including new transportation terms and definitions from BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2006-173, Implementation of Roads and Trails Terminology Report.

Maps

New maps added to Chapter 2 of the Proposed Plan/FEIS that were not in the Draft Plan/EIS show vegetation and wildlife habitat areas; mineral classification for fluid, locatable, and salable minerals; and recreation maps for physical, social, and administrative settings.