

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**  
**LIST OF PREPARERS**

**5.1 Introduction**

The Bureau of Land Management’s decision-making process is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Council of Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), as well as Department of the Interior and BLM policies and procedures for implementing NEPA. The NEPA and associated regulatory and policy framework require that all federal agencies involve interested groups of the public in their decision-making, consider reasonable alternatives to proposed actions, and prepare environmental documents that disclose the potential impacts of proposed actions and alternatives thereof. The regulations also require that persons who were primarily responsible for preparing the EIS or significant background papers, as well as basic components of the document, be identified (40 CFR § 1502.17).

**5.2 Public Participation**

Notice of Exchange Proposal

On November 15, 22, and 29, and December 6, 2008, the BLM published a notice in *The Desert Sun* regarding the agency’s consideration of a proposal to exchange lands with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians pursuant to section 206 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended. The notice stated that the purpose of the land exchange is to consolidate the ownership of federal lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument and to transfer certain lands to the Tribe, expecting to complete a series of exchange transactions to transfer all lands described in the notice. Interested parties were invited to submit comments concerning the proposed land exchange and provide notice of any liens, encumbrances, or claims on the lands involved. No comments or notices were received.

Public Review and Comment Period for Environmental Assessment CA-060-0010-0005

Environmental assessment CA-060-0010-0005, which addressed environmental effects of the proposed land exchange between the BLM and the Tribe, was released for public review and comment on July 27, 2010; comments were due by September 15, 2010. The public review and comment period was subsequently extended to November 19, 2010.

Comments were received from 144 individuals, ten organizations, and three governmental entities. Based on public comments and upon further internal review, it was determined that preparation of an environmental impact statement is necessary to address potentially significant effects of the proposed land exchange.

Notice of Intent to Prepare a Draft EIS

On February 10, 2012, the BLM published a notice in the *Federal Register* regarding its intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed land exchange between the BLM and the Tribe (77 FR 7179). The notice announced the beginning of the scoping process, invited public participation, and described how the time and place of public scoping meetings would be announced. It explained that the BLM was soliciting public input on the issues and impacts to be

addressed in the EIS, as well as the extent to which those issues and impacts would be analyzed. The notice identified how written comments could be submitted by email or regular mail, indicating that all comments must be received no later than 30 days after the last public scoping meeting.

### Public Scoping Meetings

Following publication of the notice of intent to prepare an EIS, a news release of February 23, 2012, identified public scoping meeting dates, times, and locations (BLM California Desert District news release no. CA-CDD-12-28). Notices of the public scoping meetings were published in *The Desert Sun* on March 8 and 9, 2012; a website article at [www.kcet.org](http://www.kcet.org) and an article in *The Desert Sun* about the proposed land exchange, including dates, times, and locations of the public scoping meetings, were published on March 14, 2012, and March 18, 2012, respectively; and an article about the first public scoping meeting, including details about the upcoming second meeting and how to submit public comments, appeared in *The Desert Sun* on March 23, 2012. Additionally, a notice regarding the March 22 and 27 public scoping meetings was sent to individuals and organizations that submitted comments on environmental assessment CA-060-0010-0005, as well as to other interested parties: approximately 140 notifications were sent via email message and about 120 via regular mail; some notices were sent to the same individuals via both email and regular mail.

Public scoping meetings were held at two locations in Palm Springs, California, on March 22 and 27, 2012: the Agua Caliente Spa Hotel and the BLM Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, respectively. The public was provided a document that preliminarily identified issues extracted from public comments submitted to the BLM regarding EA CA-060-0010-0005. The primary purpose of the public scoping period, therefore, was to identify issues in addition to those extracted from public comments submitted in response to the EA. Each public meeting began with an historical overview of how checkerboard landownership came to exist, the purpose and need for the proposed land exchange, the purpose of public scoping, and opportunities for public participation in the NEPA process. Maps of the BLM and Tribal lands identified for exchange were available for review and taking home. The deadline for submitting public comments was announced as April 27, 2012.

Approximately 75 people attended the first public scoping meeting on March 22, 2012; about 50 people attended the second meeting on March 27, 2012. Oral comments were provided by 24 individuals, six of whom represented non-governmental organizations. In addition, the BLM received scoping comment letters and email messages from 62 individuals, five of whom represented non-governmental organizations and two who represented governmental entities, thereby supplementing the issues previously extracted from public comments submitted in response to the EA.

### **5.3 Distribution of Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

This draft EIS is available for a 90-day public review and comment period, beginning the date of publication of a Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* by the Environmental Protection Agency. The initial distribution list of local, state, and federal government entities receiving copies of this document is provided in Appendix M. A news release announcing the availability of the draft EIS with instructions on how to obtain a copy was mailed to individuals who submitted comments on the EA released in 2010, participated in public scoping meetings in 2012,

and/or submitted comments during the scoping period. This document is also available for public review at the following internet site: <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/palmsprings.html>.

Comments received during the public review and comment period will be incorporated into the final EIS. Names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, or other personal identifying information contained in these comments may be made publicly available at any time. While individuals may request confidentially, there is no guarantee that personal identifying information can be withheld. 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 review in their entirety.

#### **5.4 List of Preparers**

##### Bureau of Land Management

Jim Foote, Monument Manager, Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office  
Greg Hill, Wilderness Coordinator, California Desert District  
Steven Kupferman, Branch Chief for Energy and Minerals, California State Office  
Matthew Davis, GIS Specialist, Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office

##### Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians

Richard M. Begay, Director of Historic Preservation

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