

US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Royal Gorge Field Office

The Eastern Colorado RMP/EIS Newsletter

Issue 1, May 2015

Introduction from the Field Manager

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO) has initiated a land use planning process that will cover all BLM-administered lands and federal mineral estate within the RGFO, except the Browns Canyon National Monument, which will have its own resource management plan (RMP). The BLM currently manages public lands through two RMPs and associated amendments. These RMPs are the Royal Gorge RMP (1996), as amended by the South Park Land Tenure Adjustment Plan (2005) and four travel management plan amendments, and the Northeast RMP (1986), as amended in 1991 by the Oil and Gas Amendment. The BLM's current management decisions are based on the Records of Decision for each of these plans. The new RMP, which will be called the Eastern Colorado RMP, will combine both of the original planning areas into one cohesive plan.

This is the first in a series of newsletters designed to keep you informed on the progress of the Eastern Colorado RMP/environmental impact statement (EIS) and how you can participate. Inside, you can find information about the planning area, what an RMP involves, preliminary planning issues and criteria, and how you can participate in this first phase of the process. We appreciate your help in this effort, and we look forward to your continued interest and participation in this project.

Keith Berger, RGFO Field Manager

Eastern Colorado RMP Planning Area

The planning area is the RGFO boundary, including all lands, regardless of land ownership, and encompasses approximately 35,660,000 acres of federal, state, and private lands in 38 eastern Colorado counties. The BLM's decision area for this planning effort includes all BLM-administered lands (approximately 668,000 acres) and federal mineral estate (approximately 3,895,000 acres of federal minerals under other federal land and 2,679,000 acres of federal minerals under state, municipal, and private lands) within the planning area, except Browns Canyon National Monument. The decision area does not include other federal, state, municipal, or private lands. The planning area covers a large percentage of eastern Colorado; however, BLM surface management of the area is relatively small, being confined mainly to seven counties in south central Colorado. The remaining BLM-administered surface lands are small isolated tracts scattered over the rest of eastern Colorado. Surface lands within the planning area administered by other federal agencies, such as the United States (US) Forest Service, Department of Defense, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service; and by state agencies, such as the Colorado State Land Board; are not the subject of this planning effort. In addition, planning decisions and descriptions in the RMP do not apply to private lands, with the exception of federal minerals that lie beneath private lands (known as split estate). See the last page of the newsletter for maps of the Eastern Colorado RMP planning area and decision area.

What is a Resource Management Plan?

An RMP, similar to a county master plan, is a land use plan that describes broad multiple-use guidance for managing lands and federal mineral estate administered by the BLM. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act directs the BLM to develop such land use plans and to provide for appropriate uses of public lands. Decisions in land use plans guide future land management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions.

The BLM land use (or RMP) planning process, explained in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1600 and the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook and Manual (H-1601-1; BLM Manual 1601), falls within the framework of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) environmental analysis and decision making process described in the Council on Environmental Quality regulations of 40 CFR 1500-1508, the Department of the Interior NEPA Manual (516 DM 17), and the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1).

How Can You Participate?

Public involvement is an integral part of preparing the Eastern Colorado RMP/EIS. The envisioning and public scoping periods give the public and other interested agencies and organizations the opportunity to provide comments on issues to be addressed and methods to be used in the RMP revision before the BLM begins drafting it.

The public is formally invited and encouraged to participate in the RMP revision process. Some ways you can participate are:

- ◇ Attending one or more of the *envisioning meetings* (see this and last page) to help develop the vision for, and key management priorities to be addressed in, the RMP revision
- ◇ Attending one or more of the *scoping open houses* (see this and last page) to learn about the project and planning process and to meet BLM representatives
- ◇ Reviewing the progress of the RMP revision online at the Eastern Colorado RMP website, www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/rgfo.html; the website will be updated with information, documents, and announcements throughout RMP/EIS preparation
- ◇ Mailing, faxing, or emailing a comment to the RMP address (see next page)
- ◇ Join or remain on the Eastern Colorado RMP mailing list by:
 - E-mailing us at ecrmp.comments@blm.gov
 - Mailing a letter to our office (see next page)
 - Contacting John Smeins at (719) 269-8581

Envisioning

The BLM will work collaboratively with the public, cooperating agencies, partners, and other stakeholders to establish a vision for, the Eastern Colorado decision area. This vision will serve as the foundation for the RMP revision and help refine the purpose of and need for the RMP revision and preliminary planning criteria (see next page). The vision will be developed by first identifying priorities for the planning area at multiple scales, including national, regional, local, and community-based priorities. Priorities may focus on a single resource or a broad goal that involves multiple resources.

The BLM will host seven public envisioning meetings to discuss key management priorities for the RMP revision. Meetings will be facilitated, teach you about the planning process, and include targeted questions to inspire brainstorming. Attendees will strategize on how to meet competing needs and then share ideas with the BLM. We encourage you to attend and give input about your vision for public lands.

Scoping

The official scoping period will begin with publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register, which is anticipated on June 1, 2015, and will continue for 60 days (until July 31, 2015). During the scoping period, the BLM will host seven scoping open houses in Colorado where you can learn about the project and planning process, talk with BLM representatives, and provide written comments identifying planning issues. The BLM welcomes input at any time during the RMP process. However, comments received during the 60-day scoping period will be reviewed and analyzed to further refine the planning issues.

Next Steps

This preliminary schedule outlines major steps in the EIS process and what happens at each step.

<u>Envisioning, Public Scoping, and Resource Data Collection</u> <i>We are here!</i>	<u>Alternative Development and Draft RMP/EIS Preparation</u>	<u>Draft RMP/EIS Publication</u>	<u>Proposed RMP/Final EIS Preparation and Publication</u>	<u>Record of Decision and Approved RMP Preparation and Publication</u>
Spring – Summer 2015	Fall 2015 – Winter 2016	Winter 2016–2017	Winter 2017–2018	Winter 2018–2019
Host envisioning meetings	Use public comments in creating alternatives	Publish draft EIS	Review and incorporate public comments on draft EIS	Write and publish record of decision
Host public scoping meetings	Analyze impacts of alternatives	Host public meetings	Publish final EIS	
Conduct special studies		Accept public comments on draft EIS during 90-day comment period	Hold 30-day public review and protest period	
Gather public comments on scope over 60-day period				
Publish scoping report summarizing public comments				

Preliminary Planning Issues

Planning issues are conflicts or concerns over a resource management topic that is well defined and entails alternative actions or decisions. The BLM requests your comments on these or other issues on BLM-administered lands within the Eastern Colorado RMP planning area. Please note that travel management plans and route designations are not being reevaluated as part of this planning effort. Future travel management planning will be conducted under separate NEPA analysis. Similarly, the Arkansas River Management Plan and the Browns Canyon National Monument plans are independent planning and NEPA efforts and are not part of this RMP revision. Preliminary planning issues are:

- Managing public lands and resources, including authorized and permitted land uses, for a growing population and expanding urban interface, with consideration for community values and needs
- Addressing increasing numbers and types of human activities and uses
- Managing vegetative and water resources, terrestrial and aquatic habitat, and special management areas (areas of critical environmental concern nominations), while sustaining biological diversity and native species populations
- Managing mineral, renewable, and nonrenewable energy resources
- Considering land tenure adjustments, split estate, withdrawals, and utility/energy corridors

Contact us to Get on the Mailing List!

To request addition to or removal from the list or to update your address, contact us by one of the methods below. You can also use these methods to submit a scoping comment.

Email: ecrmp.comments@blm.gov

Postal Mail: John Smeins
Bureau of Land Management
3028 East Main Street
Cañon City, CO 81212

Phone: (719) 269-8581

Before providing your phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information, you should be aware that your information may be made publicly available at any time. While you can request that your personal identifying information be withheld from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Preliminary Planning Criteria

Planning criteria guide development of the Eastern Colorado RMP/EIS by helping define the decision space. They are generally derived from applicable laws, BLM Director and Colorado State Director guidance, and the results of public and governmental participation (43 CFR 1610.4-2). The BLM developed preliminary planning criteria to set the sideboards for focused decision-making and analysis in the RMP/EIS. Planning criteria will evolve throughout the planning process as public comment is received. Preliminary planning criteria are:

- The BLM will recognize in the RMP/EIS the special importance of public lands to people who live in communities surrounded by public lands and the importance of public lands to the nation as a whole.
- The BLM will make every effort to encourage public participation throughout the RMP/EIS process.
- Environmental protection and commodity extraction are both desirable and necessary objectives of sound land management practices and are not to be considered mutually exclusive priorities.
- Broad-based public participation will be an integral part of the RMP/EIS process. Decisions in the plan will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, federal, and tribal agencies as long as the decisions are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law and regulations applicable to public lands.
- The BLM will strive to minimize potential adverse impacts.
- The BLM will recognize and make decisions following all existing laws and regulations
- The BLM will facilitate oil and gas development and production and provide options for flexibility to the oil and gas industry for environmentally sound exploration, development, and operations.
- A Master Leasing Plan for South Park will be considered.
- The RMP/EIS will consider management of lands bordering the decision area and will strive to harmonize management of BLM-managed lands in the decision area with adjacent lands outside the decision area.

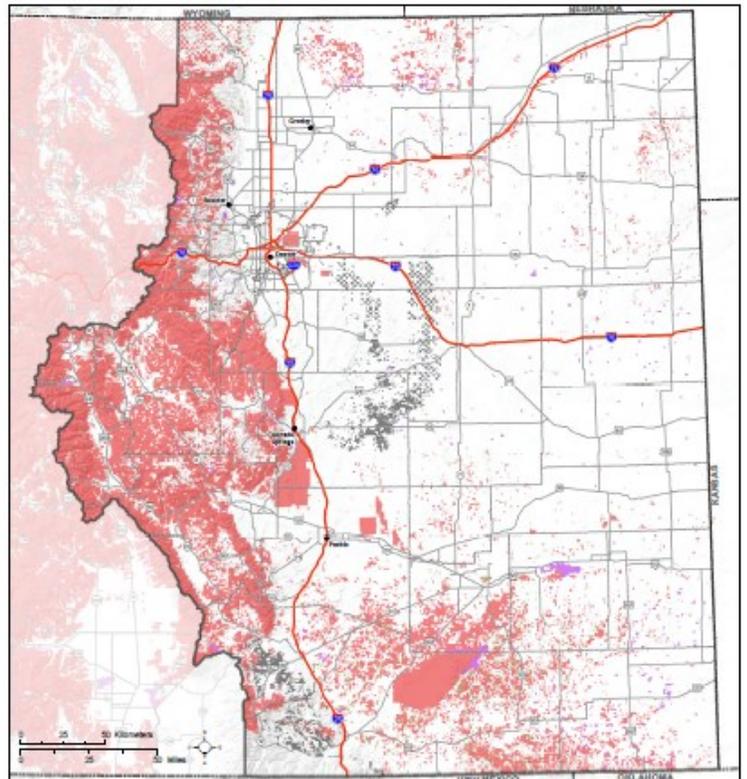
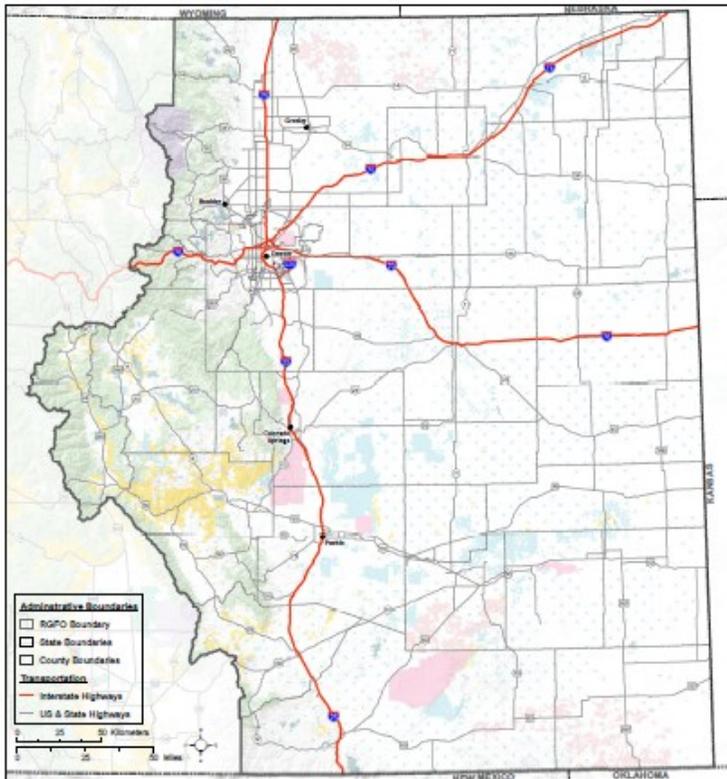
BLM's Multiple-Use Mission

The BLM's multiple-use mission mandates managing public land resources for a variety of uses, such as energy development, livestock grazing, recreation, and timber harvest, while protecting a wide array of natural, cultural, and historical resources.

Click on each map to view the full-sized PDF files.

Eastern Colorado RMP Planning Area

Eastern Colorado RMP Decision Area



Mark Your Calendar! <i>Public Involvement Opportunities</i>		
Location (Colorado)	Envisioning Meeting	Scoping Open House
Greeley Recreation Center, 651 10th Avenue, Greeley	May 18 7:00–9:00pm	June 16 5:30–7:30pm
Denver Marriott West, 1717 Denver West Boulevard, Golden	May 19 3:00–5:00pm	June 15 5:30–7:30pm
Fairplay Community Center, 880 Bogue Street (fairgrounds), Fairplay	May 20 2:00–4:00pm	June 24 5:30–7:30pm
Salida High School, 26 Jones Avenue, Salida	May 26 7:00–9:00pm	June 23 5:30–7:30pm
National Mining Museum, 117 East 10th Street, Leadville	May 27 5:30–7:30pm	June 25 5:30–7:30pm
Huerfano County Community Center, 1038 Russell, Walsenburg	June 2 7:00–9:00pm	June 30 5:30–7:30pm
June 3: Washington Elementary School, 606 N 9th Street, Cañon City June 29: The Abbey, 2951 E Hwy 50 (East Frontage Road), Cañon City	June 3 7:00–9:00pm	June 29 5:30–7:30pm