



Idaho and Southwestern Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Draft Land Use Plan Amendment/ Environmental Impact Statement



January 2014

Project Overview

This initiative is the result of the March 2010, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) *12-Month Finding for Petitions to List the Greater Sage-Grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus) as Threatened or Endangered* (75 Federal Register 13910, March 23, 2010). In that 12-Month Finding the USFWS concluded that Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) was “warranted, but precluded” for listing as a threatened or endangered species. The USFWS reviewed the status and threats to the GRSG in relation to the five Listing Factors provided in Section 4(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA). Of the five Listing Factors reviewed, the USFWS determined that Factor A, “the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the habitat or range of the Greater Sage-Grouse,” and Factor D, “the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms.” posed “**a significant threat to the Greater Sage-Grouse now and in the foreseeable future**” (75 Federal Register 13910, March 23, 2010; emphasis added). The USFWS identified the principal regulatory mechanisms for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Forest Service (Forest Service) as conservation measures in land use plans (LUPs).

In response to the USFWS findings, the BLM and Forest Service are preparing LUP amendments (LUPAs) with associated environmental impact statements (EISs) to incorporate specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG, consistent with national BLM and Forest Service policy. The planning strategy will evaluate the adequacy of BLM and Forest Service LUPs and address, as necessary, amendments throughout the range of the GRSG. These EISs have been coordinated under two administrative planning regions: the Rocky Mountain Region and the Great Basin Region. These regions are drawn roughly to correspond with the threats identified by the USFWS in the 2010 listing decision, along with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Management Zones framework.

The Great Basin Region comprises LUPs in California, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, and portions of Utah and Montana. This region comprises the WAFWA Management Zones III (Southern Great Basin), IV (Snake River Plain), and V (Northern Great Basin). The USFWS has identified a number

of threats in this region, the major ones being wildfire, loss of native habitat to invasive species, and habitat fragmentation.

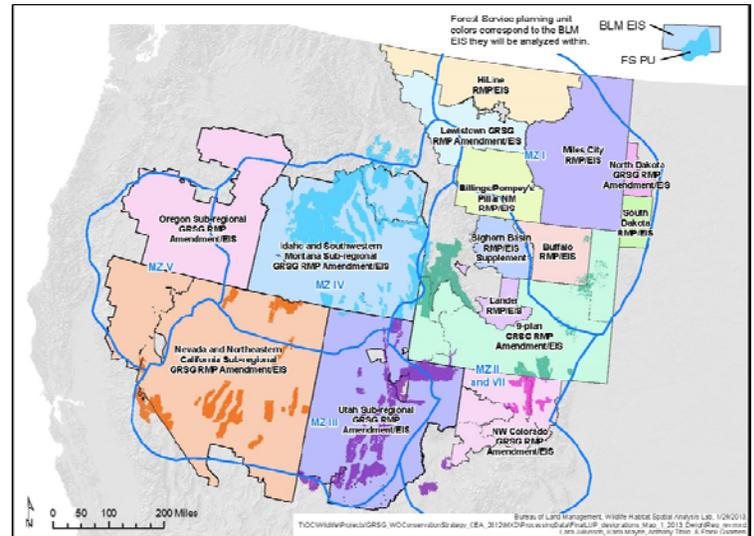


Image shows the BLM and Forest Service GRSG planning strategy sub-region/EIS boundaries

On a sub-regional level, the BLM in Idaho and Montana and Forest Service Intermountain Region (Region 4) are proposing to complete this Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region LUPA/EIS to analyze the effects of amending up to 21 BLM and 8 Forest Service LUPs in order to provide sub-region-wide consistent management of GRSG habitat for all included BLM-administered and National Forest System lands. These proposed LUP amendments would identify and incorporate appropriate regulatory mechanisms to conserve, enhance, and/or restore GRSG habitat, and would be designed to eliminate, reduce, or minimize threats to PPH and PGH on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region. The proposed LUPAs address both USFWS Listing Factors A and D (above) and are intended to provide consistency in the management of GRSG habitats across the sub-region’s BLM-administered and National Forest System lands. The BLM and Forest Service intend to issue separate Records of Decision. The Records of Decision, which will be issued by September 30, 2014, are expected to offer sufficient evidence for the USFWS to consider preclusion of a potential listing for GRSG as a threatened or endangered species under the ESA.



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Planning Area Overview

The planning area is the geographic area within which the BLM and Forest Service will make decisions during a planning effort. A planning area boundary includes all lands regardless of jurisdiction; however, the BLM and Forest Service only make decisions on lands that fall under their respective jurisdiction. Land use plan amendments would be limited to providing land use planning direction specific to the conservation of GRSG and their habitat.

For this draft LUPA/EIS, the planning area includes lands in the Bruneau, Burley, Challis, Four Rivers, Jarbidge, Owyhee, Pocatello, Salmon, Shoshone, and Upper Snake field offices in Idaho, Boise, Caribou-Targhee, Salmon-Challis, and Sawtooth National Forests and Curlew National Grassland in Idaho, and Butte Field Office, Dillon Field Office, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest in southwestern Montana. The sub-region also includes the portion of the Sawtooth National Forest located within Box Elder County in Utah.

The planning area covers all or a portion of 28 counties in Idaho, 5 counties in southwestern Montana, and one county in Utah. Lands within the planning area include a mix of private, federal, and state lands. In total, there are over 49 million acres in the planning area.

The decision area includes all preliminary priority habitat (PPH) and preliminary general habitat (PGH) within the planning area for which the BLM and Forest Service have authority to make management decisions. The BLM and Forest Service have jurisdiction over all BLM-administered and National Forest System lands, respectively. In addition, the BLM has jurisdiction over federal minerals on National Forest System lands and in some areas where the surface is owned by a non-federal entity. For the purpose of this planning process, lands with federal mineral interests refers to areas with state or private surface. **In total, there are over 11 million acres of PPH/PGH in the decision area.** Any decisions in the LUPAs would apply only to BLM-administered and National Forest System lands (the decision area).

The table below depicts the total acreage of PPH and PGH by each county in the decision area.

Acres of PPH/PGH by County

County Name	PPH Acres	PGH Acres	Total Acres
Idaho			
Ada	0	494	494
Adams	7,782	14,485	22,267
Bear Lake	45,150	5,306	50,456
Bingham	87,804	96,541	184,345
Blaine	456,136	82,984	539,120
Bonneville	6,232	61,383	67,615
Butte	554,613	93,960	648,573
Camas	97,594	34,343	131,937
Caribou	7,437	11,108	18,545
Cassia	382,399	255,277	637,677
Clark	418,815	116,258	535,074
Custer	887,218	180,262	1,067,481
Elmore	134,561	111,471	246,032
Fremont	106,615	20,968	127,584
Gem	0	19,515	19,515
Gooding	194,965	18,087	213,052
Jefferson	169,076	12,241	181,317
Jerome	0	54,875	54,875
Lemhi	444,633	140,349	584,982
Lincoln	306,095	129,684	435,780
Madison	11,445	840	12,285
Minidoka	124,480	10,761	135,241
Oneida	215,858	83,579	299,437
Owyhee	2,344,473	651,073	2,995,546
Payette	3,378	9,078	12,456
Power	86,210	38,256	124,466
Twin Falls	408,944	67,233	476,177
Washington	66,064	92,899	158,963
Montana			
Beaverhead	557,833	262,805	820,638
Deer Lodge	0	708	708
Gallatin	0	326	326
Madison	63,438	198,259	261,697
Silver Bow	0	18,059	18,059
Utah			
Box Elder	71,827	0	71,827

Source: BLM and Forest Service GIS 2013

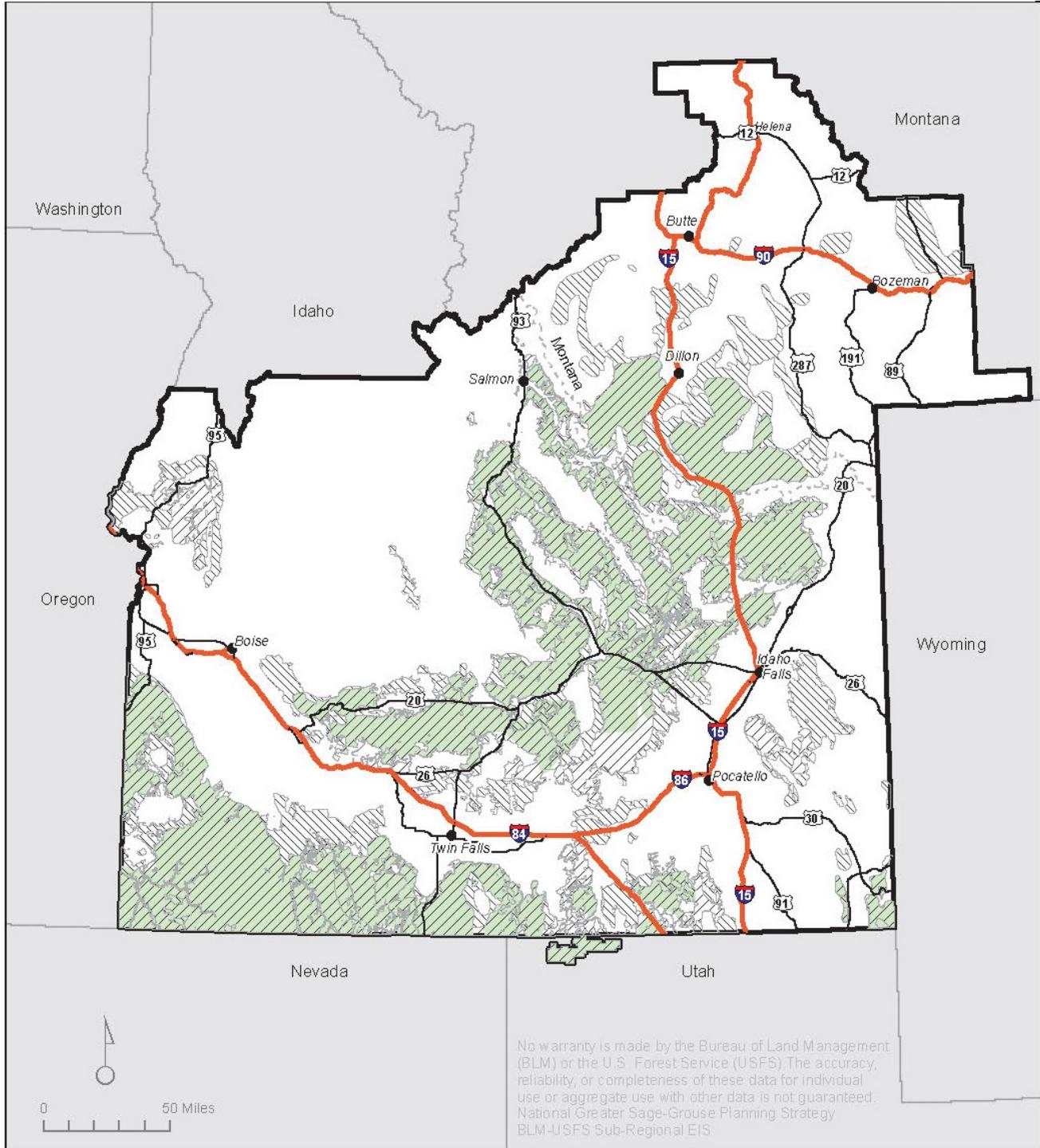


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Preliminary Priority/General Habitat Map



- GRSG COT PAC
- Priority Habitat
- General Habitat
- Analysis Boundary
- Interstate highway
- US highway
- Major Cities

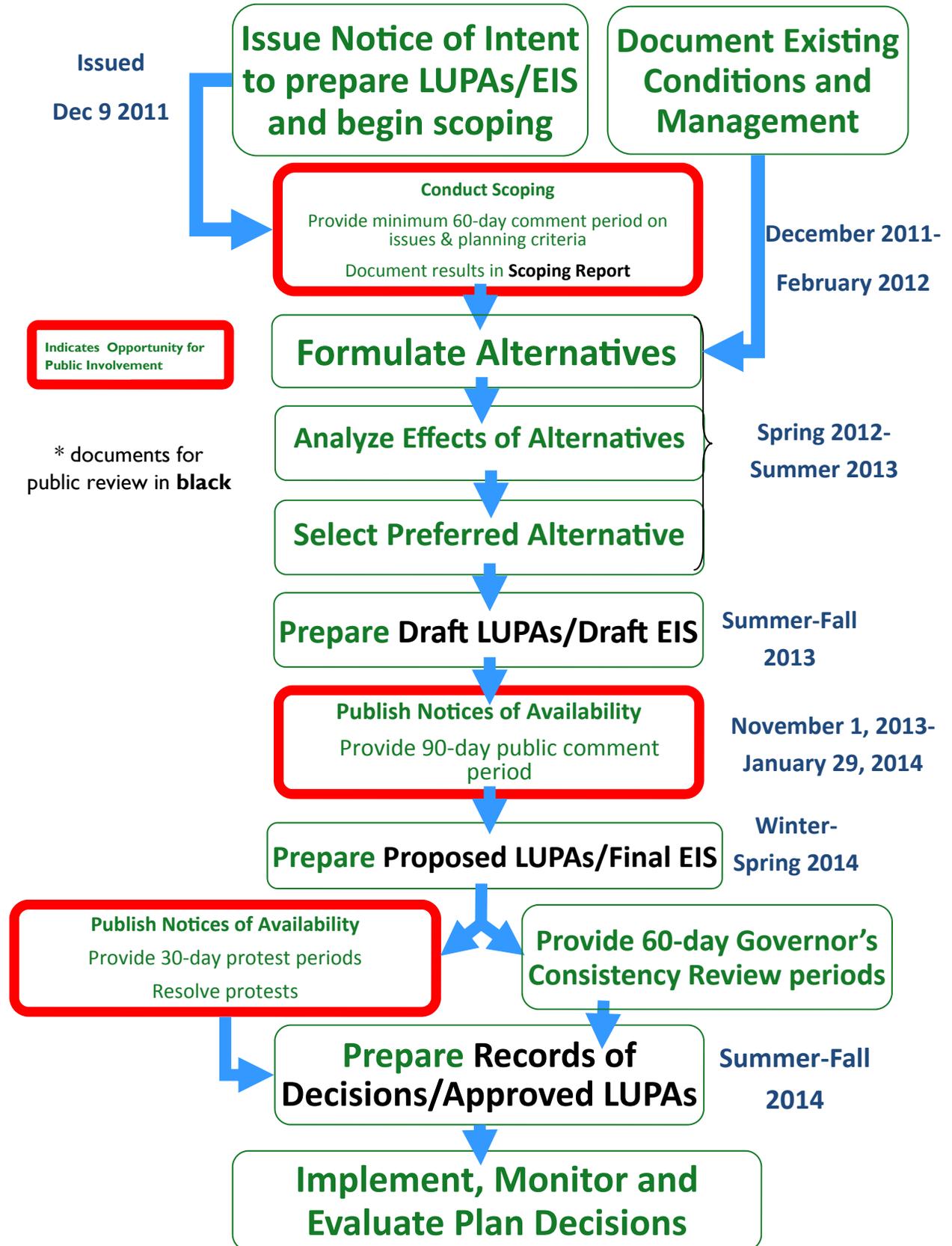


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Planning Process





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Guide to Commenting

Why Public Comments are Important

This is an opportunity for you to be involved in the decision-making process and to offer your thoughts on alternative ways for the BLM and Forest Service to accomplish what they are proposing, and to offer your comments on the agencies' analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed action and possible mitigation of potential harmful effects of such actions.

The National Environmental Policy Act "... is intended to help public officials make decisions that are based on the understanding of environmental consequences..." (40 CFR 1501(c).) To achieve this, the DEIS considers the effects of our actions on, economic and natural resources within the planning area. Citizens, such as yourself, often have valuable information about places and resources they consider important and the potential effects proposed federal actions may have on those places and resources. This is your opportunity to work with us so we can take your information into account.

The BLM and Forest Service are responsible for managing public lands in the public interest. Comments that provide relevant and new information with sufficient detail are most useful and are referred to as substantive comments. The BLM and Forest Service review all comments and identify the topics that are substantive for consideration in the final published document.

Viewing the Document

The BLM and Forest Service encourage the public to review the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Draft LUPA/Draft EIS and provide comments. The public can view the document in the following ways:

Electronically:

http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa_register/sage-grouse_rmp_revision.html

In-Person:

BLM Idaho State Office
1387 S. Vinnell Way
Boise, ID 83709

How to Submit Comments

Comments may be submitted in the following ways:

- Electronically by e-mail to:
blm_id_swmt_sagegrouse_eis@blm.gov
- By US mail to:
BLM-Greater Sage-Grouse EIS
1387 S. Vinnell Way
Boise, ID 83709
- Fax: 208-373-3805

To facilitate analysis of comments and information submitted, we strongly encourage you to submit comments in an electronic format.

**Public comments will be
accepted until **January 29, 2014****

Protecting your Privacy

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Questions About Commenting or About the Document?

If you have questions about commenting or about the document, please contact:

Brent Ralston, Project Lead – Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/
EIS, Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region.

Telephone: 208-373-4000

Guide to Commenting (continued)

Substantive Comments

A substantive comment is one that does one or more of the following (BLM Handbook H-1790, *National Environmental Policy Act Handbook*):

- Questions, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in the RMP and EIS
- Questions, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis
- Presents new information relevant to the analysis
- Presents reasonable alternatives other than those analyzed in the EIS
- Causes changes or revisions in one or more of the alternatives

Nonsubstantive Comments

A nonsubstantive comment is one that can be categorized as one or more of the following (BLM Handbook H-1790, *National Environmental Policy Act Handbook*):

- Comments in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives without reasoning that meet the criteria for a substantive comment
- Comments that only agree or disagree with BLM policy or resource decisions without justification or supporting data that meet the criteria for a substantive comment
- Comments that don't pertain to the project area or the project
- Comments that take the form of vague, open-ended questions

Tips for Providing Helpful Comments

- Provide specific and detailed text changes. Include the section, management action or page number to help us find the exact location of the subject of your comment. Clearly identify:
 - Where the issue or error is located
 - Why you believe there is an error
 - Alternative ideas to address the issue/errors
- Provide constructive solutions with documentation or resources to support your recommendations.
- Include any knowledge, experience or evidence as it relates to your observations and comments.
- Provide GPS readings if possible when referring to specific locations.
- Avoid vague statements or concerns. These don't give the BLM something on which to act.
- Comments are not votes for or against a decision. BLM must rely on supporting information, not the number of comments received. Multiple comments/topics with the same concern are considered one comment.
- Avoid using form letters to convey your opinion. Your unique way of writing a comment helps the BLM understand your point of view.

Examples of substantive and nonsubstantive comments can be found on the BLM NEPA Web Guide: http://www.blm.gov/wol/st/en/prog/planning/nepa/webguide/document_pages/6_9_2_1__examples.html.