BLM

Public Scoping Report

for the

Carlsbad Field Office
Resource Management Plan Revision/
Environmental Impact Statement

May 13th, 2011
Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Pecos District
Carlsbad Field Office
620 E. Greene St.
Carlsbad, NM 88220

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620 E. Greene Street
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Executive Summary

This report documents the public scoping process for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Carlsbad Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Scoping Report includes a description of the planning area; a summary of the scoping process, including the comments received; a summary of new issues identified during scoping; and an overview of the planning schedule.

The purpose of scoping is to identify issues important to the future management of public lands and resources. These issues will guide development of alternatives to be analyzed in the Carlsbad RMP/EIS. The scoping process also provides an opportunity to educate the public about the management of public lands and for the BLM to gauge the concerns of those who have a stake in the resources of the area.

Project Overview

The Carlsbad Field Office (CFO) administers BLM-managed lands in southeastern New Mexico. The planning area includes approximately 2.1 million acres of Federal surface land and 3 million acres of BLM-managed mineral estate in Chaves, Eddy, and Lea Counties. These lands are currently managed under the 1988 Carlsbad RMP, which was amended in 1997 and 2008. A revision to this plan is necessary due to changes, both on the landscape and in the resource use and protection arenas. The revised RMP will evaluate the effectiveness of the decisions in these plans and provide new management direction where needed.

1.1.1 Scoping Process

The BLM published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to develop the Carlsbad RMP/EIS in the *Federal Register* on June 10, 2010. The NOI formally began the scoping process. The BLM submitted a news release to local media and the Associated Press, and developed a website devoted to the RMP revision. The BLM also mailed a notice to a list of contacts maintained by Carlsbad Field Office. The CFO hosted ten public meetings where the public was encouraged to submit comments on the RMP revision. The formal scoping period ended on August 30, 2010, 30 days after the last public meeting.

1.1.2 Cooperating Agencies

The BLM has invited a number of Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as Tribes, to participate in the RMP as cooperating agencies. Seven agencies accepted the BLM's invitation. Two more have indicated they would like to be involved in the RMP process informally.

Issue Summary

1.1.3 Summary of Public Comments

The BLM received comments from 30 individuals. Comments addressed the following issues:

- Air Resources (Air Quality and Climate Change)
- Data Needs and Gaps
- Dumping and Illegal Activities
- Fluid and Solid Minerals Development

- Groundwater and Karst Aquifers
- Land Health
- Lands and Realty
- Planning Criteria
- Recreation
- Renewable Energy
- Riparian Areas/Watersheds
- Special Designations
- Transportation Management
- Visual Resources
- Wildlife

1.1.4 Issues Identified During Scoping

Prior to the scoping process, the BLM developed a list of preliminary issues for the Preparation Plan. The BLM will address many of the public comments received as part of the issues already identified. Some comments raised new questions within the issues identified by the BLM. Comments identified two new issues: dumping and illegal activities, and wildlife.

1.1.5 Anticipated Decisions to be Made

The revised RMP will be comprehensive in nature and will address issues identified through internal BLM discussions, by other agencies, and through public scoping. The revised RMP decisions will fall into two categories: desired outcomes (goals, standards, and objectives), and allowable uses and actions to achieve desired outcomes.

1.1.6 Issues Raised that Will Not Be Addressed

Some comments raised issues that will not be addressed in the RMP because they are outside the scope of the plan. Issues may be outside the scope of the plan if they request implementation level actions; are outside the BLM's jurisdiction; or would require a change in policy, regulation, or law.

1.1.7 Valid Existing Management to be Carried Forward

The revised RMP will address and integrate, to the extent possible, valid existing management decisions. The BLM will prepare an Analysis of Management Situation to analyze the effectiveness of current planning decisions.

1.1.8 Special Designations

The planning process will consider nominations for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) from the public. The BLM will also evaluate existing Special Management Areas and ACECs to determine if they should be carried forward or if their boundaries need to be adjusted.

Draft Planning Criteria

The BLM identified draft planning criteria in the Preparation Plan. These criteria were adjusted based on public scoping. The BLM added one new criterion, recognizing the requirement of the BLM to follow the Secretary's Order for the Potash Area.

Data Summary/Data Gaps

The CFO will use existing resource information wherever possible. However, the following areas where additional data is needed have been identified:

- Air resources
- Cultural resources
- Fluid minerals
- Karst
- Potash
- Recreation
- Special designations
- Special status species
- Transportation
- Visual resources
- Water resources
- Wilderness
- Wildlife

Additionally, several commenters identified available data that the BLM will consider in the planning process.

Summary of Future Steps in the Planning Process

Scoping is only the first step in the planning process. Several more steps are necessary to complete the RMP, including Analysis of the Management Situation, formulation of alternatives, estimating the effects of alternatives, selection of the preferred alternative, and the selection of the Proposed Plan.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Overview

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for the management of public land based on the principles of multiple-use and sustained health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for present and future generations. Resource Management Plans (RMPs) provide management direction and are used to determine appropriate uses, allocate resources, develop strategies to manage and protect resources, and establish systems to monitor and evaluate the status of resources and effectiveness of management practices over time.

The BLM Carlsbad Field Office (CFO) manages Federal lands in southeastern New Mexico under the 1988 Carlsbad RMP, which was amended in 1997 and 2008. In 2010, the CFO began the process of revising its RMP. This revision will address the management of BLM-managed lands in the planning area, which includes approximately 2.1 million acres of BLM-managed surface lands and 3 million acres of BLM-managed mineral estate in Chaves, Eddy, and Lea counties (1 million of which is split estate). The CFO will follow the processes outlined in the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and all applicable regulations, which includes the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) associated with the RMP revision.

1.1.1 Background

The 1988 Carlsbad RMP and the 1997 Carlsbad RMP Amendment are the primary documents that guide management in the planning area, along with the 2008 Pecos District Special Status Species RMP Amendment. Table 1 summarizes the decisions affecting the surface and mineral estate in the planning area.

In January 2010, the BLM completed the *Carlsbad Resource Management Plan and the Carlsbad Resource Management Plan Amendment RMP Evaluation Report*, evaluating the 1988 Plan and Amendments. The evaluation showed that decisions in the following resources needed to be updated:

- Areas needing special designations
- Cave and karst
- Cultural resources
- Fluid and solid minerals
- Lands and realty
- Lands with wilderness characteristics
- Planned and unplanned fire
- Rangeland resources (including air, soil, water, vegetation and grazing)
- Recreation
- Terrestrial and aquatic habitat (including wildlife, special status species, and riparian areas)
- Travel management
- Visual resources

Table 1. Decisions Affecting Management of the Planning Area

Plan Name	Purpose	Year
Carlsbad Resource Management Plan	Establishes resource/resource use management direction for public lands and federal mineral development throughout the field office.	1988
Carlsbad Resource Management Plan Amendment	Establishes decisions for primarily minerals, oil, and gas development within the planning area, and amends the 1988 RMP	1997
New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing	Develops standards for public land health and guidelines for livestock grazing management for New Mexico in compliance with the Rangeland Reform Policy EIS	2001
New Mexico Fire and Fuels Resource Management Plan Amendment	Amends all BLM New Mexico RMPs to make all NM RMPs current with the National Fire Plan.	2004
Pecos District Special Status Species Resource Management Plan Amendment	Ensures continued habitat protection of the lesser prairie-chicken and sand dune lizard by amending the Carlsbad RMP and RMP Amendment-mineral decisions and travel management for a portion of the CFO planning area.	2008
Final Programmatic EISs for Wind, Geothermal, West Wide Energy Corridor, and National Vegetation Treatment	Provides general decisions for accommodating renewable energy development, transmission and vegetation treatments.	Varies

1.1.2 Purpose and Need for the Plan Revision

The Federal Lands Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires the BLM to "develop, maintain, and when appropriate, revise land-use plans" (43 U.S.C. § 1712(a)). The BLM has determined that it is necessary to revise the existing land use plan and prepare a new RMP for the CFO, which will take into account a number of new issues that have arisen since the preparation of the existing plan. These changes are outlined in the *RMP Evaluation Report*. In general, the purpose of the RMP is to provide a comprehensive management framework for BLM-managed lands in the planning area and its allocation of resources pursuant to FLPMA's multiple-use and sustained yield mandate. In addition, the purpose of this plan revision is:

- To consolidate the existing land use plan and amendments;
- To reevaluate, with public involvement, existing conditions, resources, and uses, and reconsider the mix of resource allocations and management decisions designated to balance uses and the protection of resources pursuant to FLPMA and applicable law;
- To resolve multiple-use conflicts or issues between resource values and resource uses;
- To disclose and assess the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the reasonably foreseeable future actions resulting from the management actions in the RMP and alternatives; and
- To establish consolidated guidance and updated goals, objectives, and management actions for the public lands in the decision area.

The RMP will be comprehensive in nature and will address issues identified through agency, interagency, and public scoping efforts.

A revision to the 1988 RMP and 1997 RMP Amendment is necessary because a number of changes have occurred, both on the landscape and in the resource use and protection arenas. These changes are largely due to continuing fluid and solid mineral extraction and energy development in the area and new technologies being used to extract those resources. Approximately 78% of the planning area is leased for oil and gas development. In addition, potash is mined in the planning area. Challenges exist in managing fluid and solid minerals, as well as concurrent development. In response to these challenges, the CFO has initiated the development of the reasonably foreseeable development (RFD) scenario for fluid mineral development in addition to on-going air quality and groundwater studies. The BLM will incorporate these studies into the current management direction to guide the CFO's decisions regarding mineral development.

There is also a need to update the RMP to address several interrelated issues and management concerns, including renewable energy, recreation, special designations, special status species, visual resources, and wildlife habitat. Updated or new wildlife and special status species stipulations, Conditions of Approval (COAs), and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are needed for oil and gas development. Special designations such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) need to be reexamined, especially for several cultural areas.

There are opportunities to update recreation decisions in the plan revision to capitalize on community interest and needs, as well as surrounding tourism destinations. Special recreation designations need to be updated. Most of the planning area is currently designated as open to cross-country motorized vehicle use, a designation that needs to be reexamined to balance resource protection with travel management needs. Visual resources need to be inventoried and visual resource management (VRM) designations need to be updated to address renewable energy demand, as well as other potential uses in the planning area. Lastly, the President's priority on meeting the nation's future energy demand through renewable energy development will be another priority for the RMP revision. Future renewable energy sites and interconnecting rights-of-way need to be considered in the RMP.

1.2 Planning Area

The planning area for the revised Carlsbad RMP is located in southeastern New Mexico (Figure 1). It includes Eddy, Lea, and a portion of Chaves Counties. The planning area encompasses approximately 6.2 million acres and includes the communities of Artesia, Carlsbad, Hobbs, Jal and Lovington. Within the planning area, the BLM manages 2.1 million surface acres and 3 million acres of mineral estate (Table 2). Of the mineral estate, 1 million acres are split estate, meaning that the surface and minerals are not owned by the same entity (e.g., State surface/Federal minerals).

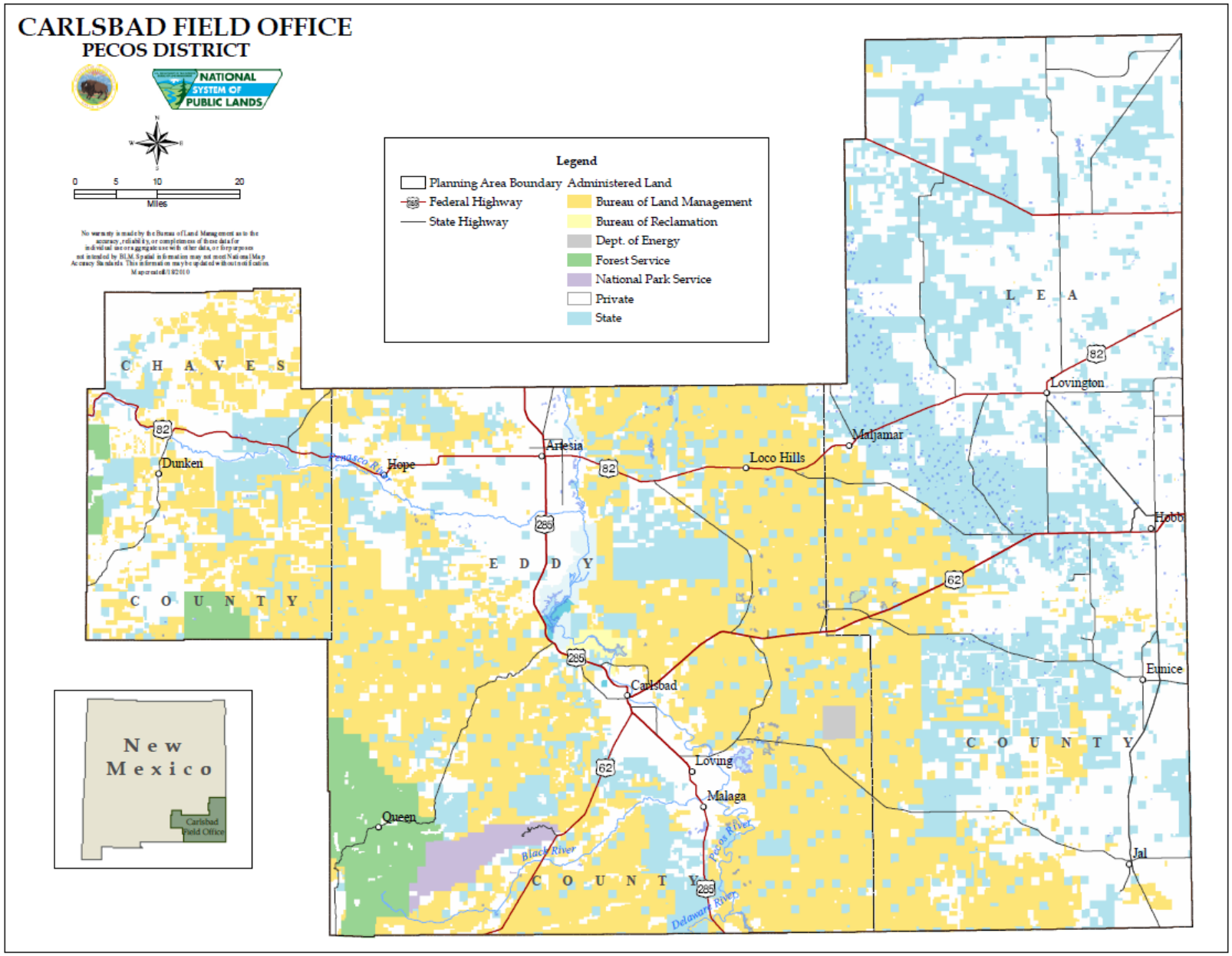

Figure 1. Map of the Planning Area

Table 2. Surface Management in the Planning Area

Surface Management Responsibility	Surface Acres	Percentage of Planning Area
Bureau of Land Management	2,093,000	33%
US Forest Service	174,000	3%
National Park Service	47,000	<1%
Bureau of Reclamation	14,000	<1%
Department of Energy	10,000	<1%
State of New Mexico	1,570,000	25%
Private	2,352,000	38%
Total	6,260,000	100%

1.3 Scoping Process

Scoping helps the BLM determine what issues the public feels the RMP should address. This section provides a description of the scoping process, the techniques that the BLM used to notify the public, and a brief summary of the public meetings.

1.3.1 Description of Process

The BLM published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to develop the Carlsbad RMP and associated EIS in the *Federal Register* on June 10, 2010. This formally began the scoping process. The BLM submitted a news release to local media and to the Associated Press, and developed a website devoted to the RMP revision.

The CFO hosted ten public meetings. Members of public were encouraged to submit oral or written comments regarding management of BLM-managed lands in the planning area. The formal scoping period ended August 30, 2010, 30 days after the last public meeting. Although the BLM accepts comments at any time during the planning process, comments received during the scoping period are particularly helpful in guiding the development of alternatives. All of the comments received by August 30, 2010, were compiled, reviewed, organized, and analyzed for this report. This report identifies and documents issues derived from the comments.

1.3.2 Public Notice

1.3.2.1 Federal Register

The Carlsbad RMP/EIS public scoping process began with the publication of an NOI in the *Federal Register* on June 10, 2010. The NOI announced the BLM's intent to revise the RMP for the CFO, to prepare an EIS, and to conduct public scoping. It also included contact information for the CFO in order to enable public to obtain more information about the process.

1.3.2.2 Mailing List and Planning Flyers

An initial mailing list for this planning effort was compiled by updating a list of contacts maintained by the CFO. This list included individuals and companies that operate on Federal lands, Special Recreation Permit holders, volunteers, public officials, and other interested parties. The CFO also used the mailing list compiled for the HB In-Situ Solution Mine EIS, an ongoing EIS in the Carlsbad Field Office.

The CFO sent information explaining the planning and scoping processes to individuals on the mailing list on July 8, 2010, and posted it on the Carlsbad RMP Website. A flyer announcing the scoping meetings was posted in communities in the planning area, including Artesia, Carlsbad, Hobbs, and Jal (Appendix C).

1.3.2.3 Media Releases

The BLM prepared a media release to introduce the project, announce the scoping meetings, and invite the public to provide input. The news release was issued to various New Mexico media, including the Carlsbad Current-Argus, Artesia Daily Press, and Associated Press. The Carlsbad Current-Argus and the Artesia Daily Press published stories on the RMP revision. The story was also carried on the Associated Press newswire.

1.3.2.4 Website

The BLM established the Carlsbad RMP Website on the CFO Website in June 2010. The website is updated regularly and includes postings of all BLM news releases regarding the plan, information about the planning process, a planning schedule, a copy of the preparation plan, a schedule of the scoping meetings, a map of the planning area, the NOI, and other information as it becomes available. The New Mexico State Office Website also links to the Carlsbad RMP Website.

1.3.3 Public Meetings

The BLM hosted ten public scoping meetings on five days between July 19 and July 27, 2010 (Table 3). Each meeting lasted three hours and was held from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. During these meetings, 71 people registered their attendance. The meetings included a formal presentation followed by an "open house" period. The presentation included an overview of the BLM and the CFO, the planning process, and the purpose of scoping and encouraged attendees to ask questions and provide comments. The open house included presentation boards and maps as well as a Geographic Information System (GIS). CFO specialists were available to answer questions and take verbal comments. This format allowed CFO staff to interact with the public in a casual environment.

Table 3. Public Meeting Attendance

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Number in Attendance
July 19, 2010	Artesia High School Auditorium, Artesia	9
July 20, 2010	Pecos River Convention Center, Carlsbad	17
July 22, 2010	Hope Community Center, Hope	9
July 26, 2010	Jal Community Center, Jal	7
July 27, 2010	New Mexico Junior College, Hobbs	29
	Total	**71**

1.4 Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agency status provides a formal framework for government agencies to engage in active collaboration with a federal agency to implement the requirements of NEPA. Federal and State agencies and local and tribal governments may qualify as cooperating agencies if they have "jurisdiction by law or special expertise" (40 CFR 1501.6 and 1508.5).

The BLM has invited the following agencies to participate as cooperating agencies:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Carlsbad Irrigation District
- Carlsbad Soil and Water Conservation District
- Chaves County Commission
- City of Artesia
- City of Carlsbad
- City of Eunice
- City of Hobbs
- City of Jal
- City of Lovington
- Department of Energy
- Eddy County Commission
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Federal Highway Administration
- Lea County Commission
- Lea Soil and Water Conservation District
- Carlsbad Caverns National Park
- Guadalupe Mountains National Park
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- New Mexico Department of Agriculture
- New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs
- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
- New Mexico Department of Transportation
- New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resource Department
- New Mexico Environment Department
- New Mexico State Land Office
- Office of the State Engineer
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Geologic Survey

The following agencies expressed an interest in becoming cooperating agencies:

- Carlsbad Irrigation District
- Carlsbad Soil and Water Conservation District
- City of Eunice
- Department of Energy
- Carlsbad Caverns National Park
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs – Historic Preservation Division
- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
- Office of the State Engineer
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

On September 24, 2010, the BLM hosted a meeting with these agencies to discuss the role of cooperating agencies in the RMP process. The BLM has signed seven Memorandums of Understanding with the following agencies formalizing the cooperating agency relationship:

- Department of Energy
- Carlsbad Irrigation District
- Carlsbad Soil and Water Conservation District
- City of Eunice
- City of Jal
- Lea County Water Users Association
- Natural Resources Conservation Service

The U.S. Geological Survey and the New Mexico Environment Department indicated they wish to be involved in the RMP process informally.

1.5 Collaborative Planning

Collaboration is a process by which interested parties, often with widely varied interests, work together to seek solutions with broad support. Collaboration mandates methods, not outcomes; and does not imply that parties will achieve consensus.

1.5.1 Agency Coordination

Although no scoping meetings were held specifically for agencies, the BLM has contacted key Federal, State, and local agencies to initiate coordination and collaborative efforts that will continue throughout the RMP/EIS process. As described above, the BLM has invited key agencies to formally participate as cooperating agencies. The BLM will continue to reach out to, and accept comments from, any agencies that choose not to become cooperating agencies. The BLM will also complete all required consultations as described in Appendix C of the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1).

1.5.2 Resource Advisory Council

A Resource Advisory Council (RAC) is a committee established by the Secretary of the Interior to provide advice or recommendations to BLM management (BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1). The BLM New Mexico RAC provides input on BLM decisions from local community members, concerned citizens, and government officials of all levels. The New Mexico RAC includes a panel of mixed expertise and balanced interests ranging from natural resources and Native American culture to energy and mineral development.

The BLM New Mexico RAC has been inactive since 2008 and is being reformed as District RACs. As soon as the Pecos District RAC is formed, the CFO will brief the members on the RMP revision and seek input on the planning process. The CFO will provide updates to the RAC throughout the planning process.

1.5.3 Tribal Consultation

The following seven Tribes have traditional uses in the planning area:

- Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Comanche Indian Tribe
- Hopi Tribal Council
- Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma
- Pueblo of Isleta
- Mescalero Apache Tribe
- Ysleta del Sur Pueblo

On August 31, 2010, the BLM sent a letter to each of the Tribes that invited and encouraged them to become cooperating agencies. The BLM followed up the letter with a telephone call and an invitation to meet in person. As of the publication of this report, none of the Tribes have decided to become cooperating agencies. The invitation to become a cooperating agency will remain open throughout the planning process.

2. Issue Summary

2.1 Summary of Public Comments

The BLM received comments from 30 individuals (Table 4). Twelve individuals commented at public meetings and 18 letters were received by mail, email, or hand-delivered to the CFO. All scoping comment letters were read, revealing 345 specific comments that could be categorized into 11 issues) and 18 subject categories (see Appendix B). Comments classified as outside the scope of plan, would require administrative or policy actions, or were questions directed to the BLM are summarized in Section 2.4, "Issues Raised that Will Not Be Addressed".

Table 4. Geographic Distribution of Commenters

City	Number of Commenters
Albuquerque	2
Artesia	2
Carlsbad	13
Denver	1
Eunice	1
Hobbs	1
Houston	1
Jal	3
Loving	1
Oklahoma City	1
Roswell	2
Santa Fe	1
Unknown	1

The following is a summary of public comments and does not necessarily represent the views of the BLM or guarantee that the BLM will take any particular action or choose any particular alternative. Comment summaries displayed in bulleted lists are paraphrased to allow for easy display.

2.1.1 Comments on Preliminary Planning Issues

Planning issues express opportunities, conflicts, and problems associated with the management of public lands. Issues also reflect new data, new or revised policies, and changes in resource use that affect an RMP. Prior to external scoping, the BLM identified eleven preliminary planning issues. These issues were published on the Carlsbad RMP Website and handed out at public meetings. Many comments were on the preliminary planning issues identified by the BLM, and expressed either specific aspects of the issue that should be evaluated in the plan or suggested management actions to address issues. This summary addresses where the BLM will consider the comments in the planning process. For a summary of the planning process, please see *Section 5: Summary of Future Steps in the Planning Process*.

Impacts Analysis:

Several commenters felt the BLM should consider the impacts of air quality in its planning process.

- Air quality is one of the major benefits of living in rural southeastern New Mexico but there are areas where that is no longer the case. In recent years, rapid oil and gas development has resulted in reduced air quality in local communities and rural areas.
- The BLM should consider activities within the planning area and regional/local air quality studies. The BLM should consider seasonal air issues such as heat in the summer, which results in more haze, or spring winds that result in more dust in the air.

Climate Change

Alternatives:

One commenter suggested the BLM consider more carbon sequestration.

Impacts Analysis

One commenter stated that as much as practical, the BLM should use reasonableness and good, broadly accepted science as its guide.

2.1.1.1 Issue 2: Groundwater and Karst Aquifers

Alternatives:

One commenter urged that water for drilling operations be considered a temporary use.

Commenters felt that groundwater and aquifers need to be closely monitored, and one recommended specific protection for the Capitan Aquifer.

Impacts Analysis:

Commenters were concerned about water quality and quantity. In particular, there was concern about the impacts of oil and gas development, including leaks and spills, on groundwater quality and quantity. They felt that additional development would result in contaminated aquifers.

Another commenter pointed out that oil and gas is not the only activity that may affect groundwater or related karst aquifers. The commenter believed surface retention ponds for mines and the proposed solution mining project pose just as significant, if not greater, potential harm to these resources. Potential direct and indirect impacts from wind and solar projects, in addition to certain agricultural uses and even recreation, were raised as activities that can impact aquifers.

2.1.1.2 Issue 3: Fluid and Solid Minerals Development

Fluid Minerals

Alternatives:

Commenters encouraged the BLM to take the following actions to address these surface protection concerns:

- Change or add COAs to include maintenance of cattleguards
- Put size and timing restrictions on rig moves
- Ensure oil and gas companies clean up and keep wells clean of trash and debris
- Enforce the rule of reseeding

When developing reclamation standards and policies, one commenter urged the BLM to continue to support the efforts of Restore New Mexico, stating that it is a unique coalition that includes oil and gas operators, New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts, local communities, environmental organizations, and others. However, the commenter felt the BLM should not restrict oil and gas activities in active fields that are located within a broader area that has begun restoration.

Another commenter wished to make sure that the drilling process ensures pore spaces are protected.

Several comments addressed the development of requirements for oil and gas development.

- Stipulations required for future oil and gas leasing should be the least restrictive necessary to adequately protect other resource values.
- Oil and natural gas development is a crucial part of the BLM's multiple use mandate. Oil and gas development should not be unreasonably limited.
- Alternatives containing overly stringent restrictions or COAs may render development uneconomical and should not be analyzed as NEPA requires alternatives to be feasible. Alternatives that prohibit or eliminate all oil and gas development within the area are neither practical nor reasonable and should not be analyzed in detail.
- Regulations, BMPs, and COAs must be justifiable and reasonable. For example, reasonable reclamation does not mean making the land better than it was before it was disturbed. Improvements in condition resulting from reclamation are good, but should not be mandated.
- Existing regulations at Federal and State level and COAs make additional BMPs for oil and gas development unnecessary.
- Current requirements and policies for oil and gas development will likely reveal that new stipulations and BMPs may not be necessary or reasonable. Enforcement of these requirements and policies may be adequate.
- Companies should flare off natural gas.

Several commenters expressed concern over the proper disposal of produced water. One commenter was particularly concerned with illegal dumping of produced water and requested BLM develop an education plan and no tolerance policy in the event a water hauler is discovered dumping toxic water.

Impacts Analysis:

Commenters emphasized their economic interest in, and the economic benefit of, oil and gas development in the planning area, as well as the need for reliable, domestic sources of energy.

Multiple commenters were concerned about the impacts from oil and gas development on resources and resource uses in the planning area.

- Damage to cattleguards results in loose cattle, traffic accidents, and cattle getting into the wrong pastures.
- Grates should be longer and wider to accommodate large equipment. Oil companies should take responsibility for maintenance and improvements to damaged cattleguards as a result of oil and gas development.
- The cost to ranching (actual dollars and risk exposure to the rancher) due to oilfield impacts should be analyzed.
- There are excessive well pads.
- Wells are too close to the river.
- Pit reclamation should occur. Groundwater and surface vegetation should be protected from pits and caliche pads on split estate lands.
- Ranchers and oil companies must take responsibility for maintaining the integrity of land and water.
- Oil and gas development results in noxious weeds.
- Fracing causes pollution and is a public health hazard.

Another commenter was concerned about the impact the Mesquite Salt Water Disposal off of State Road NM 200 would have on his water.

Potash Development[*]

Alternatives:

Commenters noted that, with regard to management of the Secretary's Potash Area, management decisions must be consistent with the Secretarial Policy as set forth in an order of the Secretary of the Interior entitled *Oil, Gas and Potash Leasing and Development Within the Designated Potash Area of Eddy and Lea Counties, New Mexico* and associated case law and BLM policy.

Several commenters suggested adding "concurrent development in the Potash Area" to the list of issues being considered under Fluid and Solid Minerals. One commenter added that, in addition to deciding how energy development should be facilitated while allowing for multiple uses, the BLM should also determine how potash development should be facilitated in the Potash Area while allowing for energy development, multiple uses, and appropriate protection of public lands and resources. This commenter also requested management actions, best management practices, and mitigation measures be included in the RMP to enhance and protect potash resource development and maximize the development of potash in the potash area.

Another commenter expressed concern that potash was not adequately addressed in the Preparation Plan or NOI, "despite the fact that the planning area provides approximately 80% of the United States' potash production and the United States imports 85% of the potash used by our nation's farmers to grow the crops to feed this country."

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[*] The terms Potash Area and Potash Enclave appeared to be used interchangeably in some submitted comments. However, the Secretarial Policy as set forth in an order of the Secretary of the Interior entitled *Oil, Gas and Potash Leasing and Development Within the Designated Potash Area of Eddy and Lea Counties, New Mexico*, sets out different requirements for management of areas that are within the enclave and areas that are outside the enclave but within the Potash Area. Where possible, in this report, the BLM will interpret and consider comments in a way that is consistent with the Secretary's Order.

This commenter felt that issues for BLM to consider in the RMP and EIS included:

- How has the BLM's historical and current management of the Potash Area resulted in the waste of millions of tons of potash and precluded recovery by the Federal government and New Mexico of substantial royalties on potash production?
- What additional management actions, best management practices, and mitigation measures are necessary to "enhance or protect" potash resource development in the Potash Area?
- How should BLM facilitate potash and oil and gas development in the Potash Area while allowing for appropriate protection of public lands and resources?
- Should all potassium leases issued by the BLM contain diligence stipulations, consistent with those used since 2007, if not more stringent, to require orderly and timely development of the potash resource?

Impacts Analysis:

According to comments, the Potash Area contains recoverable oil and gas resources, which could generate Federal royalties and revenue for State and local governments.

Another commenter emphasized the importance of the potash resources in the Potash Area, and the resource's importance to our nation's food supply. Additionally, the commenter detailed the investment in the Potash Area, and the economic benefit potash mining has in the planning area.

There were concerns about the NOI's question, "How should the RMP address new technologies such as potash solution mining?" The commenter wished to make clear that solution mining is not a new technology, but is a common mining technique used throughout the United States and across the world, and is being studied in the Potash Area through the HB In-situ Project. Moreover, the commenter wanted the BLM to make clear in the RMP that potash solution mining is appropriate for the Potash Area and that, in addition to the HB In-situ Project, additional potash solution mining projects may be implemented in the future within the Potash Area. In addition to solution mining, the commenter requested the BLM recognize the technology that currently exists and is currently employed to recover high values of carnallite from ore.

In addition to comments specifically about potash development, comments were submitted regarding conflicts between oil and gas development and potash development. Commenters believed the BLM should avoid "exacerbat[ing] the ongoing conflicts between oil and gas and potash development in Southeastern New Mexico." They expressed concern with the challenges associated with the 1986 Secretarial Order requiring "concurrent development" of potash and oil and gas resources within the Potash Area.

One concern regarding concurrent development involved the risk of gas migration from oil and gas wells into underground potash mines. The commenter was concerned that such migration could cause the potash mines to become gassy, posing a risk to miners by increasing the chance of an underground explosion. The commenter states that mines not currently classified as gassy are not constructed or equipped to vent or otherwise handle methane or other explosive or toxic gasses, nor are the miners accustomed to monitoring or dealing with the presence of methane. Mines classified as gassy have additional safety requirements imposed by the Mine Safety and

Health Administration of the United States Department of Labor, which could make the mining activities uneconomical. There are various ways a well can fail and release hydrocarbons into the surrounding substrata, including a well blowout. Additionally, the presence of potash mining creates a unique hazard to oil and gas operations, due to subsidence that occurs when underground potash beds are removed. Drilling in areas where this is occurring subjects the wells to a tremendous, underground force, which can critically compromise the mechanical integrity of a well. Gas that escapes a failed well can migrate to a potash mine. The commenter then points the BLM to several studies and an IBLA case that documents this risk.

Another concern involved the fear that oil and gas operators would locate wells in a way that would build a fence around potash mines. The commenter provide the example that, since 1992, certain operators have submitted Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) for wells that, if drilled, would largely run in a north-south direction immediately to the east of Intrepid's East and North Mines. Because each of these wells will require a safety buffer of approximately one-half mile radius, their approval will condemn substantial acreage to the east of Intrepid's East and North Mines and will effectively impede Intrepid's access to the potash deposits in the East Potash Area that lie beyond these wells. This would result in extreme difficulty for Intrepid in expanding its East Mine to access known, commercially mineable, potash and this potash will be permanently wasted. The commenter recommended BLM look at the overall pattern of oil and gas drilling in the Potash Area before it approves an individual APD.

There were concerns about the BLM's method and information used to map potash resources. Specifically, the commenter stated that the RMP should consider management actions to enable potash producers to obtain data for BLM's consideration and use.

Commenters noted that the oil and gas and potash industries are continuing to work towards a mutually acceptable co-development plan. One commenter suggested that the BLM leave such issues such as those related to drilling, casing, completing, producing and plugging oil and gas wells within the Potash Area to this study, rather than in the RMP process. Another commenter urged the BLM to draft the RMP such that the science, recommendations from the study group, and accepted policy changes can be readily incorporated in the RMP. At a minimum, the commenter requested the efforts be mentioned to leave the door open for positive resolution of the issues.

One commenter encouraged the BLM to permit concurrent development of oil and gas and potash resources. Decisions associated with the concurrent development should be based on generally accepted, peer-reviewed scientific evidence and conducted with transparency.

2.1.1.3 Issue 4: Renewable Energy

Commenters were generally supportive of renewable energy development. One commenter stated that the BLM should consider more wind and solar farms.

Some commenters had some caveats about renewable energy development.

- Development of alternative energy should occur where it is appropriate and where it does not degrade public land use values.

- A long review and study time to determine impacts of wind turbines on raptors, migratory birds, bats and where impacts may occur on the ground should occur.
- Consideration must be given to possible impacts of renewable projects on existing use. Some projects could have an adverse impact on oil and gas operations if magnetic currents are generated. These currents could pose corrosion concerns with not only pipelines but also with casing integrity. The best available science should be used to foster concurrent development.
- Areas near established Wilderness Areas, ACECs, National and State Parks should be excluded from renewable energy development.
- Existing utility corridors should be used for renewable energy where possible.

Another commented that some areas should be identified for wind and solar development; however, the market place needs to be the driving factor. The commenter recognized that wildlife, recreation, and other uses will be part of the BLM's review.

2.1.1.4 Issue 5: Lands and Realty

Rights of Way

Alternatives

One commenter urged the BLM to work closely with the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration and the New Mexico Public Regulatory Commission Pipeline Safety Division to ensure consistency between their regulations and requirements set forth in the RMP. This would ensure operators are not put in a position where they cannot comply with one set of requirements without being out of compliance with another set.

Impacts Analysis

One commenter worried about pipelines not respecting the current trails or not providing for alternative routes when the pipelines cross trails in recreation areas.

Land Tenure

Alternatives

One commenter supported consolidation of BLM lands with State and private individuals, where possible, if it would enhance BLM management of those lands and not be a detriment to plant and wildlife communities. The commenter provided an example of an isolated spring on BLM land surrounded by State or private land. Such a location should be retained because of the high diversity of plants and animals at such a site, even though the separation from other BLM-managed lands would make it more difficult to manage.

One commenter felt that riparian lands have the highest value and should be obtained whenever possible. The commenter believed BLM acquisition of much of the Delaware River and upper Black River has served to protect vital riparian habitat.

Another commenter urged the BLM to dispose of some lands to help lower the national debt and provide property taxes to help pay government expenses. The commenter believed land should be appraised at fair market value where it is comingled with private land, and it could be offered

to the lessee if they are interested in purchasing. Such action would help the operator have a "solid unit" and BLM would not have to manage scattered parcels. This commenter felt that farmers and ranchers produce the food for all of us and need a unit big enough to be economical.

Withdrawals

Alternatives

One commenter questioned the need for new withdrawals and asked if any parcels previously withdrawn can be opened.

2.1.1.5 Issue 6: Recreation

Equestrian Recreation

Alternatives

Several commenters were interested in preserving, designating, and increasing areas and public access for horseback riding. One commenter suggested that corridors for horseback riding be developed with limited intrusions. Commenters also requested the BLM provide public information and education on riding opportunities.

Motorized Recreation

Alternatives

One commenter was especially interested in keeping the designated off-highway vehicle (OHV) areas open for public use and having a plan that will allow all users of public land to work together to protect each group's right to access public land.

Another commenter felt that current boundaries for OHV designation should be maintained and not expanded, and another stated that the BLM needs to be more proactive in recreation and protect special areas before they get destroyed. The commenter requested the BLM limit OHV use in protected areas.

Impacts Analysis

Some commenters supported motorized recreation.

- OHV users protect and want the land to stay in a natural state. They enjoy the clean air, the beauty of nature, and want to see it protected. They want it to stay as a wilderness.
- Both Hackberry Lake East (sand dunes) and West are assets to the public.
- OHVs allow people who could not otherwise get there (elderly, disabled families, etc.) to enjoy our public lands as well.
- No part of the currently designated OHV areas should be closed to use unless for temporary need.

Other commenters had concerns about the impact of OHV and recreationists.

- Recreational and hunting access can result in a loss of forage and damage to private property.

- Discussion and planning needs to take place regarding problems related to the disposal of trash, vandalism of private property, and off road driving.

Other Forms of Recreation

Alternatives

One commenter was concerned that non-consumptive plant and wildlife observation was not identified as a recreation opportunity and stated that BLM should recognize the importance of healthy bird communities and the economic benefits of attracting birders and other nature observers to visit the area. Another commenter felt the BLM should promote movie making in the area for more income. Another wanted more camping locations. One commenter requested more rights-of-way to trails.

2.1.1.6 Issue 7: Transportation Management

Roads

Alternatives

Commenters were concerned with unnecessary roads. One questioned whether there should be limitations on access and use or if closure should occur in some areas. Another commenter requested speed bumps and speed limits on BLM roads.

Impacts Analysis

One commenter expressed interested in transportation and potential impacts of motorized traffic on roads and trails within BLM-managed land as they relate to wildlife and habitat fragmentation.

One commenter was concerned that because the location of BLM-managed areas is not known, many places are being blocked off.

Another commenter encouraged the BLM to consider the predominant use of roads in a particular locale and the impacts to current use will have on these activities when making decisions.

Open, Limited, and Closed Areas

Alternatives

Several commenters were concerned about the open designation for cross-country motorized vehicle use and would like to see most of the planning area designated as limited to existing roads and trails. One commenter would like to see the Pecos and Delaware River corridors closed to cross-country motorized vehicle use.

Impacts Analysis

One commenter expressed concern with cross-country motorized vehicle use as it pertained to unknown hunters on their ranch.

2.1.1.7 Issue 8: Special Designations

General Comments about Specially Designated Areas

Alternatives

One commenter felt the BLM needs to be more proactive in recreation, protect special areas before they "get trashed," and limit motorized vehicle use in protected areas.

One commenter wanted all current ACECs to be carried forward. They recommended that each of these sites be evaluated with an eye on biodiversity, disturbance threats, management problems and presence of threatened and endangered species and other species of concern.

Impacts Analysis

One commenter was concerned that, to the extent the BLM develops additional ACECs during the RMP process, such designations should not alter or restrict existing lease rights either within the boundary of a proposed ACEC or adjacent to an ACEC. The commenter felt the BLM should ensure that ACECs, if designated or expanded, are not utilized to limit activities on existing oil and gas leases and existing oil and gas fields, directly or indirectly.

Special Areas

Alternatives

Comments were submitted concerning the management of special areas.

- Areas considered for Wilderness protection should include the area at the mouth of Big Canyon, the BLM land to the north of Carlsbad Caverns National Park, and a sand hills area in eastern Eddy County.
- Pierce and Cedar Canyons should be designated as a special use area as they are too pretty to allow excessive drilling and OHV use.
- An ACEC proposal for the Delaware watershed west of Yeso Hills Research Natural Area will be forthcoming. This proposal will include several springs and expanses of gypsum soils. The Delaware River-Yeso Hills ACEC proposal will include a large variety of plants and over 200 vertebrate species. While the majority of the land is BLM-managed land, there is some State land to the north and south of Delaware River. These lands should be obtained through exchanges with the New Mexico State Land Office. Blocking this area under BLM management will make management easier and help secure adequate habitat and good management for a wide variety of threatened and endangered species and other species of concern.
- The following protections should be in place for the Delaware River-Yeso Hills, whether or not the ACEC is designated:
    - Abandoned oil pads and roads need to be reclaimed. When oil leases expire, the lease needs to be retired.
    - Exotic species need to be surveyed and an aggressive program to eliminate or at least control them needs to be developed.
    - Biodiversity at all springs need to be inventoried.
    - All springs need to be fenced to prohibit cattle from accessing them.

    - Cattle need to be removed permanently from the riparian area of the Delaware River. If cattle are not removed immediately by the lessee, BLM needs to remove the cattle for sale at auction.
- All the desert heronry areas where Great Blue Herons (*Ardea Herodias*) nest should be considered for ACECs. These desert-nesting Great Blue Herons are the only ones known throughout its range and thus, are unique to this area.
- The BLM should manage the salt lakes and dry playas east of Loving and north of the Carlsbad-Hobbs Highway as a single ACEC unit. The plants found at these sites are limited in range because of the highly saline situations. These areas are one of the most important areas throughout the total distribution of ducks, cranes, and shorebirds when they have water. This also attracts predators including Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) which feed on the large flocks of prey.
- BLM should work to obtain as much of the riverfront on the Pecos River and lower Black River as they have on the Delaware River.
- The Delaware River should be nominated for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System. It has no dams on the New Mexico portion of the river. The Delaware River is not only rich biologically; there is a great deal of history associated with the river. This includes the Pope expedition in 1854 followed by his construction of Pope's Well, settlement in the late 1800s, and historic farming and dam construction.
- The BLM should revisit the idea of a Scenic Byway through Dark Canyon. The current one through Rocky Arroyo would have been an excellent site for this designation had it not been for the huge footprint oil and gas has been allowed to develop there.

2.1.1.8 Issue 9: Land Health

Alternatives

One commenter was interested in the fire program and another felt that the BLM should consider more range burning. One commenter felt that range work is excellent.

Commenters were concerned with the following species:

- Lovegrass
- Honey Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*)
- Cresote bush (*Larrea tridentate*)
- African Rue
- Cockleburrs
- Other noxious weeds

One commenter supported activities that will bring back and/or enhance native grasslands and riparian areas. The commenter recognized that this is a long and sometimes controversial action. Overgrazing has caused the invasion of exotic species and, in places, an imbalance of native species taking the place of grasslands. The commenter said that where possible, the BLM should work to try to create a proper and more historic balance in plant communities by controlling all exotics and natives where they are out of balance. The commenter felt this potential increase of grass should be to benefit to wildlife and never result in an increase in Animal Unit Months (AUMs) for livestock on BLM-managed land.

One commenter stated that Conservation Reserve Program and Soil Bank's (precursors to Natural Resource Conservation Service) policies decreased the lesser prairie-chicken habitat. To increase habitat, the BLM should plant seeds with nutrition (e.g., broom corn and mylow) and turn lose feral hogs so the lesser prairie-chicken can eat the hog scat. The commenter feels that the BLM is misspending funds on current seed mixes.

Impacts Analysis

One commenter stated that a ranch's net worth is determined by the number of animals a rancher can run on the allotment. Banks loan money on the number of AUMs and, if the land is damaged, AUMs are lost and the rancher's pocketbook suffers. The commenter stated that they, as well as all users of public land, are responsible for being caretakers.

2.1.1.9 Issue 10: Riparian Areas/Watersheds

Alternatives

One commenter stated that the BLM should not allow oil and gas drilling in any drainages or upslope from riparian areas. The commenter believes the well being placed on New Mexico State Lands in Owl Draw is a horrible example of how to take care of New Mexico lands.

A commenter wanted grazing to be eliminated in high erosion areas, especially near drainages and riparian areas. Increased erosion has greatly altered streams, rivers, and springs across the Southwest and southeastern New Mexico.

Impacts Analysis

Commenters were concerned with water quality. One commenter stated that riparian areas account for less than 1% of habitat in New Mexico, yet over 75% of endangered and threatened species in the State require such habitat for a major portion of their life cycle.

2.1.1.10 Issue 11: Visual Resources

Alternatives

Commenters were concerned about intrusions to viewsheds. One commenter stated that the landscapes across southeastern New Mexico are pock marked with abandoned roads and drill pads. The commenter acknowledges that it will take years to correct the problem, and the BLM needs to continue reclamation projects and place those in lesser prairie-chicken areas at the top of the list.

One commenter felt that the BLM should continue to require that oil and gas structures be painted with colors of the landscape in which they are located. They should also be placed out of sight from major roads when possible.

Impacts Analysis

A commenter felt that development along the Scenic Byway through Rocky Arroyo has been is a mistake.

2.1.1.11 New Issues Identified by Scoping

Dumping and Illegal Activities

Several commenters were concerned with illegal activities such as dumping, vandalism, illegal cross-country motorized vehicle use, and hunting out of season on public lands.

Wildlife

Alternatives

One commenter requested an analysis of the effectiveness of the 2008 Special Status Species RMP Amendment for reducing habitat loss and fragmentation on the sand dune lizard and lesser prairie-chicken. The commenter is concerned that new oil and gas development activities in the planning area are continuing to reduce and fragment habitat for both species.

Another commenter was concerned with the Black-tailed Prairie Dogs, which were once abundant across the planning area, but are now absent in Eddy County, have declined rapidly in Chaves County, and are declining steadily in Lea County. The commenter suggested the BLM identify an area for reintroduction as a town should be re-established somewhere in Eddy County. The commenter believes most of the general knowledge about prairie dogs is incorrect or unsupported. The commenter stated prairie dogs act as keystone species, serving to provide food or habitat for a wide range of species including some which are threatened.

One commenter felt that there are too many quail waterings and a moratorium is needed.

Impacts Analysis

One commenter requested the BLM use the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for New Mexico (CWCS-NM), which "focuses upon species of greatest conservation need (SGCN), key habitats, and overcoming the challenges affecting the conservation of both species and habitats." The desired outcome is that New Mexico's key habitats persist in the condition, connectivity, and quantity necessary to sustain viable and resilient populations of resident SGCN and host a variety of land uses with reduced resource use conflicts. The commenter requested that the BLM review CWCS-NM and consider any potential impacts to the appropriate SGCN and the key habitats identified within that document.

2.1.1.12 Planning Criteria

Commenters wanted the BLM to consider the following guidelines for the RMP process:

- The purpose of an RMP is to establish a framework that outlines various land uses and resource protections of Federal lands. RMPs should outline general goals, and site-specific planning should be conducted at the project level.
- The BLM must follow requirements of FLPMA and plan for multiple use, including oil and gas development on Federal lands.
- The BLM should work as much as possible with the State and individuals.
- The BLM must acknowledge existing oil and gas lease rights and ensure that the RMP revision process does not impact ongoing operations or development on existing leases.

- When developing alternatives to the Carlsbad RMP, the BLM should consider only reasonable alternatives as required under NEPA.

2.1.1.13 Other Planning Comments

Some comments did not fit into any of the above categories. One commenter felt that this planning process is a good opportunity to review how the resources are currently managed, determine what works and what does not work, and identify changes and improvements in the process. The RMP process should provide the BLM with the evidence and justification to determine what can be done differently, what the BLM is required to do, what can be done to maximize personnel resources, what does not have to be done, and how can coordination and collaboration with other agencies and units be used to meet requirements.

A commenter wanted the BLM to consider evaluating what to stop doing, including actions or functions that provide little or no value and actions that may actually be roadblocks to the goals of managing the resources.

Another felt that the planning process should not be used just to create new conditions, more compliance criteria, or to withdraw more land from multiple use.

One commenter supported the BLM's use of adaptive management, but requested the BLM ensure that its use of the adaptive management process does not lead to inconsistent or changing stipulations or COAs. Such inconsistencies would hamper or eliminate the ability to develop Federal lands to the benefit of Federal, State, and local economies.

Several commenters wanted to make clear that the BLM should not cease oil and gas development during the RMP revision process, and the BLM should make this clear to the public.

Finally, commenters wished to reserve the right to supplement their comments throughout the RMP process as necessary.

2.1.2 Issues Identified During Scoping

Prior to the scoping process, the BLM developed a list of preliminary issues in its Preparation Plan. That list is available on the Carlsbad RMP Website, or by request from the CFO. Many of the public comments received will be addressed as part of the issues identified by the BLM. In addition to the issues identified by the BLM, the RMP will address the following issues identified by the public.

2.1.3 Issue 2: Groundwater and Karst Aquifers

What activities, other than oil and gas development, are affecting groundwater, and what are those impacts?

What kind of monitoring is needed for groundwater resources?

2.1.4 Issue 3: Fluid and Solid Minerals

What is the economic impact of fluid and solid mineral development?

How can surface conflicts between fluid mineral development and other resources be minimized, while still allowing for development?

How should the Restore New Mexico program and other partnerships influence priorities for restoration of surface disturbance?

How does fracing affect other resources, and how can adverse impacts be minimized?

How concurrent development of oil and gas and potash resources within the Secretary's Potash Area be managed, consistent with the Secretary's 1986 Order?

What are the cumulative effects of oil and gas development on potash resources? What are the cumulative effects of potash development on oil and gas resources?

What lease stipulations should be required on new potash leases?

How can the Potash Area be managed to protect miners' safety, while still allowing for concurrent development of oil and gas resources, consistent with the 1986 Secretary's Order?

2.1.5 Issue 4: Renewable Energy

What are the impacts of renewable energy projects on existing use, such as the impact of magnetic currents on oil and gas operations?

What are the impacts of renewable energy projects on other resources, such as visual resources and wildlife?

2.1.6 Issue 5: Lands and Realty

Are new withdrawals needed? Can any of the lands currently withdrawn be opened?

How should rights-of-way for pipelines be located in recreation areas to avoid conflicts with other uses?

How can consistency between BLM and State requirements for pipelines be provided?

What are the opportunities for carbon sequestration?

How can conflicts between resources, recreationists, and other users be minimized?

2.1.7 Issue 6: Recreation

What areas, if any, should be considered and prioritized for non-motorized recreation, such as equestrian uses and bird watching?

What opportunities exist on public lands for movie making?

How can access to trails and public lands be provided?

2.1.8 Issue 7: Transportation Management

What impact does transportation management have on wildlife habitat and habitat fragmentation?

What are the primary uses of roads in the planning area?

2.1.9 Issue 8: Special Designations

How will new special designations affect current uses of those areas?

2.1.10 Issue 9: Land Health

How should weeds be addressed? How should areas or species be prioritized for treatment?

What is the economic impact of rangeland health decisions?

How should prescribed fire be used to manage rangeland health?

What guidelines and criteria should be used when developing water lines and facilities?

2.1.11 Issue 10: Riparian Areas/Watersheds

What uses should be allowed, and what uses should be limited, in riparian and upslope areas?

2.1.12 Issue 11: Visual Resources

How should the restoration of visual resources be prioritized?

2.1.13 New Issues Identified

2.1.13.1 Dumping and Illegal Activities

How should dumping and other illegal activities on BLM-managed lands be addressed?

2.1.13.2 Wildlife

What are the species of concern within the planning area? How can these species and their habitat be managed to sustain viable and resilient populations?

How should areas for habitat and wildlife protection be prioritized?

Should decisions made in the 2008 Special Status Species RMP Amendment be revisited in light of new oil and gas development in the sand dune lizard and lesser prairie-chicken habitat?

How should wildlife improvement projects, such as quail watering, be managed?

2.2 Anticipated Decisions to be Made

The plan will be comprehensive in nature, and will resolve or address issues within the planning area identified through agency, interagency, and public scoping efforts. The plan decisions will fall into two categories: desired outcomes (goals, standards, and objectives), and allowable uses and actions to achieve desired outcomes. The plan will address program-specific and resource-specific decision guidance consistent with the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1).

The plan will explain or identify the current management situation, desired future conditions to be maintained or achieved, cultural resource management goals, goals for continued management of energy resources, and goals for multiple resource management within the planning area. Appropriate methods and management actions necessary to achieve planning area objectives will be determined.

2.3 Issues Raised that Will Not Be Addressed

The following issues and comments were raised during scoping, but will not be addressed as part of the planning process because they are outside the scope of the plan. Where appropriate, these comments have been forwarded to the appropriate resource specialist.

2.3.1 Implementation Level Actions

The BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1), Appendix C, provides two categories of decisions: land use plan decisions, and implementation decisions. Land use plan decisions are the decisions that are made in the RMP. These broad-scale decisions guide future land management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions. Implementation decisions generally constitute the BLM's final approval allowing on-the-ground actions to proceed. These types of decisions require site-specific planning and NEPA analysis, and are generally not addressed in an RMP.

The following issues concerning implementation decisions were raised during scoping and will not be addressed in the RMP.

- Elimination of a road in Gypsum Wild Buckwheat habitat because it is no longer needed due to development on nearby non-Federal land.
- Development of trailheads, waters, parking areas, specific trails, horse gates at cattleguards for equestrian uses.
- Site specific denials of APDs in the Potash Area
- Granting APDs in the Potash Area during the plan revision
- Notification of ranchers by oil and gas companies when development occurs
- Signing to advise hunters of closed roads
- Inventory and closure of specific routes
- Youth programs
- Increasing public awareness for how to deal with cattle on the road
- HB In-situ Potash Solution Mine Project Scoping Report and EIS
- Public comment on the Cave and Karst Resource handbook
- Reviewing and approving potash leases
- Granting the Section 17 APDs
- Approving potash exploration drilling prior to oil and gas drilling
- Conducting NEPA evaluation of APDs, including the inappropriate use of categorical exclusions as found by the Government Accountability Office
- A Potash Enclave cutoff boundary should be drawn within the structure that takes into account the influence of barren or sub-economic data points, rather than rejecting the entire structure
- Determining that ore with high carnallite values should be protected as "known ore"

2.3.2 Issues Outside the BLM's Jurisdiction

The following comments raised issues that the BLM cannot address because it is outside its jurisdiction:

- Parked trains acting as a fence
- Older ranchers' wells not being displayed shown in GIS at the State Engineer's Office.
- Determination of pore space ownership
- The Sand Point Landfill and city trucks not properly securing their loads.
- Forest Service OHV trails
- Designation of Pope's Well to the National Register of Historic Places
- Working relationships between operators and cultural contractors
- Working relationships between potash and oil and gas operators in the Potash Area
- Development of wildlife refuges as part of the RMP

2.3.3 Issues to Be Resolved Through Administrative Action or Policy

The following comments raised actions that the BLM will not address in the RMP because they concern BLM or Department of Interior policy, would require formal rulemaking, or would require Congress to amend a law.

- Cultural resources permitting
- Required testing before approval of a wind energy project
- Prohibiting public access without lessee permission
- Compensation to lessee for loss of forage due to oil and gas production and exploration
- Charging an additional fee to oil companies and allocating that fee to range improvements on affected allotments
- Allowing permitted users to block access to public lands
- Providing for competitive leasing for renewable energy
- Designating of Wilderness Study Areas as Wilderness
- Using mined out sections of potash mines for disposal of toxic waste
- Using BLM land as a repository for radioactive waste
- Ensuring potash is a priority resource in the Potash Area
- Denying applications for potassium leases when the applicants have no "identifiable, substantial and genuine, and not merely speculative or casual," intent to develop the potash resource
- Revising IM NM-2009-12
- Adopt similar regulatory requirements as it has in the trona area in Wyoming, including suspending oil and gas leases and closing the area to new leases
- Sequencing development of potash before oil and gas in the Potash Area
- Considering management actions that would require BLM to obtain data regarding the presence of potash, and not proceed with approval of APDs in the absence of such data
- Raising the potash acreage limitation to allow more beneficial development of the potash resource.
- Mandating that oil and gas operators log all new boreholes drilled in the Potash Area with geophysical logs in open hole conditions.

- Withholding oil and gas drilling approvals on all lands in the Potash Area until it definitively determines that such land does not contain commercial potash reserves
- Giving preference to potash solution mining in the Potash Area.
- Continuing to supporting the Permian Basin Memorandum of Agreement executed by oil and gas operators, the BLM, and the State of New Mexico regarding the identification and protection of cultural resources
- Making clear that the RFD scenario is not a limit or threshold on future oil and gas development

2.3.4 Managing Concurrent Development in the Secretary's Potash Area

The following concerns were raised with the BLM's data, data needs, and the methods used to collect data, all concerning potash:

- No mention is made of any development scenario for potash development, even though there are a number of projects already initiated in the Potash Area to increase potash production over the period covered by the RMP, including a new solution mine.
- The Potash Enclave map is inaccurate and outdated.
- The BLM should drill core holes (or allow third parties to do so) and obtain the additional data it needs to draw an accurate Potash Resource Map.
- The BLM should not limit its analyses to the Potash Enclave data in its possession but, instead, should update its Potash Enclave map under the revised standard and affirmatively seek all available data to support a robust, thorough examination of potash issues.
- There are locations on BLM's Potash Resource Map that are reflected as either "barren," "indicated," or "inferred" although BLM has in its possession data that conclusively demonstrates "measured ore" when applying the presently effective thickness and grade standards and using the Van Sickle data sufficiency methodology.
- The entire structure, consisting of approximately 2.5 square miles, should not be disregarded as enclave.
- The BLM should clarify its apparent position that it can accord less than ½ mile of influence to data points that exceed the cut-off grade used to define Potash Enclave.
- The BLM should reconsider the use of geophysical log data in its mapping of the Potash Area.
- The BLM does not consider the wealth of other data available in the Potash Enclave such as the geophysical log data, now commonplace in the oil and gas industry.
- The BLM should assess existing management actions and practices and identify the large number of wells that have been drilled in the Potash Area.
- The BLM should identify the known potash that has been lost due to oil and gas drilling.
- The BLM should identify existing limitations, data gaps, and deficiencies in BLM's mapping of the potash resource.
- The BLM should reconsider the wisdom of having Sandia National Laboratories (a scientific body acknowledged to be credible but with no experience in potash mining and potash resource development), or any other similarly situated third party, undertake a study to tell the potash producers, whose very living and existence depends on their ability to commercially mine potash, what thickness and grade of potash is "commercial."

Having such third party (notwithstanding their credibility), or the BLM on the third party's recommendation, establish what is and is not a commercially viable potash deposit has the potential to stifle innovation and technological advancement. BLM should seriously evaluate whether it is advantageous (or even appropriate) for the federal government to determine, define, and potentially limit the commercial and technological advancement of an industry.

- On August 24, 2009, Sandia National Laboratories issued its Final Report "Evaluating the Use of Oil and Gas Well Logs for Potash Reserve Identification in Southeastern New Mexico," which found that existing oil and gas well logs do not contain sufficient information to meet the mineral specific requirements specified in the current potash standards. BLM should not rely on this report to exclude geophysical log data from its mapping of the potash enclave because Sandia's study is not comprehensive and does not consider all data. Specifically, BLM unduly limited the scope and usefulness of Sandia's study by requiring that Sandia just evaluate elog use in isolation, divorced from other data such as core hole data and mine face sample data (rather than in conjunction with such data). If Sandia is allowed to conduct a fully and accurately scoped study of elogs, the results will show that such data can contribute significantly to BLM's mapping of potash enclave in the Potash Area. Accordingly, Intrepid here re-iterates its request that BLM authorize Sandia to complete its full assessment of elogs, including the use of them in correlative fashion as Intrepid asked initially in its comments on the Sandia study.
- In the *IMC Kalium* case, the Department administrative law judge rejected the mapping of potash enclaves by reference to technology currently in use in the Potash Area, including specifically the use of carnallite and other minerals as a limit on enclaves. The oil and gas companies argued that the 1986 Order required the BLM to map enclaves according to the distinct ore cut-offs and technological capabilities, including milling processes and tolerances for insolubles and other contaminants, of each operation in the Potash Area. The ALJ expressly rejected this site-specific analysis, finding that enclave maps should be based on a much more general showing of geological prospectivity and available technology.
- A comment suggests that the BLM should clarify its methodology for defining the influence of barren and sub-economic core holes. Single sub-economic or barren data points should not disqualify square miles of potash resources from enclave protection.
- There was also a concern about the current APD approval process in the Potash Area, "under which substantial amounts of potash were lost based on inaccurate or incomplete data identifying the location of commercially mineable potash resources."

2.4 Valid Existing Management to be Carried Forward

The plan will address and integrate, to the degree possible, programmatic BLM RMP Amendments, including the 2008 Pecos District Special Status Species RMP Amendment, the 2001 New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing, and the Final Programmatic EISs for Wind, Geothermal, West Wide Energy Corridor, and National Vegetation Treatment. As part of the planning process, the BLM is preparing an Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), which analyzes the effectiveness of current planning decisions. The BLM will use the AMS to determine whether these management decisions are still valid, and whether they need to be carried forward. The AMS will be made available to the public on the Carlsbad RMP Website.

2.5 Special Designations

The planning process will consider the ACEC nomination of the Delaware River-Yeso Hills area, all of the Great Blue Herons desert heronries, and salt lakes and dry playas east of Loving and north of the Carlsbad-Hobbs Highway. The BLM will also evaluate existing Special Management Areas and ACECs to determine if they meet the current ACEC requirements.

The Delaware River will be evaluated for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System.

3. Draft Planning Criteria

The preliminary planning criteria identified in the Preparation Plan will be used in the RMP. The Preparation Plan is available on the Carlsbad RMP Website and by request from the CFO.

In addition to the preliminary planning criteria, the CFO will add the following criteria:

"All decisions regarding the Designated Potash Area will be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Order, *Oil, Gas and Potash Leasing and Development Within the Designated Potash Area of Eddy and Lea Counties, New Mexico,* 51 Fed. Reg. 39425, and subsequent case law, including *Intrepid Potash – New Mexico LLC,* 176 IBLA 110 (2008), *IMC Kalium Carlsbad, Inc.,* 170 IBLA 25 (2006), and *In the Matter of Yates Petroleum Corp., et al.,* IBLA 92-612 (2003)."

The BLM received comments on the following criteria:

Planning and management direction will focus on the relative values of resources and not the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or economic output.

Concern was expressed that this criteria was too limiting, and could lead to arbitrary decisions about allocation of resources. However, the BLM recognizes that there may be uses and resources that are not reflected in monetary values. This criterion makes clear that, while BLM will consider economic impacts, the BLM will not base its decision solely on what management maximizes economic return. Here, "relative values" includes values other than economic values.

Where practicable and timely for the planning effort, the best available scientific information, research and new technologies will be used.

The planning team will use every effort to use best available scientific information, but acknowledges that there may be some situations in which it may not be practical or even possible to obtain certain information. If stakeholders or other members of the public have information they feel would be valuable to the planning effort, they are encouraged to submit that information to the BLM.

4. Data Summary/Data Gaps

In many cases, existing resource information available in the CFO will be used in the preparation of the RMP. Much of this data needs to be updated and compiled for use in the RMP. The CFO identified additional data needed in the following areas: potash, fluid minerals, cultural resources, karst, recreation, transportation, wilderness, wildlife and special status species, water resources, visual resources, special designations, and air resources. A complete GIS Data Needs table detailing these data needs is available in the Preparation Plan, which is available on the Carlsbad RMP Website or by request. This table will be updated upon completion of the AMS, Draft RMP/EIS, and Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

4.1 Data Provided or Identified During Scoping

Commenters identified these sources of data during scoping:

- Techniques for mapping the Potash Enclave
- Information on Leo Van Sambeek, Ph.D., P.E.'s study on safety of underground potash mines in areas with nearby oil and gas wells
- Information on the economic contributions of mineral development
- Information on areas that may contain wilderness characteristics

4.2 Data Gaps Identified During Scoping

A commenter provided comments regarding the BLM's potash data. It is summarized in Section *2.1.1.23: Data Needs and Gaps*. The solids mineral specialists will review these comments during their analysis.

5. Summary of Future Steps in the Planning Process

Scoping is only the first step in the planning process. Several more steps are necessary to complete the RMP, including the AMS, formulation of alternatives, estimating the effects of alternatives, selection of the Preferred Alternative, and the selection of the Proposed Plan.

5.1 Analysis of the Management Situation

The next step in the process, the AMS, will involve the use of existing information and data from new inventories to describe the resources within the planning area, current management of the area, and opportunities to resolve the issues identified by the resource specialists and during scoping. This analysis provides a reference for developing and evaluating alternatives.

This step is currently ongoing. The public will be informed of this process through updates as the team prepares the AMS. Once completed, the document will be posted on the Carlsbad RMP Website.

5.2 Formulation of Alternatives

Alternatives will be formulated by identifying a range of reasonable combinations of resource uses and management practices that address issues identified during scoping and that offer distinct choice among potential management strategies. This will include a No Action Alternative, or continuation of current management. Public comments, input from cooperating agencies, and the expertise of BLM resource specialists will all be used to develop alternatives. This step will occur from September through December 2011. Public outreach on the alternatives will occur during the winter or spring of 2012.

5.3 Estimating the Effects of Alternatives

Once the alternatives are developed, the next step involves estimating the effects of each alternative on the environment and the management situation. This step will occur from July through October 2011.

5.4 Selection of the Preferred Alternative

The Field Manager and District Manager will recommend to the State Director a preferred alternative that best resolves planning issues and promotes balanced multiple use objectives. The State Director will approve the selection of the Preferred Alternative along with the other alternatives under consideration through release of the Draft RMP/EIS.

This step will be completed when the draft document is released.

5.5 Public Comment Period

The Draft RMP/EIS will be released to the public which will begin a 90-day public comment period. The BLM will host public meetings during this period. The BLM will notify the public by publishing a Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*, news releases, newsletters, and on the Carlsbad RMP Website.

5.6 Selection of the Proposed Plan

Based on the information in the draft plan and public comments, the BLM will select a Proposed Plan and present it to the public with a Final EIS. Once the Proposed RMP/Final EIS is released, it will start a 30-day protest period and 60-day Governor's consistency review.

5.7 Publication of a Record of Decision

Based on the resolution of public protests and issues raised in the Governor's consistency review, the BLM will modify the Proposed RMP and publish a Record of Decision. This is scheduled to occur in 2014. The CFO will then periodically monitor and evaluate planning decisions to ensure that they are continuing to meet BLM and community needs.

Appendix A: Acronyms

Analysis of the Management Situation	AMS
Animal Unit Month	AUM
Application for Permit to Drill	APD
Area of Critical Environmental Concern	ACEC
Best Management Practice	BMP
Bureau of Land Management	BLM
Carlsbad Field Office	CFO
Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for New Mexico	CWCS-NM
Environmental Impact Statement	EIS
Federal Lands Policy and Management Act	FLPMA
National Environmental Policy Act	NEPA
Notice of Intent	NOI
Off-Highway Vehicle	OHV
Resource Management Plan	RMP
Reasonably Foreseeable Development	RFD
Species of Greatest Conservation Need	SGCN
Visual Resource Management	VRM

Appendix B: Comment Chart

Comment#	Receipt	Name	City	Issue 1 - Air Resources	Issue 2 - Groundwater and Karst Aquifers	Issue 3 - Fluid and Solid Mineral Development	Issue 4 - Renewable Energy	Issue 5 - Lands and Realty	Issue 6 - Recreation	Issue 7 - Transportation Management	Issue 8 - Special Designations	Issue 9 - Land Health	Issue 10 - Riparian Areas/Watersheds	Issue 11 - Visual Resources	New Issue Identified	Planning Criteria	Data Needs and Gaps	Other Planning Comments	To be resolved through administrative action or policy	Outside the Scope of the Plan	Questions for the BLM	Total
A-1	Public Meeting	Jerry W. Sherrell	Artesia																	1		1
C-1	Public Meeting	Julian Garza	Carlsbad						1	3				4						2		3
C-2	Public Meeting	Pete Garcia	Carlsbad						1, 3, 5			7								2, 4, 6		7
C-3	Public Meeting	Winston Ballard	Carlsbad		8	2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12				3					4					1, 6, 10		12
C-4	Public Meeting	Micki Schultz	Carlsbad						3	2	4									1		4
C-5	Public Meeting	Curtis Doyle	Carlsbad									1										1
C-6	Public Meeting	Anon.	Unknown							1												1
C-7	Public Meeting	Bill Garwood	Carlsbad			1, 5			6	2	6				4					3		6
H-1	Public Meeting	Joseph Fluder	Albuquerque																		1	1
J-1	Public Meeting	Bert Madera	Jal			3														2	1	3
J-2	Public Meeting	Kelly Myers	Jal							1												1
J-3	Public Meeting	Mark McClay	Jal																1			1
M-1	Hand-delivered	Justin Magby	Carlsbad												1					2		1
M-2	Mail	Gary Epps	Artesia					8	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7											6		8
M-3	Mail	Claramai Hayhurst (Hayhurst-Rook Family Educational Trust)	Loving	4		12, 13	5, 6		14			1, 2, 3, 7, 9			8, 11	10						14
M-4	Mail	Mary Lynn Bogle (Hinkle, Hensley, Shanor & Martin, LLP)	Roswell			1, 2, 3, 5												7, 9		4, 6, 8		8
M-5	Mail	Terra Manasco (New Mexico Department of Game and Fish)	Santa Fe			1	2	3	4	8	5	6	7		9, 10							10
M-6	Mail	Clabe Pearson (The Merchant Livestock Co., Inc.)	Carlsbad						3			1							2			3
M-7	Mail	Danny and Libby Berry (Berry Ranch)	Eunice		11	6			2	3, 8		1	11		4, 10				7	5, 9		11

Comment#	Receipt	Name	City	Issue 1 - Air Resources	Issue 2 - Groundwater and Karst Aquifers	Issue 3 - Fluid and Solid Mineral Development	Issue 4 - Renewable Energy	Issue 5 - Lands and Realty	Issue 6 - Recreation	Issue 7 - Transportation Management	Issue 8 - Special Designations	Issue 9 - Land Health	Issue 10 - Riparian Areas/Watersheds	Issue 11 - Visual Resources	New Issue Identified	Planning Criteria	Data Needs and Gaps	Other Planning Comments	To be resolved through administrative action or policy	Outside the Scope of the Plan	Questions for the BLM	Total
M-8	Mail	Steve West (New Mexico Wilderness Alliance)	Carlsbad	1	3, 4	5, 6	7, 8, 10, 11	12, 13	14, 15, 16		19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 32, 40	30, 31	33, 34, 35	36, 37, 38	41				9, 39	17, 18, 26	2	40
M-9	Mail	Randy Bolles (Devon Energy Corporation)	Oklahoma City	19, 20, 21		5, 6, 8, 9, 16, 17, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35					32					2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18		1, 14, 22	36			36
M-10	Mail	Elizabeth Bush-Ivie (Oxy USA Inc.)	Houston	6, 7, 25	8, 10, 11	4, 5, 12, 14, 15, 26, 31	17, 20	18, 19, 27		21, 22						13, 29, 30		1, 2, 3	23	28	9, 16, 24	31
M-11	Mail	Woods Houghton (Eddy County Extension Service)	Carlsbad			2						1										2
M-12	Mail	Amy Silberberg	Albuquerque																	1, 2		2
M-13	Mail	W. G. Kennedy	Roswell					1, 2														2
M-14	Mail	Norbert Rempe	Carlsbad			2													1, 3			2
M-15	Mail	Jess & Jo Ann Perry (Desert Rough Riders)	Carlsbad					2	1, 3													3
M-16	Hand-delivered	Jimmy Richardson	Carlsbad		5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4				7												7
M-17	Hand-delivered	Kenny Smith	Hobbs		5	3				2					1, 4							5
M-18	Mail	Robert Jornayvaz III (Intrepid Potash)	Denver			1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 25, 29, 30, 33, 38, 42, 43, 46, 47, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 63, 73, 78, 80, 84, 86, 91, 92											19, 20, 22, 23, 35, 36, 37, 40, 64, 65, 68, 70, 71, 74, 75, 77, 81, 83		15, 24, 26, 27, 28, 32, 34, 41, 45, 48, 49, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 69, 72, 85, 87, 89, 90, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 100, 101	21, 31, 39, 44, 66, 67, 76, 79, 80, 81, 82, 88, 99, 102		102
																						328

Appendix C: Scoping Meetings Outreach

Sample Flyer Posted in Communities in the Planning Area

Bureau of Land Management
Carlsbad Field Office

Resource Management Plan Revision
New Guidance for Changing Times

Local Area Public Meetings
1pm – 4pm & 6pm – 9pm

July 19 in Artesia at the Artesia High School Auditorium

July 20 in Carlsbad at the Pecos River Conference Center-Carousel Room, 711 Muscatel Drive

July 22 in Hope at the Hope Community Center

July 26 in Jal at the Jal Community Center, 109 West Panther

July 27 in Hobbs at the NM Junior College/Training Outreach Facility - Moran Building, 5317 Lovington Highway

Mailing Sent to Interested Parties

Bureau of Land Management
Carlsbad Field Office
Resource Management Plan Revision

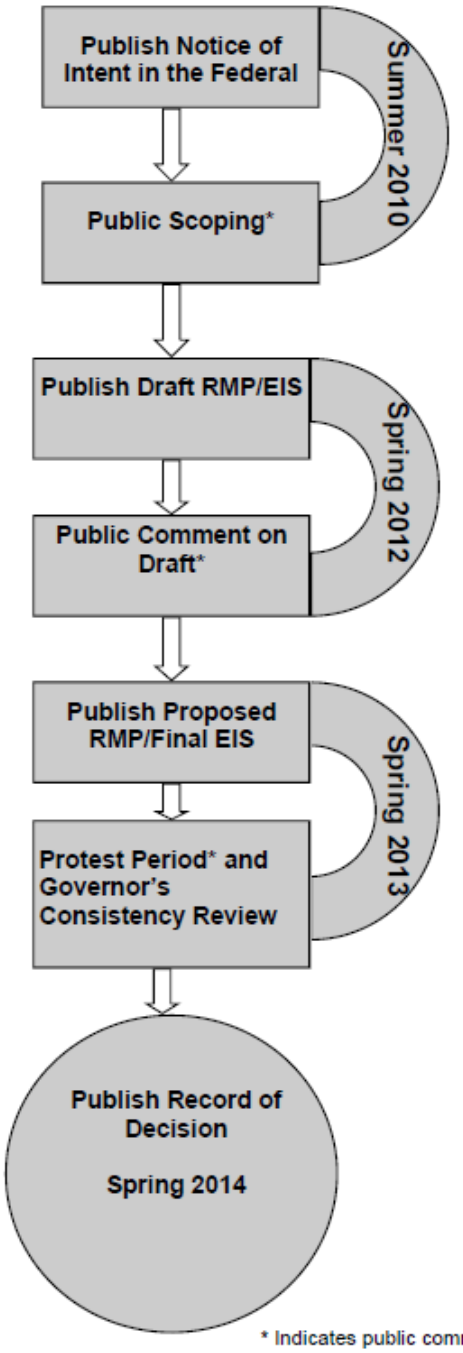
NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS

What is the Carlsbad Field Office Resource Management Plan?

To ensure the best balance of uses and resource protections for America's public lands, the BLM undertakes extensive land use planning through a collaborative approach with local, State and Tribal governments; the public; and stakeholder groups. The result is a Resource Management Plan (RMP), which provides the framework to guide decisions for every action and approved use on BLM lands.

The RMP for the area managed by the Carlsbad Field Office was completed in 1988, with an amendment in 1997. Since 1988, a number of changes have taken place that warrant the need to revise the plan. The Carlsbad Field Office will begin the plan revision in June 2010. This is a four year process, and will involve multiple opportunities for public involvement. The first step in preparing the RMP is called "scoping," which is a process for introducing the public to the planning process and soliciting their concerns and comments. The RMP will govern management of the Carlsbad Field Office for up to 20 years, so it's important to get involved to make sure that your voice is heard!

RMP Timeline



* Indicates public comment opportunities

How will the RMP be prepared?

The BLM will use the process set forth in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Under NEPA, federal agencies must prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for major federal actions that may have a significant effect on the human environment. The EIS will analyze a range of reasonable alternatives, and the potential environmental, cultural, social, economic, and other effects of the alternatives. The BLM will use comments received in scoping to help determine the scope of its analysis and the range of alternatives. Once the BLM has developed its alternatives and analyzed the potential effects of those alternatives, we will publish a draft EIS. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the draft. The BLM will take those comments under consideration when revising the draft to create the final RMP.

How can I get involved?

Public participation is vital to creating a sound RMP. The first step in becoming involved is to sign up for the mailing list. Once you are on the mailing list, you'll receive notices about scoping meetings that we're hosting in your area. You'll also be notified about the progress of the plan and key milestones.

Once you're on the mailing list, keep an eye out for more information. You can attend scoping meetings to receive more information about the plan, ask questions, express concerns, and submit comments. You can submit comments at any time during the scoping period. The BLM will continue to accept scoping comments for inclusion in the Scoping Report until August 30, 2010.

Tips for Providing Effective Comments

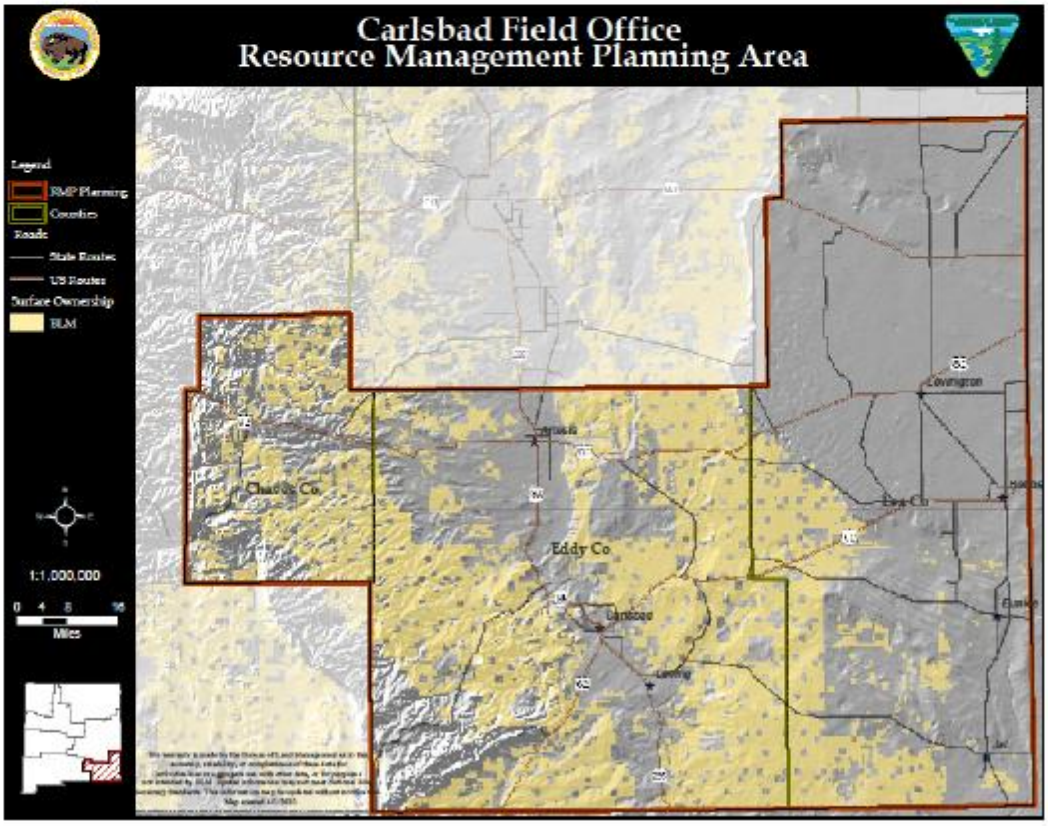
- Review the BLM website, monitor local newspapers, attend public meetings, and become familiar with the planning process
- Provide substantive and concise written comments
- For the maximum consideration, submit your comments during the timeframes announced
- Become familiar with the decisions that the BLM will be making
- Keep your comments focused on the planning process
- Make sure you are on the mailing list for the RMP

Public Scoping Meetings

Scoping meetings provide you with the opportunity to find out more about the planning process, ask questions and speak to resource specialists. They also provide an opportunity to comment on the planning process.

- July 19, 2010—Artesia High School, 1002 West Richardson, Artesia, NM
- July 20, 2010—Pecos River Conference Center-Carousel Room, 711 Muscatel Ave., Carlsbad, NM
- July 22, 2010—Hope Community Center, 603 Hope Highway, Hope, NM
- July 26, 2010—Jal Community Center, 603 Hope Highway, Jal, NM
- July 27, 2010—New Mexico Junior College, Training Outreach Facility, 1 Thunderbird Circle, Hobbs, NM

Meetings will be from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., and from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. All meetings are "open houses", meaning that you can come and leave at any time.



Need more information? Want to be added to the mailing list?

- **WEBSITE:** www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Carlsbad_Field_Office.html
- **EMAIL:** nm_cfo_rmp@blm.gov
- **FAX:** 575-885-9264, attn: RMP Project Manager
- **MAIL:** BLM, Carlsbad Field Office, RMP Project Manager, 620 E. Greene St., Carlsbad, NM 88220
- **PHONE:** 575-234-5986

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please specify whether you would like to receive notices by mail or by email.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publically available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Bureau of Land Management
Carlsbad Field Office
Attn: RMP Project Manager
620 E. Greene St.
Carlsbad, NM 88220

News Release

BLM NEWS RELEASE

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ■ BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
NEW MEXICO STATE OFFICE ■ 301 DINOSAUR TRAIL ■ SANTA FE, NM 87508
Hans Stuart ■ External Affairs Chief ■ 505.954.2018

For Immediate Release
June 28, 2010

For Additional Information
James B. Smith 575.234.5986
Donna Hummel 505.954.2019

BLM to Revise Resource Management Plan for Public Lands in Eddy, Lea and Southwestern Chaves Counties

-Agency to Develop Environmental Impact Statement-

Carlsbad, New Mexico – The Bureau of Land Management's Carlsbad Field Office is seeking public input as it begins a process to revise and update its Resource Management Plan (RMP) for public lands in Eddy, Lea and southwestern Chaves counties.

The new RMP will provide overall management direction for the next two decades for about 2.2 million surface acres and 4.1 million acres of Federal mineral estate (1.9 million acres of which is split estate – with private or state surface ownership and federally owned minerals).

The BLM is revising the RMP due to the changes that have taken place in the resource use and protection arena over the past 20 years. This is due to continuing energy development, changing demands and types of uses of BLM-administered public lands, and the conditions of the resources they contain. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will also be developed during the planning process.

A formal announcement initiating scoping and the preparation of an EIS for the proposed project was published in the *Federal Register* on June 10, 2010.

Scoping provides the first opportunity for public comment where the BLM is asking the public to help identify issues to be addressed in the plan revision as well as offer potential solutions. The BLM will use the information it receives during scoping as it prepares the Draft RMP and an associated Draft EIS.

"It's really important for anyone who uses or enjoys public lands in Eddy, Lea and southwestern Chaves counties to participate in our planning process," said Jim Stovall, manager of the BLM's Carlsbad Field Office. "Your input will help shape how we manage these valuable lands, which are administered by the BLM on behalf of the American people."

-more-

www.blm.gov/nm

The BLM will be hosting scoping meetings to share information and accept public comment. The public is invited to stop by anytime from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. or 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the dates and locations listed below to discuss the RMP with BLM specialists or provide written comments.

DATES	TOWNS	ADDRESSES
July 19, 2010	Artesia	Artesia High School, 1002 West Richardson Ave.
July 20, 2010	Carlsbad	Pecos River Conference Center-Carousel Room, 711 Muscatel Ave.
July 22, 2010	Hope	Hope Community Center, 603 Hope Highway
July 26, 2010	Jal	Jal Community Center, 109 W. Panther
July 27, 2010	Hobbs	New Mexico Junior College, Training Outreach Facility, 1 Thunderbird Circle

During the scoping period, the BLM is also seeking ideas about the uses of public lands, possible protection measures, and recommendations on special designations such as potential Special Recreation Management Areas or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. In addition, the public may comment on the preliminary planning criteria, which will help guide the planning process.

The BLM will accept public comments through August 30, 2010.

Written comments on issues related to the RMP/EIS can also be submitted by any of the following methods:

- E-mail: nm_cfo_rmp@blm.gov;
- Fax: 575-885-9264; or
- Mail: Bureau of Land Management, Carlsbad Field Office, Attention: James B. Smith, 620 E. Greene St., Carlsbad, New Mexico 88220.

For further information or to have your name added to a mailing list, visit the Carlsbad Field Office planning website at: www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Carlsbad_Field_Office.html or contact James B. Smith, Planning and Environmental Coordinator at (575) 234-5986; or by e-mail at james_b_smith@blm.gov.

-BLM-

The BLM manages more land – 256 million acres – than any other federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about $1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

www.blm.gov/nm