

Communication Plan
Bureau of Land Management – Farming Field Office
Resource Management Plan Amendment/ Environmental Assessment for the Farmington
Field Office Visual Resources

Introduction

The 2003 Farmington Resource Management Plan (RMP) is the primary document that affects this planning area. An RMP amendment (RMPA) is needed to address changes to the visual resource management (VRM) classes as designated in the '03 RMP. Visual resources were originally inventoried between 1978 and 1980, with management classes being assigned in the 1988 Farmington RMP. Except in a limited number of specially designated areas, the 2003 Farmington RMP carried forward the 1988 VRM classes with the intent to amend the RMP when a new visual resource inventory (VRI) was completed. This amendment will be documented with an Environmental Assessment (EA).

Issues

In 2009 the VRI was updated by a third party contractor. A review of the VRI provided by the contractor indicated that a number of changes to the landscape have taken place over the past 30 years that warrant the need for an RMP amendment addressing VRM. In particular, this is due to continuing energy development in the area. Approximately 66 percent of the Farmington Field Office (FFO) area is leased for oil and gas development, with over 95 percent leasing in the high productivity area of the San Juan Basin. Newly proposed right-of-ways (ROW) considered necessary to manage oil and gas fields and facilitate continued residential expansion are increasingly in conflict with current VRM classes.

In addition, legal precedence has been established indicating that certain visual resource classes are not compatible with the valid, existing rights for oil and gas development. As the majority of oil and gas leases were leased under standard terms and conditions with limited, if any, stipulations, existing VRM classes may be inconsistent with these resource uses in some areas.

Communication Goals and Purpose of Strategy

- Notify all interested publics, agencies, affected publics, and organizations about the RMPA/EA process including steps and timelines involved.
- Ensure broad distribution of information about the RMPA/EA via news releases, fact sheets, question and answer sheets, and via the Internet, including linkage to project website: http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Farmington_Field_Office.html.
- Ensure all relevant issues and concerns are identified by all interested and/or affected parties.
- Disseminate key messages by information products and outreach efforts to ensure full participation in the process by all interested parties; include information about the RMPA/EA process, how best to participate, and otherwise provide information to be evaluated.

- Resolve any issues involving misinformation about the proposed project by outreach to news media, local and state government agencies, elected officials and other groups whenever it occurs.
- Ensure distribution of the Draft RMPA/EA to Congressional staffs, other agencies, county and municipal governments, environmental groups and other user groups, as requested.

Target Audience

- County and local elected and appointed government representatives
- Federal and State agencies (SHPO, BOR, NPS and FS)
- Congressional representatives
- Environmental groups
- Oil and gas companies
- Rights-of-way holders, permittees, and leasees
- General public and special interest groups

Key Messages

The EA will assess the environmental impacts of the proposed action to amend VRM classes across the Farmington Field Office, a No Action Alternative and range of reasonable alternatives, and will serve to provide informed decision-making. In addition, the EA will analyze the cumulative impacts including existing and reasonably foreseeable development within the affected environment.

The public and all interested parties will have several opportunities to provide input and comment on the EA as it is being developed, including during the scoping process following release of a Draft RMPA/EA and a protest period following publication of the Record of Decision. During the development process of the RMPA/EA, Farmington BLM will provide information and gather input from affected parties to ensure that issues and concerns are addressed during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The BLM will also work with all interested parties to identify potential impacts, mitigation measures and conflicts with existing uses and users of the public lands.

Strategies

The news media will be provided information at each stage of the RMPA/EA process (i.e., public scoping, issuance of Draft EA, Final EA, and Record of Decision). In addition, information will be posted on the BLM Farmington Field Office Website at:
http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Farmington_Field_Office.html.

The news media and special interest groups will be advised of any/all public meetings. News releases will be coordinated through the BLM State Office External Affairs.

Tactics

TASK	Scheduled Date
PUBLIC SCOPING	
Publish NOI	May 2011
Public Scoping Meeting	May/June 2011
Public Scoping period ends	June 2011
DRAFT RMPA/EA	
Complete Draft EA	August 2011
Public Review Period	August 2011
FINAL RMPA/EA	
Complete Proposed RMPA/Final EA	November 2011
Final RMP and ROD to public	December 2011
45-day Appeals Period	January 2012

Consultation with Other Federal Agencies

The Field Office will coordinate with neighboring BLM offices to ensure that planning decisions do not conflict, to the extent possible, with those made for adjoining planning areas.

Coordination and Consultation with American Indian Tribes

Government-to-government coordination and consultation with the following American Indian Tribes will begin upon issuance of the Notice of Intent, which begins the scoping period.

- Navajo Nation
- Navajo - Hopi
- Pueblos

Communication Modifications

Changes in the communication plan will be made as needed throughout the RMPA/EA process. New activities and new products may be added and others changed or deleted to maximize the efficacy of the communication to interest groups and individuals. Changes may also result as new information or management or research techniques may become available. Such changes will be conveyed to all interested parties.