

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Farmington District  
Farmington Field Office  
6251 N College Blvd., Ste. A  
Farmington, NM 87402

**DECISION RECORD  
for the  
Farmington Field Office  
Visual Resource Management  
Resource Management Plan Amendment  
NEPA No. DOI-BLM-NM- F010-2013-0047-EA**

**I. Decision**

The decision is hereby made to approve and implement the decision described below based on the review of the Farmington Field Office (FFO) Visual Resource Management (VRM) Resource Management Plan Amendment Environmental Assessment (EA) and project record. An EA was prepared for the plan in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The Selected Alternative was analyzed in sufficient detail in the EA to allow me to make an informed decision.

**II. Conformance and Compliance**

This decision complies with the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (43 USC 1701), and NEPA (42 USC 4321). The decision is in conformance with the 2003 Farmington RMP (BLM 2003b) in that it provides for the designation of VRM Classes pending the completion of a visual resource inventory (VRI; 2003 Farmington Resource Management Plan, pages 2-20).

Changing the designation of VRM Classes is an allocation that requires an amendment to the RMP. Thus, the EA was prepared as part of a Resource Management Plan Amendment. My decision is consistent with other allocations made in the 2003 Farmington RMP.

This plan amendment is consistent with plans and policies of the Department of Interior and the BLM, other federal agencies, tribal governments, state government, and local governments to the extent that the guidance and local plans are also consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law and regulation applicable to the public lands. No formal comments were received from federal or tribal governments indicating the proposed plan amendment was inconsistent with other existing plans or policies.

**III. Selected Alternative**

***Features***

The Selected Alternative is a combination of elements of Alternatives A and B. Alternative A serves as the basis for the majority of allocations and management actions, with the incorporation of certain allocations described in Alternative B. Specific allocations for the Selected Alternative are described below.

**VR-A- 1.** Areas to be managed as VRM Class I (51,000 acres; Figure 1) would include:

- Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness Study Area (WSA)
- Andrew's Ranch Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

- Bee Burrow ACEC
- Bis Sa'ani ACEC
- Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness
- Casamero Community ACEC
- Fossil Forest RNA
- Halfway House ACEC
- Indian Creek ACEC
- Kin Nizhoni ACEC
- Morris 41 ACEC
- Pierre's Site ACEC
- Toh-La-Kai ACEC
- Twin Angels ACEC
- Upper Kin Klizhin ACEC

**VR-A- 2.** Areas to be managed as VRM Class II (92,000 acres; Figure 1) would include the foreground/middleground surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park (NHP; 5 miles from the established Key Observation Points [KOPs]) and the following:

- Adams Canyon ACEC
- Ah-shi-sle-pah Road ACEC
- Alien Run Mountain Bike Trails
- Angel Peak ACEC
- Angel Peak Scenic Area
- Ashii Naa'a (Salt Point) ACEC
- Bi Yaazh ACEC
- Beechatuga Tongue Geological Formation
- Blanco Mesa ACEC
- Blanco Star Panel ACEC
- Cagle's Site ACEC
- Canyon View Ruin ACEC
- Chacra Mesa Complex ACEC
- Cho'li'I (Gobernador Knob) ACEC
- Christmas Tree Ruin ACEC
- Church Rock Outlier ACEC
- Crow Canyon ACEC
- Crownpoint Steps and Herrudura ACEC
- Deer House ACEC
- Delgadita / Pueblo Canyons ACEC
- Devil's Spring Mesa ACEC
- Dogie Canyon School ACEC
- Dzil'na'oodlii (Huerfano Mesa) ACEC
- East Side Rincon ACEC
- Encierro Canyon ACEC
- Encinada Mesa - Carrizo Canyon ACEC
- Ephemeral Wash Riparian Area (100 yr) where it coincides with portions of the possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail National Historic Trail (NHT)
- Farmer's Arroyo ACEC
- Four Ye'i ACEC
- Frances Mesa ACEC
- Gonzalez Canyon - Senon S. Vigil Homestead ACEC
- Gould Pass Camp ACEC
- Haynes Trading Post ACEC
- Holmes Group ACEC
- Hummingbird ACEC
- Kachina Mask ACEC
- Kin Yazhi (Little House) ACEC
- Kiva ACEC
- Largo Canyon Star Ceiling ACEC
- Margarita Martinez Homestead ACEC
- Martin Apodaca Homestead ACEC
- Martinez Canyon ACEC
- Moss Trail ACEC
- Munoz Canyon ACEC
- Navajo Lake Horse Trails
- Negro Canyon SDA
- North Road ACEC
- Pointed Butte ACEC
- Pregnant Basketmaker ACEC
- Pretty Woman ACEC
- Prieta Mesa ACEC
- Rincon Largo District ACEC
- Rincon Rock Shelter ACEC
- Rock House - Nestor Martin Homestead ACEC
- San Rafael Canyon ACEC
- Santos Peak ACEC
- Shield Bearer ACEC
- Simon Canyon ACEC
- Simon Ruin ACEC
- Star Rock ACEC
- Star Spring - Jesus Canyon ACEC
- Superior Mesa ACEC
- Tapacito and Split Rock ACEC
- Thomas Canyon Recreation/Wildlife Area
- Truby's Tower ACEC

**VR-A- 3.** Areas to be managed as VRM Class III (474,000 acres; Figure 1) would include the background surrounding Chaco Culture NHP (5-15 miles from the established KOP) and the following:

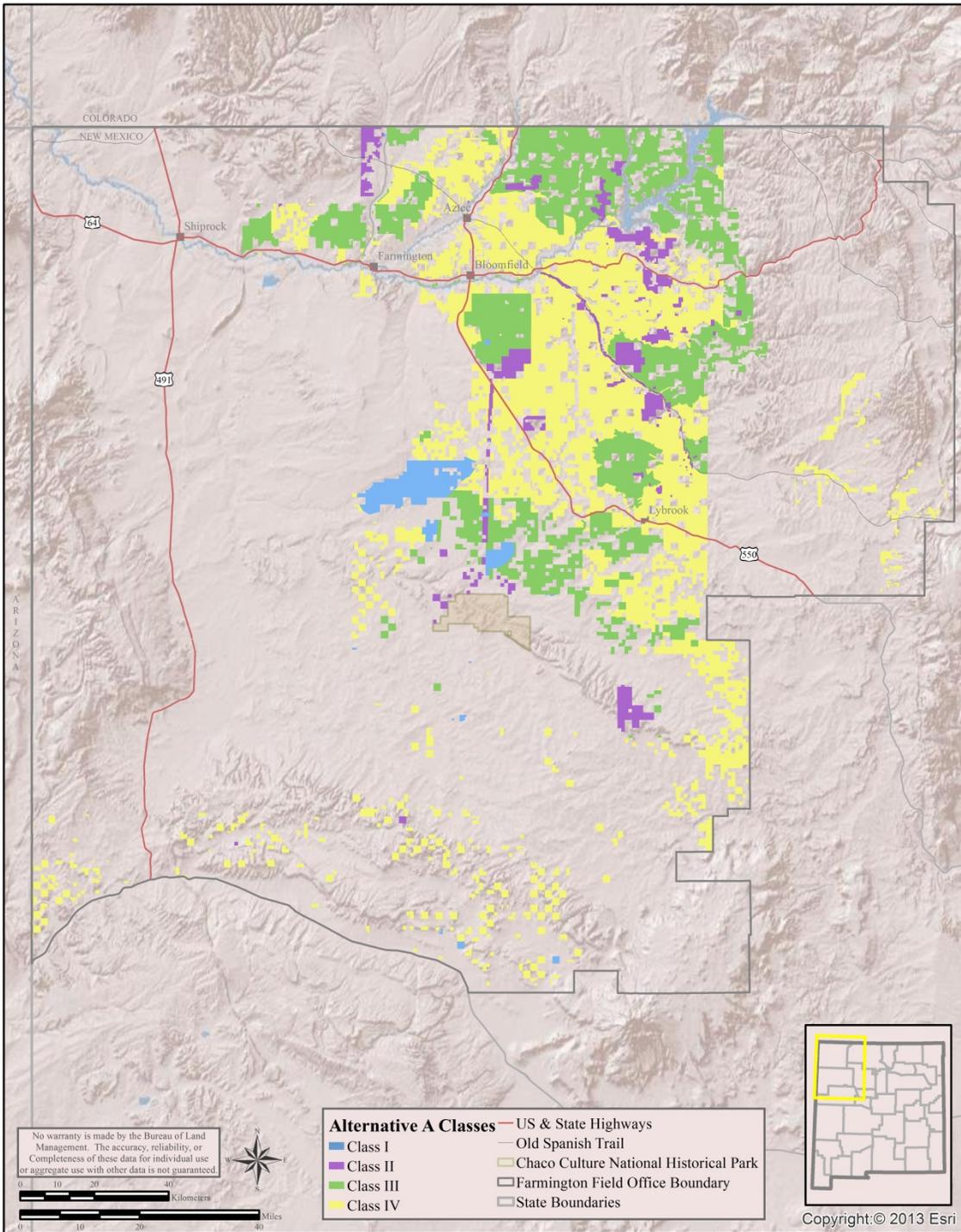
- Bald Eagle ACEC
- Betonnie Tsosie Fossil Area
- Carracas Mesa Recreation/Wildlife Area
- Carson Fossil Pocket
- Cedar Hill ACEC
- Cereza Canyon Wildlife Area

- Crow Mesa Wildlife Area
- East La Plata Wildlife Area
- Ensenada Mesa Wildlife Area
- Ephemeral Wash Riparian Area (100 yr) where it does not coincide with portions of the possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT
- Glade Run Recreation Area
- Gobernador and Cerza Canyon Fossil Area
- Gonzales Mesa Wildlife Area
- The Hogback ACEC
- Kutz Canyon Fossil Area
- La Jara ACEC
- Laguna Seca Mesa Wildlife Area
- Lybrook Fossil Area
- Mexican Spotted Owl ACEC
- Middle Mesa Wildlife Area
- Pinon Mesa Fossil Area
- Pinon Mesa Recreation Area
- Rattlesnake Canyon Wildlife Area
- Reese Canyon Research Natural Area (RNA)
- River Tracts ACEC
- Rock Garden Recreation Area
- Rosa Mesa Wildlife Area

**VR-A- 4.** The remainder of the area would be managed as VRM Class IV (803,000 acres; Figure 1). Specifically, the following areas would be managed as VRM Class IV:

- Bohanon Canyon Fossil Complex
- Dunes Vehicle Recreation Area
- Head Canyon Motocross Track

**Figure 1. VRM Class Designations for the FFO**



VRM Class designations for Specially Designated Areas (SDAs) are displayed in alphabetical order in Table 1 for easy reference.

**Table 1. VRM Class Designations for SDAs**

Name	VRM Class
Adams Canyon ACEC	II
Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Road ACEC	II
Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah WSA	I
Alien Run Mountain Bike Trails	II
Angel Peak ACEC	II
Angel Peak Scenic Area	II
Ashii Naa'a (Salt Point) ACEC	II
Andrew's Ranch ACEC	I
Bald Eagle ACEC	III
Bee Burrow ACEC	I
Beechatuga Tongue Geological Formation	II
Bettonie Tsoosie Fossil Area	III
Bi Yaazh ACEC	II
Bis Sa'ani ACEC	I
Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness Area	I
Blanco Mesa ACEC	II
Blanco Star Panel ACEC	II
Bohanon Canyon Fossil Complex	IV
Cagle's Site ACEC	II
Canyon View Ruin ACEC	II
Carracas Mesa Recreation / Wildlife Area	III
Carson Fossil Pocket	III
Casamero Community ACEC <sup>2</sup>	I
Cedar Hill ACEC	III
Cereza Canyon Wildlife Area	III
Chacra Mesa Complex ACEC	II
Cho'li'I (Gobernador Knob) ACEC	II
Christmas Tree Ruin ACEC	II
Church Rock Outlier ACEC	II
Crow Canyon ACEC	II
Crow Mesa Wildlife Area	III
Crownpoint Steps and Herrudura ACEC	II
Deer House ACEC	II
Delgadita / Pueblo Canyons ACEC	II
Devil's Spring Mesa ACEC	II
Dogie Canyon School ACEC	II
Dunes Vehicle Recreation Area	IV
Dzil'na'oodlii (Huerfano Mesa) ACEC	II
East La Plata Wildlife Area	III
East Side Rincon ACEC	II
Encierro Canyon ACEC	II
Encinada Mesa - Carrizo Canyon ACEC	II
Ensenada Mesa Wildlife Area	III
Ephemeral Wash Riparian Area	II/III
Farmer's Arroyo ACEC	II
Fossil Forest RNA	I
Four Ye'i ACEC	II
Frances Mesa ACEC	II
Glade Run Recreation Area	III

Name	VRM Class
Gobernador and Cereza Canyon Fossil Area	III
Gonzalez Canyon - Senon S. Vigil Homestead ACEC	II
Gonzales Mesa Wildlife Area	III
Gould Pass Camp ACEC	II
Halfway House ACEC <sup>2</sup>	I
Haynes Trading Post ACEC	II
Head Canyon Motocross Track	IV
The Hogback ACEC	III
Holmes Group ACEC	II
Hummingbird ACEC	II
Indian Creek ACEC	I
Kachina Mask ACEC	II
Kin Nizhoni ACEC <sup>2</sup>	I
Kin Yazhi (Little House) ACEC	II
Kiva ACEC	II
Kutz Canyon Fossil Area	III
La Jara ACEC	III
Laguna Seca Mesa Wildlife Area	III
Largo Canyon Star Ceiling ACEC	II
Lybrook Fossil Area	III
Margarita Martinez Homestead ACEC	II
Martin Apodaca Homestead ACEC	II
Martinez Canyon ACEC	II
Mexican Spotted Owl ACEC	III
Middle Mesa Wildlife Area	III
Morris 41 ACEC	I
Moss Trail ACEC	II
Munoz Canyon ACEC	II
Navajo Lake Horse Trails	II
Negro Canyon SDA	II
North Road ACEC	II
Pierre's Site ACEC <sup>2</sup>	I
Pinon Mesa Fossil Area	III
Pinon Mesa Recreation Area	III
Pointed Butte ACEC	II
Pregnant Basketmaker ACEC	II
Pretty Woman ACEC	II
Prieta Mesa ACEC	II
Rattlesnake Canyon Wildlife Area	III
Reese Canyon RNA	III
Rincon Largo District ACEC	II
Rincon Rock Shelter ACEC	II
River Tracts ACEC	III
Rock Garden Recreation Area	III
Rock House - Nestor Martin Homestead ACEC	II
Rosa Mesa Wildlife Area	III
San Rafael Canyon ACEC	II
Santos Peak ACEC	II
Shield Bearer ACEC	II
Simon Canyon ACEC	II
Simon Ruin ACEC	II
Star Rock ACEC	II

Name	VRM Class
Star Spring - Jesus Canyon ACEC	II
Superior Mesa ACEC	II
Tapacito and Split Rock ACEC	II
Thomas Canyon Recreation / Wildlife Area	II
Toh-La-Kai ACEC	I
Truby's Tower ACEC	II
Twin Angels ACEC <sup>2</sup>	I
Upper Kin Klizhin ACEC	I
<sup>2</sup> World Heritage Site	

### **Management Actions**

**VR-MA- 1.** Ensure BLM management activities and authorized uses are designed to meet the VRM objectives for the project area.

**VR-MA- 2.** If the Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah WSA is released by Congress from wilderness study, the area would continue to be managed as VRM Class I unless the release language specifies otherwise.

**VR-MA- 3.** Mitigation measures for visual resources listed below apply primarily to mineral extraction activities and are not all-inclusive. Additional mitigation measures for mineral extraction or other program activities may be developed and implemented as necessary.

- Operators may be required, on a case-by-case basis, to leave a tree screen on one or more sides of a location.
- Above-ground structures are required to be painted in one of five colors designated to blend with the natural color of the landscape.
- Permit holders are required to coordinate with the Authorized Officer on the design and color of power poles and transmission lines to achieve minimal practicable visual impacts.
- Permit holders may be required to reconstruct rock rims as near as possible to the original (RMP, 2-20)

### **Additional Information**

As disclosed in the EA on page 71, 95% of the acres in Cultural Resource ACECs would be managed to retain their existing visual character, resulting in the preservation of the existing visual setting (VRM Class I and II; Table 2). The two Cultural ACECs that would be managed as a VRM Class III are Cedar Hill ACEC (2,000 acres) and La Jara ACEC (1,000 acres). These ACECs are managed for their scientific and educational values, so VRM Class III management is not anticipated to impact culturally important landscapes or viewsheds. No Cultural Resource ACECs would be managed as VRM Class IV. As such, there would be no significant impact to cultural resources in the FFO.

**Table 2. VRM Classes for Cultural Resource ACECs**

VRM Class	Acres Managed as Cultural Resources ACECs
VRM Class I	3,000
VRM Class II	52,000
VRM Class III	3,000
VRM Class IV	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,000</b>

As disclosed in the EA on page 72, all lands visible in the foreground/midground from KOPs in Chaco Culture NHP would be managed under VRM Class I or II, resulting in the preservation or retention of the visual setting of those lands (Table 3). Twenty-nine percent of lands visible in the background from KOPs in Chaco Culture NHP would be managed as VRM Class I or II, while

71% would be managed in a VRM Class that would allow for a moderate to high level of change to the visual setting (VRM Class III or IV). Overall, lands in the foreground/midground would be managed to preserve or retain the visual setting of Chaco Culture NHP. While more than two-thirds of lands in the background could experience a moderate level of change to visual setting, these impacts would be less visible due to their distance from Chaco Culture NHP. As such, there would be no significant impacts to the visual landscape from KOPs in Chaco Culture NHP.

**Table 3. VRM Classes for Acres in the Foreground/Midground of Chaco Culture NHP**

VRM Class	Foreground/Midground	Background
VRM Class I	100	2,600
VRM Class II	2,300	4,900
VRM Class III	0	18,500
VRM Class IV	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,400</b>	<b>26,000</b>

Because a management corridor for the Old Spanish Trail NHT has not been identified pending the completion of the BLM and National Park Service trail management plan, a proxy boundary of the Ephemeral Wash Riparian Area was established where it overlapped with the Congressionally designated line that represents the possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT (Figure 2). As disclosed in the EA on page 88, by using the proxy boundary, 74% of the possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT in the FFO will be managed under VRM Class II to retain the visual character of these areas; 26% will be managed under VRM Class III (Figure 3). No possible high-potential route segments would be managed as VRM Class IV. Once the trail management plan is completed, BLM will comply with all management for high-potential route segments. As such, there will be no significant impacts to possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT.

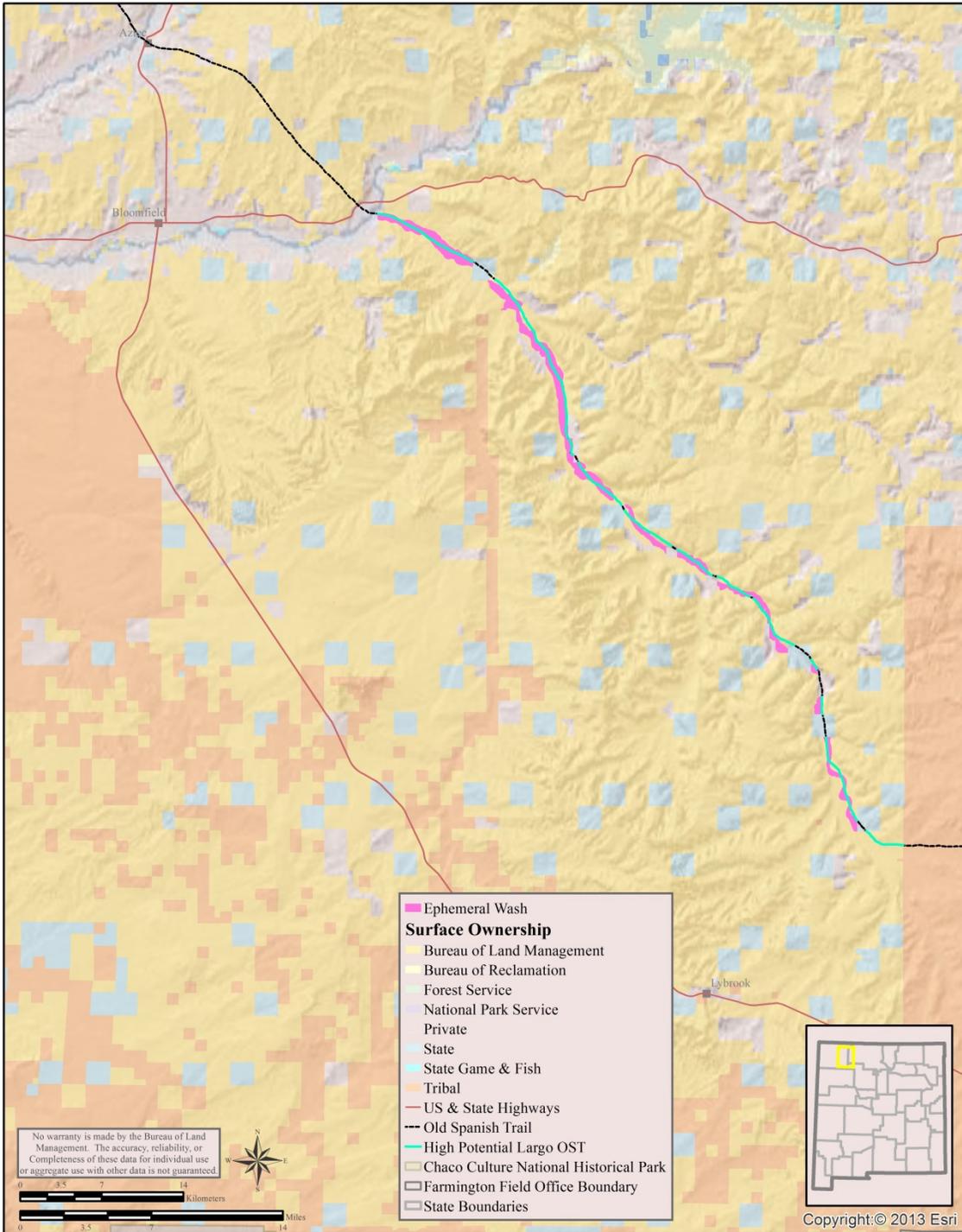
***Mitigation and Monitoring***

Mitigation measures for visual resources apply primarily to mineral extraction activities and are not all-inclusive. Additional mitigation measures for mineral extraction or other program activities may be developed and implemented as necessary.

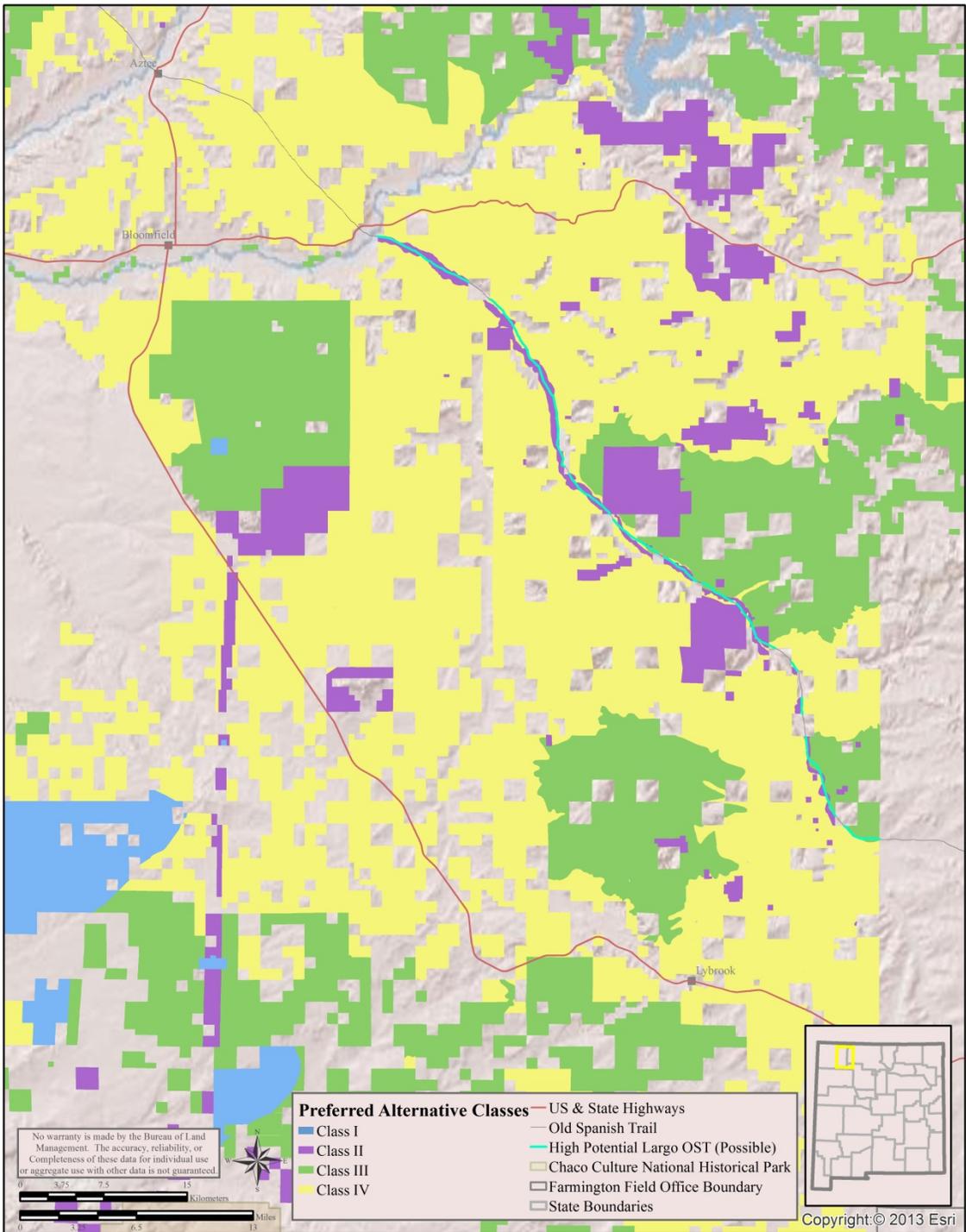
- Operators may be required, on a case-by-case basis, to leave a tree screen on one or more sides of a location.
- Above-ground structures are required to be painted in one of five colors designated to blend with the natural color of the landscape.
- Permit holders are required to coordinate with the Authorized Officer on the design and color of power poles and transmission lines to achieve minimal practicable visual impacts.
- Permit holders may be required to reconstruct rock rims as near as possible to the original (RMP, 2-20)

BLM will monitor the 2003 Farmington RMP, as amended, to ensure that decisions are effectively implemented, and to evaluate indicators of change identified in the various natural resource and program decisions. During the life of the RMP, BLM expects that new information gathered from field inventories and assessments, research, other agency studies, and other sources will update baseline data or support new management techniques and scientific principles. To the extent that such new information or actions address issues covered in the RMP, as amended, BLM will integrate the data through a process called plan maintenance or updating. As part of this process, BLM will periodically review management actions and the RMP, as amended, to determine whether the objectives in this and other applicable planning documents are being met. Where they are not being met, BLM will consider adjustments of appropriate scope. Where BLM considers taking or approving actions that would alter or not conform to the overall direction of the RMP, as amended, BLM will prepare a subsequent plan amendment and an environmental analysis of appropriate scope, and seek additional public comment.

**Figure 2. Relationship Between the Ephemeral Wash Riparian Area and Possible High-Potential Route Segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT**



**Figure 3. VRM Class Designations for Possible High-Potential Route Segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT**



## **IV. Finding of No Significant Impact**

The FONSI supporting EA DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2013-0047-EA considered the context and intensity of implementing the Selected Alternative. The FONSI concluded that (1) implementation of the Selected Alternative would not have significant environmental effects; and (2) the Selected Alternative did not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement was not necessary and was not prepared.

## **V. Public Involvement**

The scoping process formally began with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on June 13, 2011, documenting BLM's intent to prepare an RMPA and EA (43 FR 34249). The scoping period began June 13, 2011, and ended September 19, 2011.

Written scoping comments were accepted via mail, e-mail, public meeting, and fax resulting in a total of 14 responses, containing 38 comments. A response is defined as one email, fax, letter, or website submittal. A Farmington RMP Amendment for Visual Resource Management Scoping Report was compiled and finalized on September 28, 2011 (BLM, 2011).

The Farmington Field Office Visual Resource Management Resource Management Plan Amendment Environmental Assessment was made public and out for public comment from April 15, 2013 through May 31, 2013. Eight comments letters, containing 59 substantive comments, were received on the Draft EA. Responses to these comments are contained in Appendix B of the Final Visual Resource Management Resource Management Plan Amendment Environmental Assessment. The most notable change to the document was the addition of a new alternative, Alternative D, to address comments regarding a range of alternatives for management of lands around the Glade Run Recreation Area and Chaco Culture NHP.

## **VI. Decision Rationale**

I have made this decision concerning management for visual resources on BLM-managed lands in the FFO in response to direction in the 2003 Farmington Resource Management Plan (RMP) to designate new VRM Classes following a visual resource inventory (VRI). This decision will resolve all conflicts and vagueness in descriptions, map identification, and acres as found in the 2003 Farmington RMP. Any areas where VRM allocations did not correspond to RMP allocations or had than one VRM class designation were assigned to the same area have been resolved with this decision. The VRM allocations in all alternatives are consistent with other allocations made in the 2003 Farmington RMP.

I have determined that the activities described in the Selected Alternative will not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction of scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)).

The Selected Alternative is not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)). The EA does not propose any changes to existing management for endangered or threatened species. Proposed projects will continue to comply with all Federal regulations for these species.

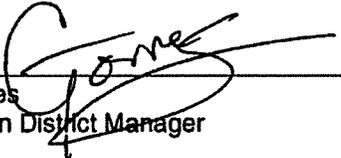
## **VII. Protests and Appeals**

The RMP Amendment/EA was circulated for a 30 day protest period in accordance with 43 CFR 1610.5-2. The protest period began December 17, 2013 and ended January 16, 2014. Two protests were received. The BLM Director responded to and denied both protests. The Director's Protest Resolution Report, which describes the rationale for denying the protests, can be found on BLM's website at:  
[http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/planning\\_overview/protest\\_resolution/protestreports.ht](http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/planning_overview/protest_resolution/protestreports.ht)

ml. The decision of the BLM Director is the final decision of the Department of the Interior and exhausts internal appeal opportunities.

**VII. Signatures**

**Recommended By:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gary Torres  
Farmington District Manager

6/12/2014  
Date

**Approved By:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jesse Juen  
BLM New Mexico State Director

6/13/14  
Date