

Afton SEZ SRMS Webinar

September 28, 2016; 10:00am-12:00pm Mountain.

Participant Dial-In: 1-888-240-2560; Passcode: 963-774-5036

Webinar URL: <http://anl.adobeconnect.com/aftonsrms09282016/event/registration.html>

Documents posted at:

http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/energy/alternatives/afton_sez.html

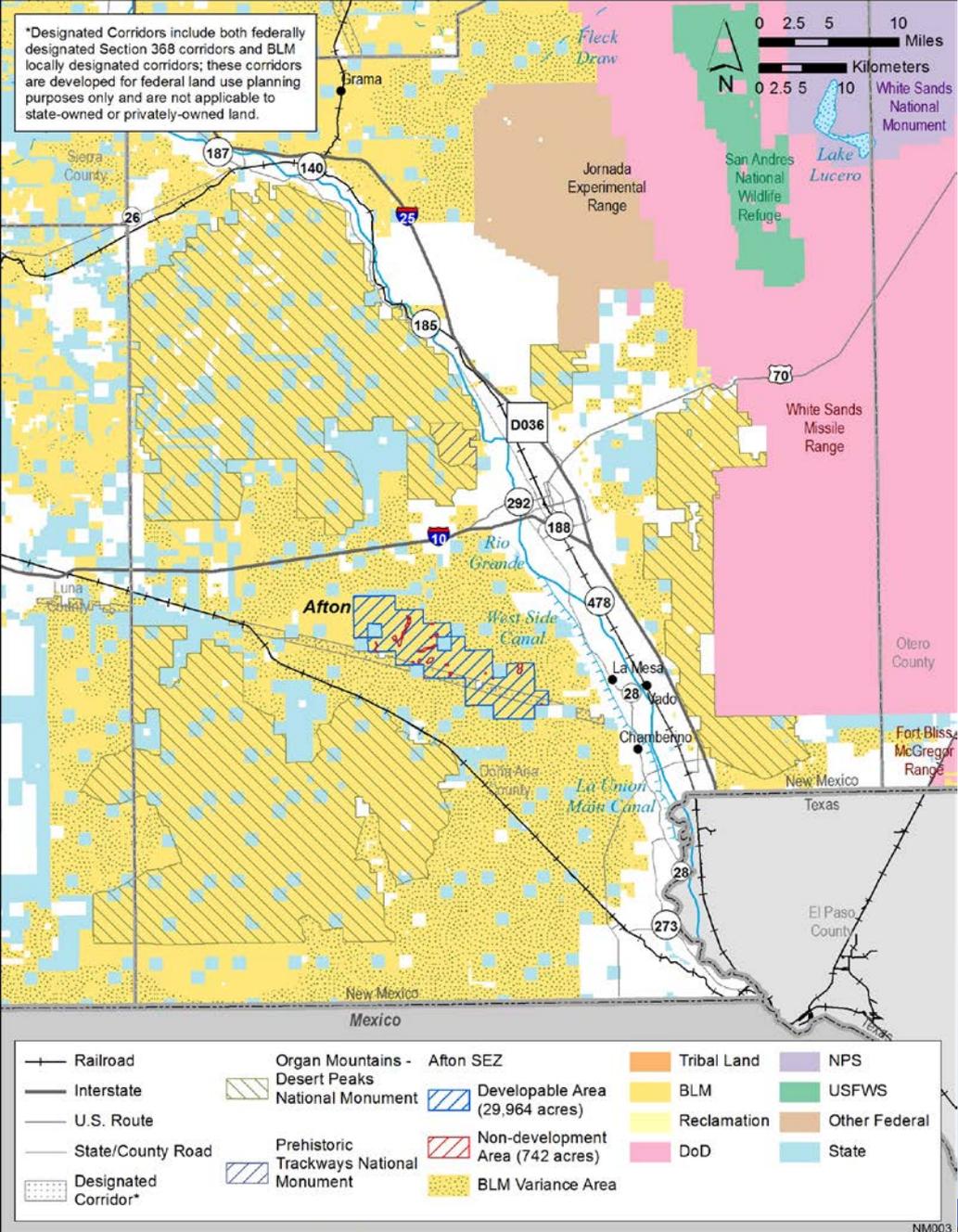
Call-In Instructions:

- ***Please mute phone and computer when you are not speaking.***
- ***If you have a question, please click on “Raise Hand” under the Set Status icon (on status bar at top of web page).***
- ***You will be asked to state your name and organization prior to providing your question or comment. When you have finished speaking, please lower your hand and re-mute your phone.***
- ***Thank you for your participation!***

Introduction and Webinar Objectives

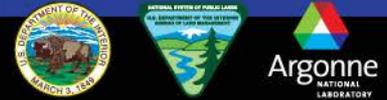


*Designated Corridors include both federally designated Section 368 corridors and BLM locally designated corridors; these corridors are developed for federal land use planning purposes only and are not applicable to state-owned or privately-owned land.



Afton SEZ and Surrounding Areas

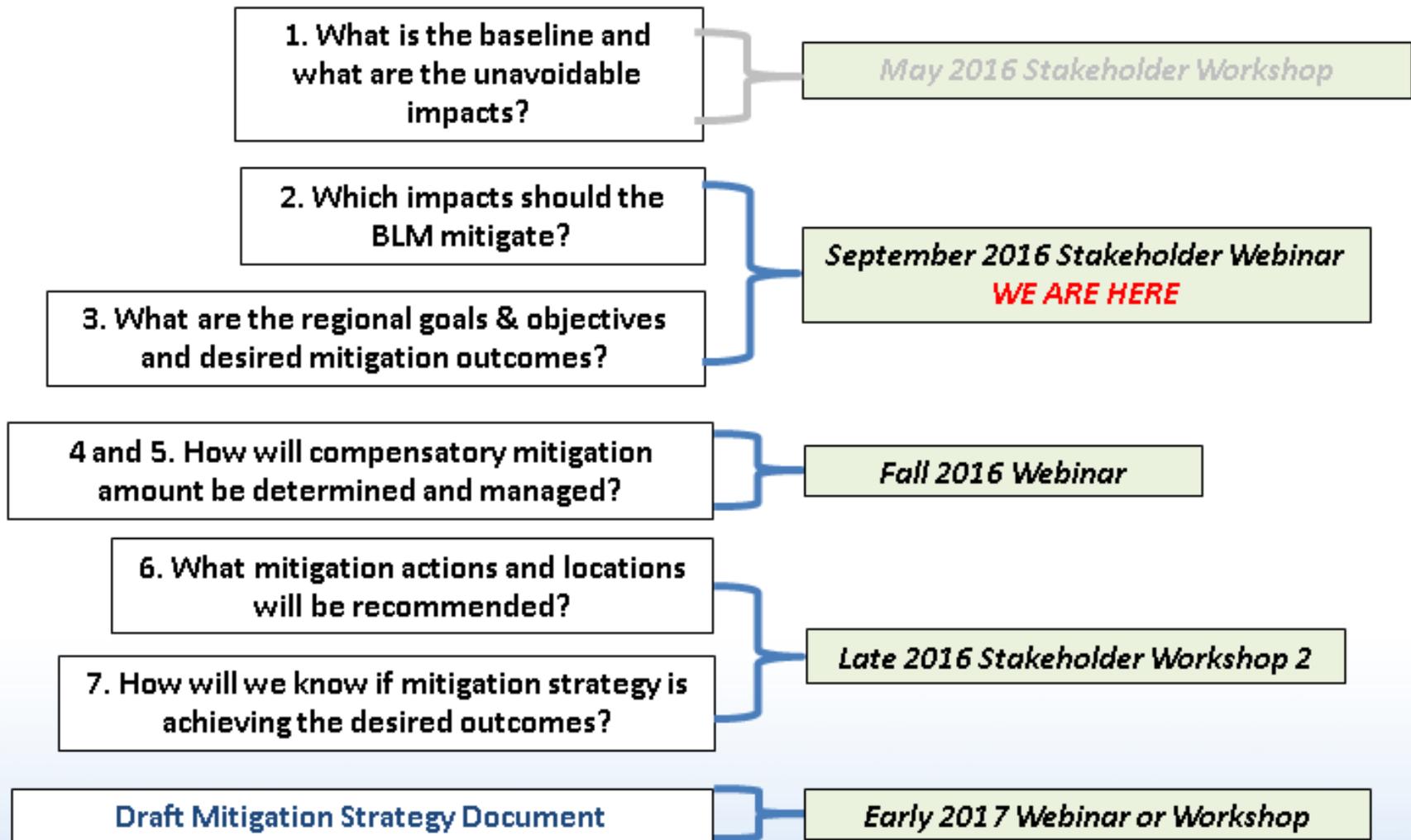
Railroad	Organ Mountains - Desert Peaks National Monument	Afton SEZ	Tribal Land	NPS
Interstate	Prehistoric Trackways National Monument	Developable Area (29,964 acres)	BLM	USFWS
U.S. Route	Non-development Area (742 acres)	BLM Variance Area	Reclamation	Other Federal
State/County Road	Designated Corridor*		DoD	State



BLM Mitigation Hierarchy:



Afton SRMS Process – Schedule for 7 Elements

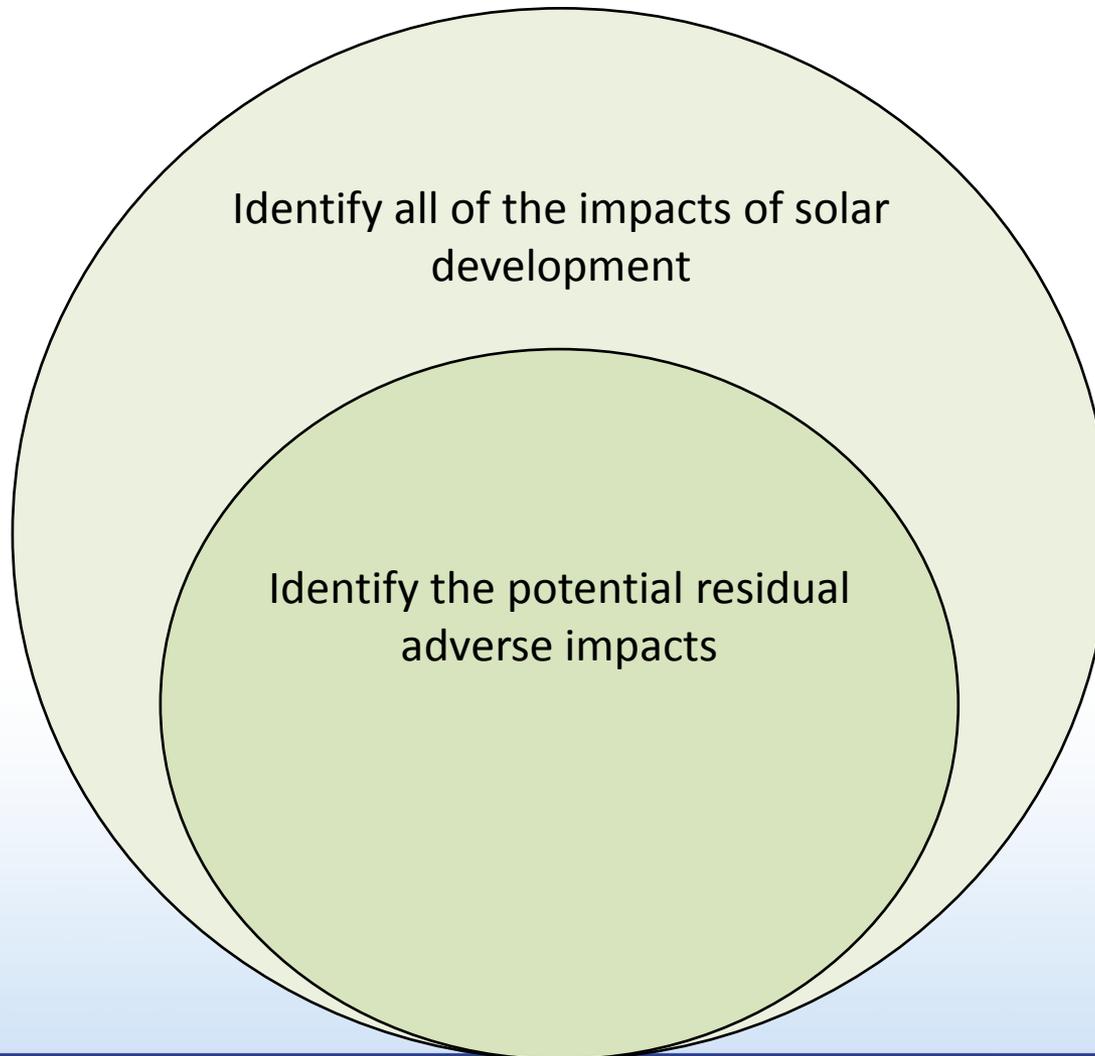


Webinar Objectives

1. Inform stakeholders of revisions made to the impact tables as a result of their input during the May workshop;
2. Introduce and get stakeholder feedback on BLM's preliminary assessment of which unavoidable adverse impacts may warrant regional mitigation;
3. Preview the regional goals and objectives, desired mitigation outcomes, and examples of potential regional mitigation actions; and
4. Introduce the process through which stakeholders may nominate candidate site locations and actions for regional mitigation.

Revisions to the SEZ Resource Impact Tables

Identify Residual Impacts of Solar Development



Identify all of the impacts of solar development

Identify the potential residual adverse impacts (those remaining after on-site mitigation)

Resource/Issue	Afton Solar Energy Zone Impacts ¹	On-site Mitigation ²		Residual Adverse Impacts ³
		Avoidance	Minimization	
<p>Ecology: Vegetation Section 12.1.10</p>	<p>Direct: Development will adversely affect characteristic vegetation (e.g., creosotebush, honey mesquite and snakeweed, and Soap tree yucca) through destruction and loss of habitat. Development will result in loss of the Chihuahuan Stabilized Coppice Dune and Sand Flat Scrub vegetation system on the SEZ. Potentially sensitive habitats on the SEZ include wetlands, desert dry washes, and playas. Development, including vegetation removal, land clearing, grading, and changes in surface water flow may alter soils and vegetation communities and result in the establishment of invasive species and noxious weeds within the SEZ.</p> <p>Indirect: Loss of native vegetation, increased surface water runoff and related erosion, or through the introduction of invasive species. Establishment of noxious weeds in the SEZ may result in their spreading to adjacent areas. Indirect impacts on wetlands outside the SEZ could occur. Indirect impacts from groundwater use on communities in the region that depend on groundwater, such as wetlands and riparian habitats along the Rio Grande floodplain, could also occur.</p> <p>Cumulative: Solar energy development could be a contributor to cumulative impacts on some vegetation communities, depending on the type, number, and location of other developments in the region.</p> <p>Data Gaps: Direct impacts could still occur on unmapped wetlands within the developable areas of the SEZ.</p>	<p>SEZ-specific programmatic design features require that all wetland, dry wash, playa, riparian, succulent, and dune communities and large blocks of unfragmented grassland within the SEZ shall be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated in consultation with appropriate agencies. (Note – The Solar PEIS ROD identified 742 acres of floodplain and intermittent and dry lake within the SEZ as non-development areas). Any yucca, agave, ocotillo, cacti and other succulent plant species that cannot be avoided will be salvaged. A buffer area will be maintained around wetland, dry wash, playa, and riparian habitats to reduce the potential for impacts.</p> <p>See programmatic design features at http://blmsolar.anl.gov/documents/docs/peis/programmatic-design-features/Ecological_Resources.pdf</p>	<p>SEZ-specific programmatic design features require the following:</p> <p>Use of appropriate engineering controls to minimize impacts on wetland, dry wash, playa, and riparian habitats, including downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition to these habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls will be determined through agency consultation.</p> <p>Consideration of other minimization measures including avoiding travel through weed-infested areas; inspecting and cleaning vehicles and equipment; limiting ground disturbance; avoiding the creation of soil conditions that promote weed germination and establishment; and disposing of seed and plant parts.</p> <p>Limiting groundwater withdrawals to reduce the potential for indirect impacts on groundwater-dependent communities, such as wetland or riparian communities associated with the Rio Grande floodplain.</p> <p>See other programmatic design features under Avoidance column.</p>	<p>Yes. Development would result in direct removal or disturbance of these native plant communities, special soil environments, and the ecosystem services they provide.</p>



Revisions to SEZ Impact Tables Made in Response to Stakeholder Input at May Workshop

- Cultural changed from “No” to “Maybe, depending on survey results”.
- Environmental Justice changed from “No” to “Maybe” relative to livestock grazing.
- Socioeconomics changed from “No” to “Maybe” relative to livestock grazing.
- Specially Designated Areas now called Special Designations; separated from Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.
- Wild Horses and Burros was removed since it is not applicable.



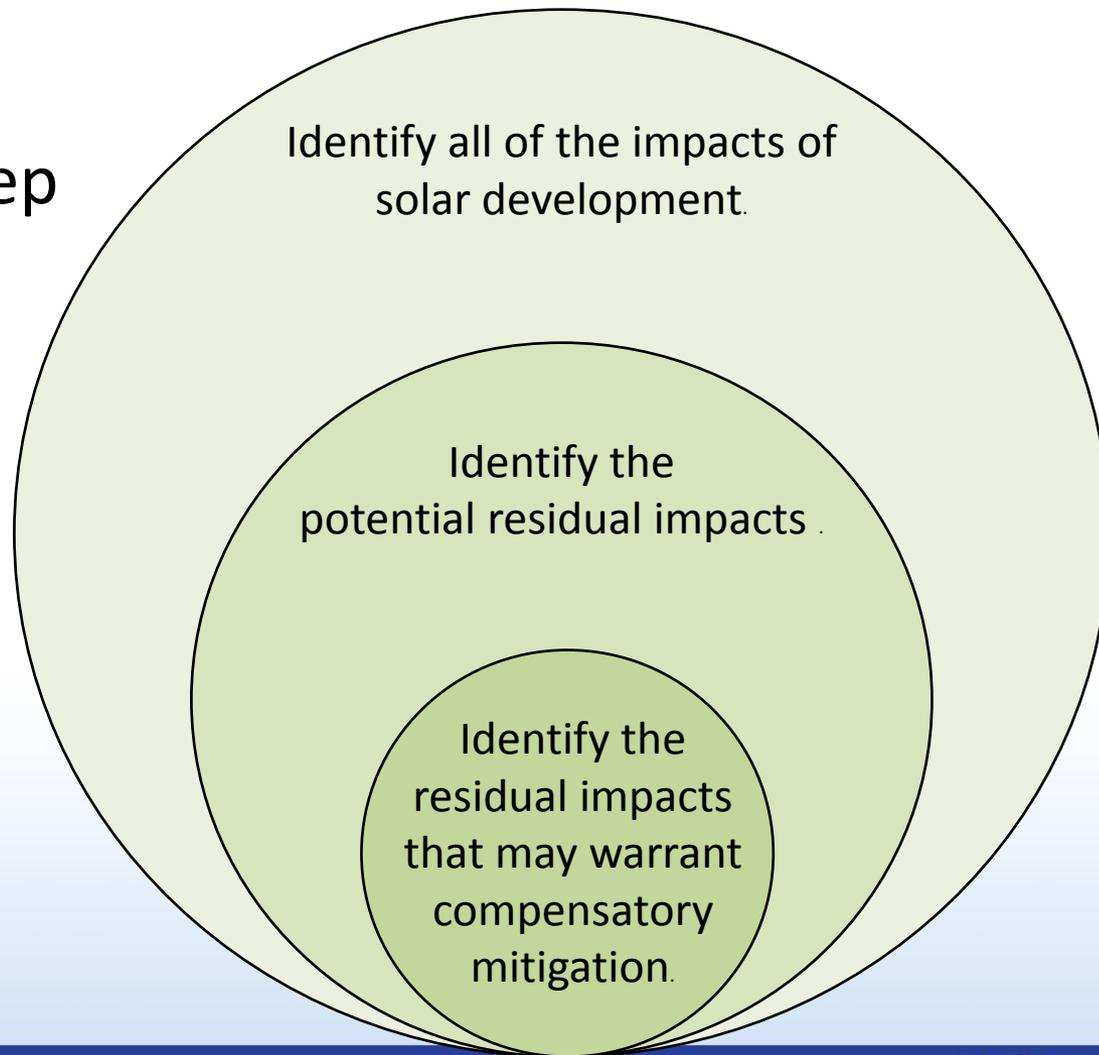
Questions?



Residual Impacts Warranting Compensatory Mitigation

Identifying the Residual Impacts of Solar Development that May Warrant Compensatory Mitigation

Three step
process



Steps for Identifying Resource Impacts That May Warrant Compensatory Mitigation

Identify the residual impacts that may warrant compensatory mitigation.

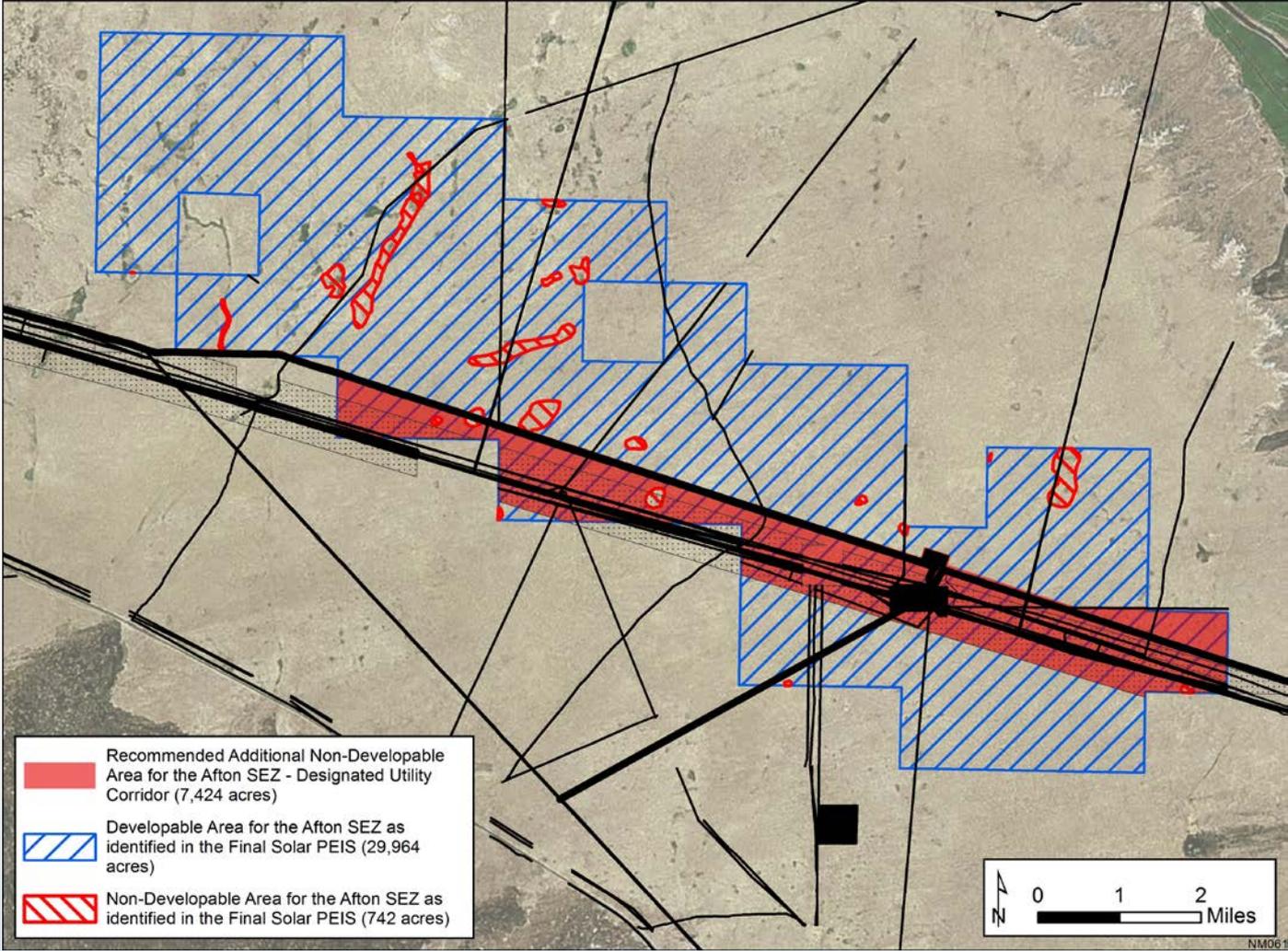
1. Identify likely residual impacts (remember mitigation hierarchy); review and, if needed, identify non-development and/or minimization areas.
2. Identify important ecosystem components and interactions.
3. Identify at-risk resources and processes in the region.
4. Estimate how the residual impacts of solar development will affect the status and trend of the regional at-risk resources.
5. Determine the significance of the residual impacts in the region.

Apply these criteria to identify which residual adverse impacts warrant compensatory mitigation.

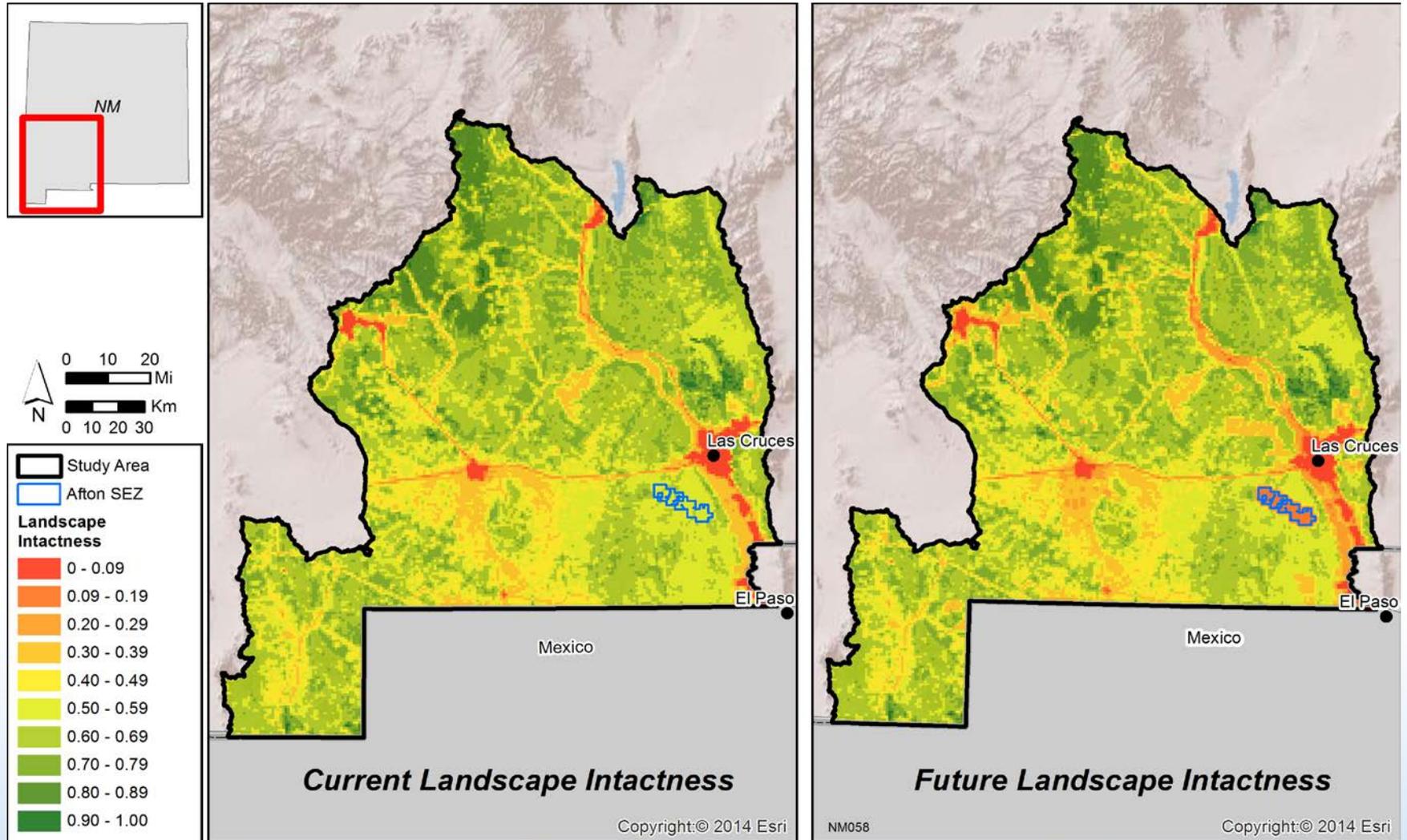
Identifying Resource Impacts that May Warrant Compensatory Mitigation (continued): Identify Non-Development/Minimization Areas

- BLM Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) reviews and if appropriate recommends revising the developable area based on:
 - existing right-of-way grants;
 - washes/ephemeral streams;
 - any other potential land-use conflicts with resource values that might be avoided by restricting SEZ development areas.
- Example – New non-development area to avoid conflicts with designated energy corridor.

Identifying Resource Impacts that May Warrant Compensatory Mitigation (cont.): Identify Non-Development/Minimization Areas



Landscape Intactness (aids in evaluating impacts and trends)



Example: Identifying Resource Impacts that May Warrant Mitigation – Vegetation

Identify the potential residual impacts

Identify the residual impacts that may warrant compensatory mitigation

Afton Solar Energy Zone Resource	Residual or Unavoidable Impact?	How certain is it that the residual impacts will occur?	How significant are the residual impacts onsite?	How significant are the residual impacts of developing the Afton SEZ in the region?	Role in the ecosystem ?	Other Considerations	Are potential residual impacts likely to warrant regional mitigation?
Ecology: Vegetation	Yes. Development would result in direct removal or disturbance of these native plant communities, special soil environments, and the ecosystem services they provide.	Very High	Very. Expect the loss of all vegetation in the developed areas, though mitigation may result in some remaining vegetation.	Somewhat. Existing vegetation on the SEZ has already been degraded and departed from historic conditions due to human activities such as grazing.	Basic Component	Natural regeneration of native vegetation is slow in the Chihuahua Desert, and the effects of seeding or other reclamation efforts are variable and poorly understood.	Yes

Example: Identifying Resource Impacts that May Warrant Mitigation – Visual

Identify the potential residual impacts

Identify residual impacts that may warrant compensatory mitigation

Afton Solar Energy Zone Resource/ Issue	Residual or Unavoidable Impact?	How certain is it that the residual impacts will occur?	How significant are the residual impacts onsite?	How significant are the residual impacts of developing the Afton SEZ in the region?	Role in the ecosystem?	Other Considerations	Are potential residual impacts likely to warrant regional mitigation?
Visual	<p>Yes. While onsite mitigation and technology restrictions would reduce visual contrasts caused by solar facilities within the SEZ, these would not likely reduce impacts to less than moderate or strong levels for nearby viewers. Potential residual impacts on individual visually sensitive areas (VSAs) will be identified through VSA analysis. Additionally, residual impacts will be evaluated during project level NEPA based on locations of development within the SEZ and project features.</p> <p>There could be minor residual visual impacts to the Butterfield Trail (under study for NHT designation) and the El Camino Real NHT.</p>	<p>High. Some VSAs with high levels of visitation and high visual sensitivity will experience high levels of visual contrast from solar development in the SEZ. The specific VSAs that will be subject to residual impacts is highly dependent on the solar technologies deployed. Residual impacts from solar power tower facilities will affect substantially more VSAs. Residual impacts will also occur due to loss of visual quality within the SEZ itself. There will also be residual impacts to night sky quality from artificial lighting impacts from solar facilities.</p>	<p>High. For certain VSAs, significant residual impacts will result from high levels of visual contrast that will occur because solar development within a large portion of the SEZ will occupy a large portion of the field of view at relatively short distances. Significance is highly dependent on the solar technologies deployed, with significantly greater residual impacts expected from solar power tower facilities. Residual impacts from loss of visual quality within the SEZ itself will also be significant.</p>	<p>Residual impacts to certain individual VSAs are likely to be significant at the regional level, but much more so if power tower facilities are constructed and operated in the SEZ. Residual impacts due to loss of visual quality within the SEZ itself, and residual impacts to night sky quality from artificial lighting impacts from solar facilities are unlikely to be regionally significant (assuming strict lighting controls for mitigation of night skies impacts).</p>	Human element.		Yes.

Preliminary Identification of Resources that May Warrant Regional Mitigation in the Afton SEZ

- Ecology: Vegetation
- Ecology: Terrestrial Wildlife
- Ecology: Migratory Birds
- Ecology: Animal Special Status Species
- Special Designations
- Visual Resources

Maybe –Tribal Concerns



Questions?



Regional Goals and Objectives, Mitigation Desired Outcomes, and Potential Mitigation Actions

Regional Goals and Objectives, Mitigation Desired Outcomes, and Potential Mitigation Actions

- **Need to Identify *Mitigation Desired Outcomes and Actions* in terms of Regional Goals and Objectives.**
- Regional goals and objectives are generally broad statements on desired conditions for resources over a large management area.
- Multiple documents may provide guidance for establishing regional goals and objectives for resources warranting mitigation:
 - Land use plans;
 - BLM policies, including handbooks and manuals;
 - Species conservation plans.

Regional Goals & Objectives, and Mitigation Desired Outcomes & Actions (continued):

- Mitigation Desired Outcomes and Actions should:
 - Consider all resources that may warrant regional mitigation due to SEZ development.
 - Consider affected ecosystem, landscape condition, current trends, external actions that may affect regional conditions.
 - Enhance the ability of agencies to invest in larger scale conservation and mitigation efforts, and to prioritize investments.
 - Use SMART principles (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely).

Regional Goals and Objectives, Mitigation Desired Outcomes, and Potential Mitigation Actions for the Afton SEZ

Resource Impacted that May Warrant Compensatory Mitigation	Regional Goals and Regional Objectives/RMP Guidance	Mitigation Desired Outcomes	Potential Mitigation Actions
<p>Vegetation (Mainly Chihuahua stabilized coppice dune and sand flat scrub)</p>	<p>Mimbres RMP Goal: Achieve and maintain healthy ecosystems while providing for human values, products, and services.</p> <p>Mimbres RMP Objective: Maintain a desired plant community that produces the kind, proportion and amount of vegetation necessary for meeting or exceeding the land use plan goals and activity plan objectives established for each site.</p> <p>New Mexico Public Lands Health Standards: Manage public land to attain the biotic, riparian, and upland standards for public land health.</p>	<p>Land development and improvement projects will be thoroughly analyzed and modified, as appropriate, to limit the amount of new surface disturbance, reduce resource conflicts, and aid in the management of resources. Restoration and maintenance of equivalent functional acreage of the limited but highly productive riparian and arroyo habitats will be underscored.</p>	<p>Habitat enhancement and restoration using proven techniques that have demonstrated progress toward the vegetation community's reference state.</p> <p>Acquisition and preservation.</p>



Questions?



Questions to Consider When Commenting:

1. Has the BLM adequately captured the concerns regarding the initial resource impact evaluation that were voiced in the April workshop?
2. Are there additional resources that should warrant regional mitigation? Please provide a justification.
3. Are there resources included in the list of those warranting regional mitigation that can be addressed with onsite mitigation? Please include examples of onsite mitigation actions to address the impact.
4. Do the regional goals and objectives presented by BLM adequately address the unavoidable or residual impacts of solar energy development that may warrant regional mitigation for each SEZ?
5. Are there other established regional goals and objectives beyond those presented (e.g., from state action plans, species-specific management plans, etc.)?
6. Are the mitigation desired outcomes sufficiently defined to support identification and assessment of candidate mitigation sites and actions for each SEZ?

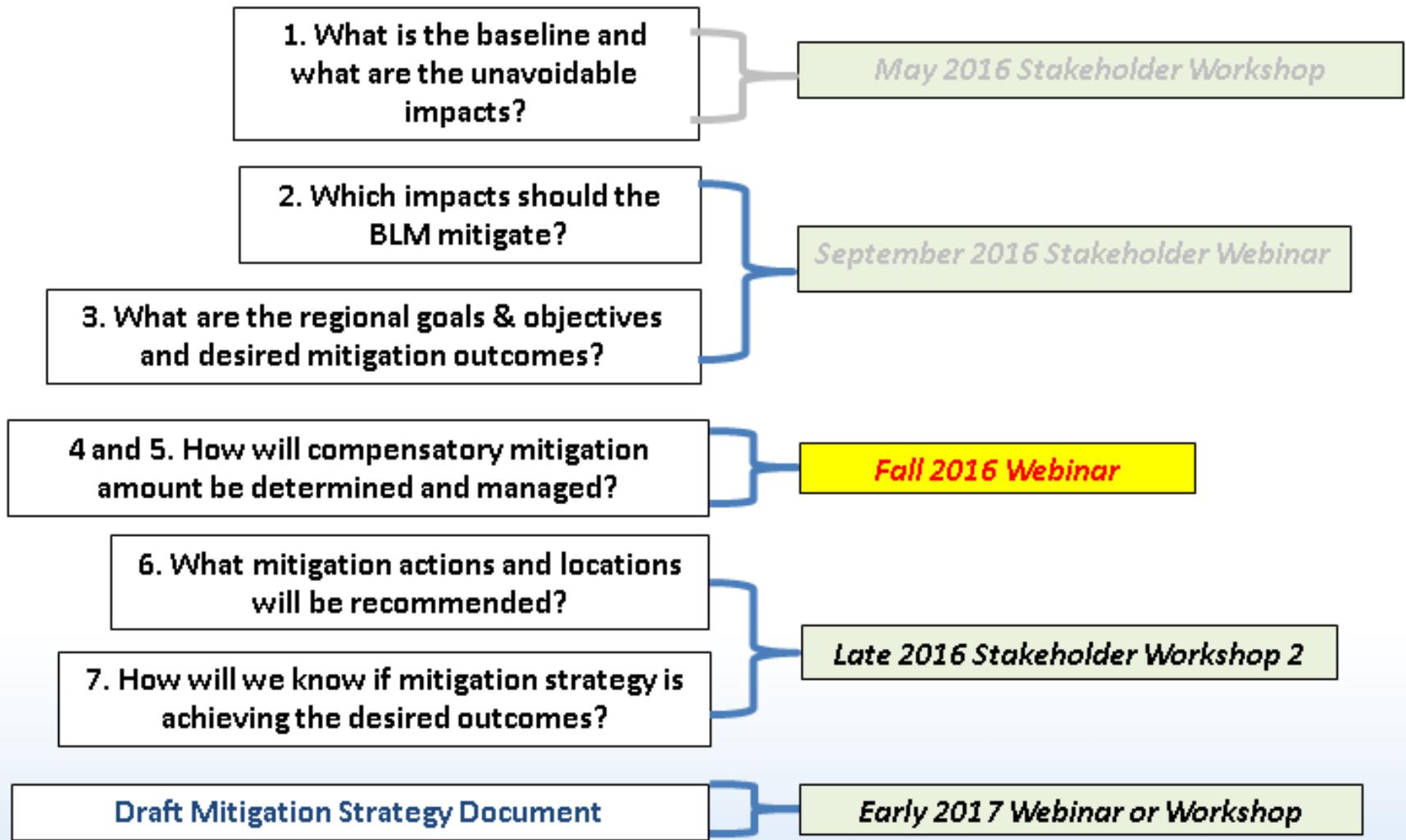
Document Posted to the Project Website:

http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/energy/alternatives/afton_sez.html

NEXT STEPS:

- Webinar presentation will be posted to the project website along with the documents discussed.
 - http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/energy/alternatives/afton_sez.html
- Stakeholder input on the documents presented here and posted on the website are requested by **October 26, 2016**.
 - Please consider using the Questions form available on the website when providing comments. However, BLM will accept any format of comments (written letter, PDF comment tags, scanned markups, etc.).
 - Submit input to lfox@anl.gov

Afton SEZ SRMS Process – Next on Schedule

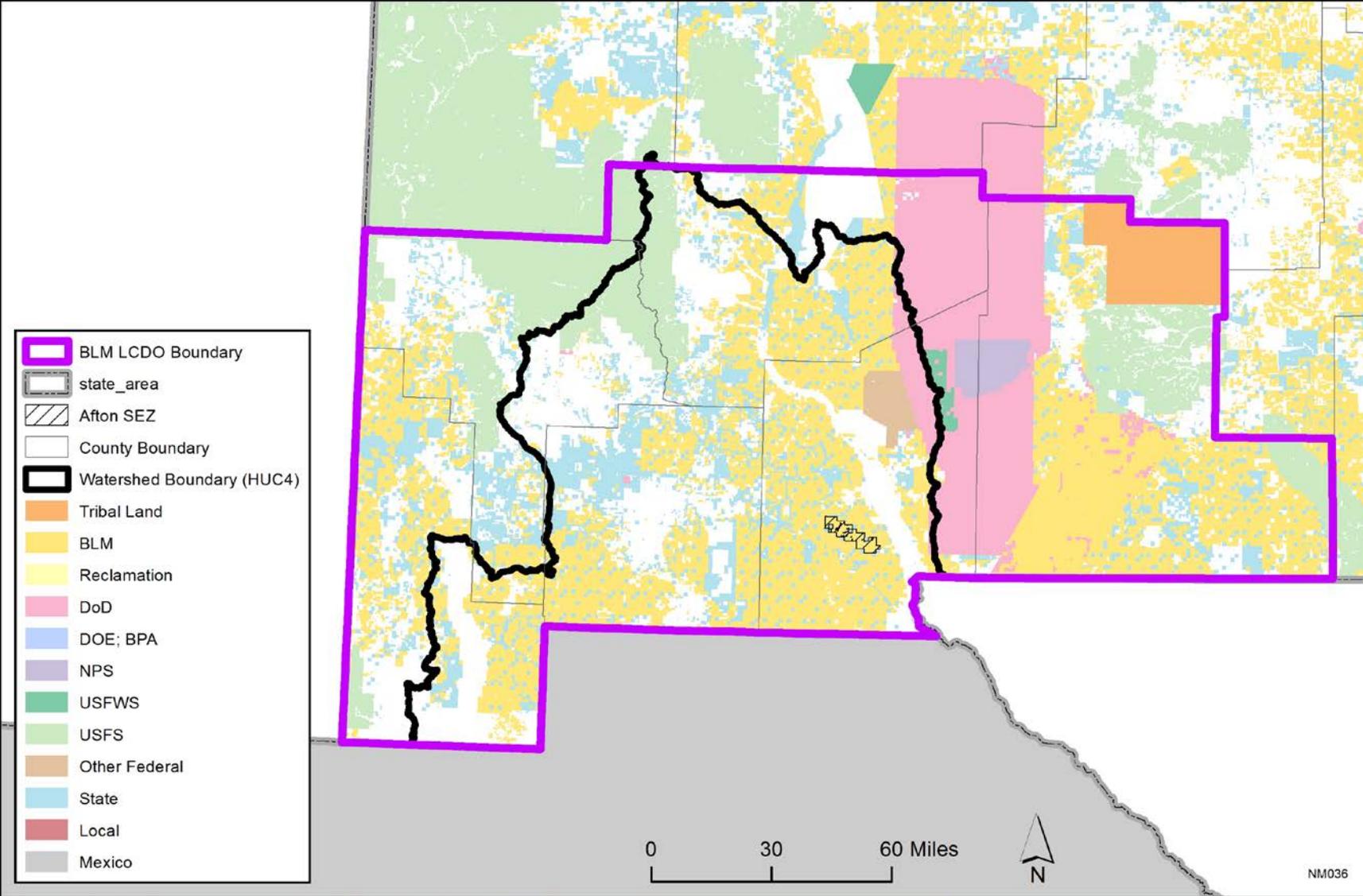


Candidate Site and Action Recommendations for Regional Mitigation

How Stakeholders Can Help BLM Identify Candidate Regional Mitigation Locations and Actions

- Stakeholders will be asked to provide candidate mitigation locations and actions (including G.I.S. data and rationale).
- BLM IDT will also propose & screen locations and actions.
- Screening of mitigation locations and actions is informed by regional goals and objectives.
- Locations and actions should mitigate for Residual Impacts Warranting Mitigation and address Regional Goals and Objectives.
- Evaluating mitigation locations and actions will be an iterative process.

Afton SEZ SRMS Region



NM036



How Stakeholders Can Help BLM Identify Candidate Regional Mitigation Locations and Actions (cont.)

- Key Compensatory Mitigation Criteria:
 - Mitigates for all or most impacts that warrant mitigation;
 - Addresses regional goals and objectives;
 - ***Is Feasible, Effective, Additive, Low-Risk, and Durable.***
- *Candidate Site Screening Matrix* tool:
 - Supports systematic comparison and ranking;
 - Can support identification of several locations and/or actions and corresponding objectives.

Request to stakeholders to submit matrix data for their site/action recommendations – details forthcoming in next webinar!

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