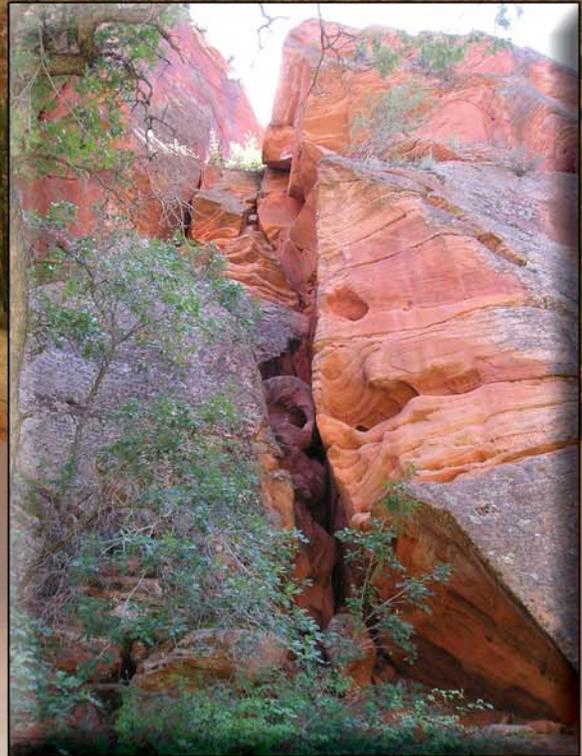


# Kanab Field Office Draft Resource Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement

BLM

Volume 1 of 2



KANAB FIELD OFFICE



October 2007

# **BLM Mission**

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

BLM-UT-PL-07-009-1610

UT-110-2007-022

DES 07-46



## United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Utah State Office  
P.O. Box 45155  
Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1345  
<http://www.blm.gov>

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
1610  
(UT-935)

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is the Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (Draft RMP/EIS) for the Utah Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Kanab Field Office. This document was prepared by the BLM in consultation with cooperating agencies, and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), implementing regulations, the BLM land use planning handbook (H-1601-1), and other applicable law.

The planning area consists of about 2.9 million acres of land, which includes about 550,000 acres of public lands managed by the Kanab Field Office. When approved, this RMP will replace the Cedar-Beaver-Garfield-Antimony RMP, as well as the Escalante, Paria, Vermilion, and Zion Management Framework Plans. The overall intent of the revised RMP is to develop a land use plan that will guide the management of public lands administered by the Kanab Field Office into the future. The Kanab Draft RMP/EIS and supporting information is available on the project web site at: [www.blm.gov/rmp/ut/kanab](http://www.blm.gov/rmp/ut/kanab).

The BLM encourages you to provide information and comments pertaining to the analysis presented in the Kanab RMP. Of particular importance is feedback concerning the adequacy and accuracy of the four proposed alternatives, the analysis of their respective management decisions, and any new information that would help the BLM produce a Proposed RMP. In developing the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, which is the next phase of the planning process, the decision-maker may select various management decisions from each of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS for the purpose of creating a management strategy that best meets the needs of the resources and values in this area under the multiple use and sustained yield mandate. Your timely comments will help formulate the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

Public meetings to provide an overview of the document, respond to questions, and take public comments will be held subsequent to the release of the draft. These meetings will be announced by local media and through public mailings. Public meetings will be held at Kanab, Panguitch, Escalante, St. George, and Salt Lake City, Utah.

Comments may be submitted electronically at: [UT\\_Kanab\\_Comments@blm.gov](mailto:UT_Kanab_Comments@blm.gov). Comments may also be submitted by mail to:

Kanab Field Office RMP Comments  
Bureau of Land Management  
Kanab Field Office  
318 East 100 North  
Kanab, UT 84741

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

Your review and comments on the content of this document are critical to the success of this planning effort. If you wish to submit comments on the Draft RMP/DEIS, we request that you make them as specific as possible. Comments are more helpful if they include suggested changes, sources, or methodologies, and reference to a specific section or page number. Comments that are only opinions or preferences will be considered and included in the decision-making process, but such comments will not receive a formal response from the BLM. Comments will be accepted for ninety (90) calendar days following the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) publication of its Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. The BLM can best use your comments and resource information submissions if received within the review period.

It is the BLM's practice to make comments, including names and addresses of respondents, available for public review. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. Although you may 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. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations and businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

The BLM would like to thank our cooperating agency partners that have worked so hard to help us complete this document. They have provided support and expertise to facilitate focusing the issues and developing alternatives to help resolve the many compelling resource concerns that face the Kanab Field Office. We would like to recognize especially Kane and Garfield counties, the State of Utah and its agencies, and the Kaibab-Paiute Tribe as cooperating agencies on this Draft RMP/EIS. Their experience and dedication have made this a better process and the BLM looks forward to continuing to work with them. We also extend thanks to those individuals and organizations that have provided extensive information and many excellent ideas that have been considered during this process.

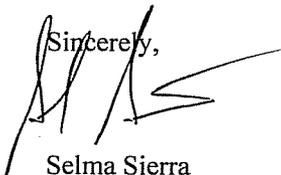
Copies of the Draft RMP/EIS have been sent to affected federal, state, and local government agencies. Copies of the Draft RMP/EIS are available for public inspection at the Kane County, Garfield County, and Salt Lake City public libraries. Copies are also available for public inspection at the following BLM locations:

Kanab Field Office  
318 East 100 North  
Kanab, UT 84741

Utah State Office, BLM  
440 West 200 South, Suite 500  
Salt Lake City, UT 84101

Thank you for your continued interest in the Kanab Field Office Resource Management Plan. We appreciate the information and suggestions you have contributed to the planning process.

Sincerely,



Selma Sierra  
Utah State Director

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
AND DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
FOR THE  
KANAB FIELD OFFICE

PREPARED BY THE  
KANAB FIELD OFFICE

OCTOBER 2007

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

---

Selma Sierra  
State Director, Utah

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## Kanab Field Office Planning Area Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

**Lead Agency:** U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

**Type of Action:** Administrative

**Jurisdiction:** Portions of Kane and Garfield Counties, Utah

**Abstract:** The Kanab Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (Draft RMP/EIS) describes and analyzes alternatives for the planning and management of public lands and resources administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Kanab Field Office. The Kanab planning area is located in south-central Utah and includes approximately 2,847,200 acres of land in Kane and Garfield Counties. Within the Kanab planning area, the BLM manages and administers approximately 554,000 acres of public land surface.

The BLM is revising this RMP to address changes in policy, changes in resource condition or demands, and changes in administrative boundaries, and to consolidate the existing five land use plans (LUP) and their amendments. As part of the RMP revision process, the BLM conducted a scoping period to solicit input from the public and interested agencies on the nature and extent of issues and impacts to be addressed in the Draft EIS. Planning issues identified in this RMP focus on recreation and travel management, special designations, minerals and energy, and non-Wilderness Study Area (WSA) lands with wilderness characteristics.

To assist the BLM Authorized Officer in making decisions and to help cooperating agencies and the public focus on appropriate solutions to planning issues, four alternatives for the RMP are considered in the Draft EIS. **Alternative A** (No Action) is a continuation of the current management direction contained in the five LUPs and off-highway vehicle (OHV) management actions. This alternative describes the current goals and actions for management of resources and land uses in the decision area. **Alternative B** (Preferred Alternative) provides opportunities to use and develop resources within the decision area while also ensuring resource protection. Alternative B would provide for continued access and development of resources with stipulations and mitigation to protect natural and cultural resources. **Alternative C** emphasizes the protection of the decision area's resource values while allowing commodity uses as consistent with current law, regulation, and policy. Management actions would emphasize resource values such as habitat for wildlife and plant species (including special status species); protection of riparian areas and water quality; preservation of ecologically significant areas; maintenance of wilderness characteristics; and protection of scientifically significant cultural and paleontological sites. Access to and development of resources within the decision area could occur with intensive management and mitigation of surface disturbing and disruptive activities. **Alternative D** emphasizes opportunities to use and develop resources within the decision area. It would provide for motorized access and commodity production with minimal restrictions, while providing protection of natural and cultural resources to the extent required by law, regulation, and policy. This alternative would largely rely on existing laws, regulations, and policies, rather than on management or special designations, to protect sensitive resources.

When completed, the revised RMP will provide a set of comprehensive, long-range decisions for: (1) managing resources throughout the planning area and (2) identifying allowable uses on the public land administered by the BLM. Comments are accepted for 90 days following the date the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability for this Draft RMP/DEIS in the *Federal Register*. Comments should be submitted via the RMP web site at [www.blm.gov/rmp/ut/kanab](http://www.blm.gov/rmp/ut/kanab) or via e-mail at [UT\\_Kanab\\_Comments@blm.gov](mailto:UT_Kanab_Comments@blm.gov). Alternatively, comments can be mailed to:

**Bureau of Land Management, Kanab Field Office, Attn: RMP Comments**

318 North 100 East

Kanab, UT 84741

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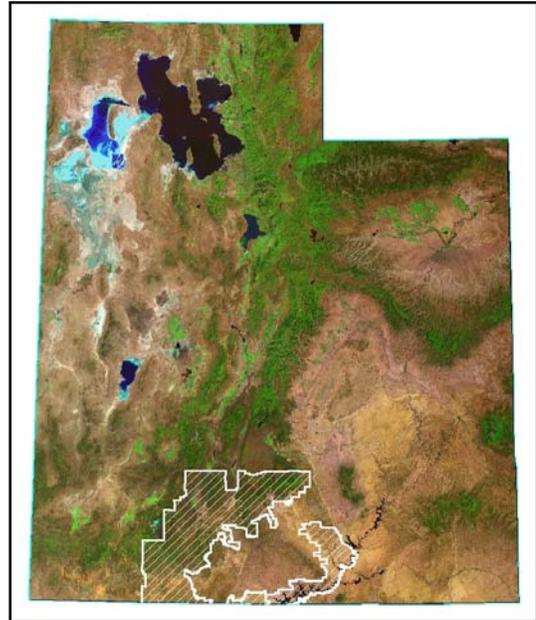
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Kanab Field Office (KFO) is revising its current land use plans. Public lands in the KFO area are currently managed under five different land use plans (LUP) (Escalante Management Framework Plan [MFP] [1981], Paria MFP [1981], Vermilion MFP [1981], Zion MFP [1981], and Cedar-Beaver-Garfield-Antimony Resource Management Plan [RMP] [1986], and their amendments, as well as two temporary administrative actions. The new plan revision, which is to be called the Kanab RMP, and its accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), will provide the management direction for public lands within the boundaries of the KFO area. The KFO planning area comprises approximately 2,847,200 acres of land, of which approximately 554,000 acres is public land surface estate administered by the BLM.

The planning area is located in south-central Utah and is bordered by Piute and Wayne counties on the north, Washington County and Zion National Park on the west, Arizona on the south (including a boundary with the Kaibab-Paiute Tribe Reservation), and Capitol Reef National Park and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area on the east (Figure ES-1). The planning area is situated within the Colorado Plateau and Wasatch and Uinta Mountains Ecoregions (Omernik 1987). The Utah portion of the Paria Canyon–Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness is also administered by the KFO. Major drainages in the planning area include the North Fork of the Virgin River, Orderville Gulch, East Fork of the Virgin River, Kanab Creek, Sevier River, Paria River, Birch Creek, and North Creek (Escalante River). Elevations range from more than 10,000 feet northeast of the town of Escalante to about 4,500 feet at the Barracks along the East Fork of the Virgin River.

**Figure ES-1. Kanab RMP Planning Area**



## PURPOSE AND NEED

### Purpose

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) requires that the BLM “develop, maintain, and when appropriate, revise land use plans” (43 United States Code [U.S.C.] 1712 [a]). The BLM has determined it is necessary to revise existing LUPs and prepare a new RMP for the KFO based on a number of new issues that have arisen since preparation of the existing plans. In general, the purpose of this RMP is the following:

- Ensure that public lands are being managed according to the principles of multiple use and sustained yield
- Provide an overview of goals, objectives, and needs associated with public land management
- Resolve multiple use conflicts or issues between resource values and resource uses
- Consolidate the existing five LUPs and their amendments.

The resulting Kanab RMP will establish consolidated guidance and updated objectives and management actions for the public lands in the decision area. The RMP will be comprehensive in nature and will address issue categories that have been identified through agency, interagency, and public scoping efforts.

## Need

Since completion of the existing LUPs, considerable changes have occurred within the planning area, resulting in a need for new or additional program direction in existing plans in some areas. These changes have resulted in three key topics that necessitate preparation of a new RMP. The three key topics include changes in policy, changes in resource conditions or demand for resource use, and changes in administrative boundaries. Changes in policy include, but are not limited to, the development of standards for rangeland health, new special status species listings, implementation of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 2000 (EPCA), and policies addressing off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. Examples of changes in resource conditions or demand for resource use include a substantial increase in OHV use, the federally listing of several species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and changes in resource use levels and patterns that have created areas of conflict between resource protection and resource uses. Changes in administrative boundaries include land transfers, realignment of BLM administrative units, and designation of the Grand Staircase–Escalante National Monument (GSENM).

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public participation is integral to ensuring that the wide range of planning issues important to public land users are addressed. Public participation in the BLM planning process includes a variety of efforts to identify and address public concerns and needs. Public involvement helps the agencies in the following ways:

- Broadening the information base for decision-making
- Informing the public about the Draft RMP/EIS and the potential impacts associated with various management decisions
- Ensuring that public needs and viewpoints are understood by the BLM.

Public input is generated through a formal public scoping period, which began with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* on April 2, 2004. The scoping period included four public scoping meetings (held in Kanab, Panguitch, Escalante, and Salt Lake City). These meetings were announced in the local media, through a planning bulletin and a follow-up postcard, on the RMP and Utah BLM websites, as well as in fliers throughout the counties in locations of heavy traffic such as post offices, local convenience stores, supermarkets, municipal buildings, local businesses, and local recreation sites. The formal scoping period ended February 15, 2005. During the scoping period, more than 1,160 individuals provided comments to the BLM or attended public scoping meetings. The majority of comments emphasized recreation and OHV management, special designations, minerals and energy, and non-Wilderness Study Area (WSA) lands with wilderness characteristics (WC) areas. Other issues of high interest included livestock grazing, access to public lands, and social and economic issues. More information on the scoping process is presented in Chapter 5 and in the *Scoping Report for the Kanab RMP and EIS*.

Additional opportunities for public participation were provided in April 2005 during a data call for information (e.g., route data and resource inventories and/or condition) and nominations for areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC) and wild and scenic rivers (WSR). In January 2006, the public was invited to provide additional input into the planning process by commenting on the preliminary

ACEC and WSR reports. For each of these requests for comments, the BLM provided at least 30 calendar days for public response, as directed by BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.2(e)).

## PLANNING ISSUES

For each public comment received, a position-neutral issue was identified. Planning issues are generally related to concerns or controversies about existing and potential land and resource allocations; levels of resource use, production, and protection; and related management practices. This process was used for all scoping input. The issues identified from comments at public scoping meetings were added to written public scoping comments, internal BLM scoping, and interagency scoping. These issues were used throughout creation of the range of alternatives (see Chapter 2). The primary issues identified through this process include non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics (WC areas), recreation, transportation, minerals and energy resources, ACECs, and WSAs.

### Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

In September 2005, the U.S. District Court, District of Utah, Central District, approved an agreement to settle a lawsuit challenging BLM's authority to conduct new wilderness inventories. The policies stemming from the settlement stipulated that the BLM's authority to designate new WSAs expired no later than October 21, 1993. The BLM retains its Section 201 FLPMA authority to inventory resources or other values, including areas with wilderness characteristics such as naturalness or opportunities for solitude and that are conducive to primitive, unconfined recreation.

The BLM's policy for considering wilderness characteristics in LUPs is contained in Section 202 of FLPMA and clarified in the *Land Use Planning Handbook* (BLM-H-1601-1). According to the handbook, lands with wilderness characteristics may be managed to protect and/or preserve some or all of those characteristics. This may include protecting certain lands in their natural condition and/or providing opportunities for solitude or for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The BLM can make a variety of LUP decisions to protect wilderness characteristics, such as establishing visual resource management (VRM) class objectives to guide the placement of roads, trails, and other facilities; establishing conditions of use to be attached to permits, leases, and other authorizations to achieve the desired level of resource protection; and designating lands as open, closed, or limited to OHV use to achieve a desired visitor experience.

There are areas in the decision area outside of existing WSAs that were determined by the BLM in the 1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory (BLM 1999a) to have wilderness characteristics. In addition, since 1999 and during scoping for this LUP members of the public submitted information suggesting that additional areas outside of existing WSAs have wilderness characteristics and should be managed to preserve those values. All the WC areas evaluated in this process are described in Chapter 3. Using the RMP planning process, the BLM will consider all available information to determine the appropriate mix of resource use and protection that best serves the FLPMA multiple-use mandate.

### Recreation

Since completion of the existing LUPs, considerable changes to recreation use have occurred within the decision area. In certain areas, increased visitor use is affecting soil, water, vegetation, and wildlife, and the potential for conflicts between recreationists is increasing. In addition to changes in use, BLM recreation management policy has changed. This RMP applies the new policies in providing recreation opportunities and benefits while protecting natural and cultural resources.

Conflict between motorized and non-motorized users was identified as a concern during the public scoping process. Specific management initiatives such as travel plans, recreation zoning, developed sites, and improved interpretation and education were considered to improve opportunities and to reduce conflict.

The existing extensive recreation management area (ERMA) was identified primarily because there was no need for more intensive recreation management; however, recreation use has increased significantly since the implementation of current management direction. Portions of the existing ERMA were reviewed for their potential to be identified as special recreation management areas (SRMA) to effectively manage the area's changing recreation patterns. The planning process considers a benefits-based recreation planning system to identify recreation niche opportunities that exist and to identify potential SRMAs. The new RMP protects resources from the impacts of recreation use and improves recreational opportunities, including the potential for new developed recreation sites.

Recreation that occurs along travel corridors and at highly developed sites remains popular. As visitation to these sites increases, management of the areas may need to focus more heavily on providing defined recreation experiences. Users of front country recreation sites typically expect more extensive interpretive information and facilities. Areas that were once dispersed recreation sites may have become de facto front country recreation sites through increased use. This RMP addresses these high-use areas and is intended to protect recreation opportunities while also protecting the resource values.

## Transportation

Existing transportation management decisions are out of date given the increased levels of OHV use and current policies. The OHV area designations do not provide for existing OHV use demands while providing for sustained resource protection. Other than two administrative actions, there are no route designations. OHV use and management was addressed in conformance with the *National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands*. Existing OHV area and route designations were reviewed and modified to meet changing levels of OHV use, existing resource conditions, and changing resource objectives.

Closures for Parunuweap Canyon, North Fork Virgin River, and Orderville Canyon WSAs were reviewed to determine how OHV use in these areas should occur to protect wilderness values. An administrative action in the Hog Canyon area was also reviewed.

## Minerals and Energy Resources

The Draft RMP/EIS addresses the continued sale, leasing, and location of mineral and energy resources within the decision area. Oil and gas leasing stipulations were revised to incorporate new resource data. A coal screening process was applied to identify areas acceptable for further leasing consideration. A reasonably foreseeable development scenario was identified for leasable, locatable, and salable minerals, and helped focus analysis on the development of these resources. The Draft RMP/EIS identifies areas recommended for withdrawal from locatable mineral entry and identifies areas as open or closed to disposal of salable minerals.

The EPCA directed the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Energy, to conduct an inventory of oil and gas resources beneath federal lands. The inventory is presented in the January 2003 EPCA Report. The EPCA inventory provided estimates of undiscovered technically recoverable resources and proved reserves of oil and gas beneath five major geologic basins in the western United States and an inventory of the extent and nature of limitations to their development. The Paradox/San Juan Basin, which is partly located within the

decision area, is one of the five primary inventory areas. The Paradox/San Juan Basin and the other four basins were selected because these basins contain most of the onshore natural gas and much of the oil under federal ownership.

## Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

In accordance with FLPMA, consideration will be given to the designation of additional ACECs during the RMP process. As part of the RMP process, the Water Canyon/South Fork Indian Canyon ACEC was reevaluated to determine if the relevant and important values were still present. The ACEC designation and management prescriptions for this area were reviewed to ensure they can protect any remaining relevant and important values. In addition, through scoping, several ACECs were nominated for review during this planning process. The BLM identified the areas that meet the requisite relevance and importance criteria for ACEC designation and developed the management processes needed to protect relevant and important values, resources, natural systems or processes, or hazards/safety/public welfare (referred to collectively as values), and brought these issues forward for analysis in one or more of the Draft RMP/EIS alternatives.

## Wild and Scenic Rivers

Section 5(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act directs federal agencies to consider the potential for national wild, scenic, and recreational river areas in land use planning documents; therefore, a Wild And Scenic River (WSR) review was part of the RMP revision process. All potentially eligible rivers were reviewed by the interdisciplinary team to determine if they were free-flowing and if they contain outstandingly remarkable values (ORV) that make them eligible for congressional designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS). All eligible river segments were assigned a tentative classification of “wild,” “scenic,” or “recreational,” and were considered in the Draft RMP/EIS with regard to their suitability for congressional designation into the NWSRS. Management processes were designed to protect the tentative classification, free-flowing nature, and ORVs of suitable segments

## Wilderness Study Areas

For the most part, current management of the five WSAs is adequate to protect the wilderness characteristics of those areas. However, problems have arisen in some areas. Increased OHV use has begun to threaten the wilderness characteristics of the Moquith and Parunaweap WSAs. The Draft RMP/EIS addressed increased OHV use through route designations (implementation-level decision) and travel management decisions (RMP-level decisions) to continue to protect the WSAs’ wilderness characteristics. As directed by BLM policy, the Draft RMP/EIS also set objectives for management of visual resources within the WSAs.

## ALTERNATIVES

The Draft RMP/EIS considers four alternatives in detail, three action alternatives (B, C, and D) and the No Action Alternative, for management of the decision area. Each alternative varies in both context and intensity of potential management actions, and includes a set of designations, land use allocations, and management actions needed to implement the goals and objectives. Specific management decisions that are common to all alternatives are presented in Section 2.2. Management decisions that are specific to each alternative are described in Section 2.4. There are five WSAs (53,900 acres) and one wilderness area (21,200 acres) that would remain under all alternatives. An overview of the key decisions associated with each alternative is provided below. A full discussion of each alternative is provided in Chapter 2.

## Alternative A (No Action)

Alternative A is defined as a continuation of the current management direction contained in the five LUPs and emergency OHV management actions. This alternative describes the current goals and actions for management of resources and land uses in the decision area. The management direction could also be modified by current law, regulation, and policy. Alternative A represents the baseline to which the other management alternatives are compared. Key resource decisions on public lands within the decision area include the following:

- Oil and gas leasing:
  - 76 percent (422,200 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to the standard terms and conditions of the lease form
  - 9 percent (51,200 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to moderate constraints (timing limitations, controlled surface use [CSU], lease notices)
  - 1 percent (5,500 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to major constraints (no surface occupancy [NSO])
  - 14 percent (75,100 acres) closed to leasing.
- Prescribe vegetation treatments to improve wildlife habitat, increase forage production for livestock grazing, provide for watershed protection, and reduce soil loss. Direction for vegetation treatments is not consistent across the five LUPs, focusing on treating pinyon-juniper woodlands and old sagebrush stands. No ponderosa pine trees could be removed.
- Do not change livestock grazing for other resource purposes, and continue existing allotments as currently allocated unless otherwise allowed by law or regulation.
- Recommend no rivers or river segments as suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River. Suitability determinations would not be made for any of the 15 eligible river segments; they would remain eligible and would be managed on a case-by-case basis to protect their ORVs, free-flowing nature, and tentative classification to the degree that the BLM has authority (BLM lands within the corridor) until such time as suitability determinations are made. Protective management would apply to BLM lands along eligible river segments, with 7,680 acres of river corridor (39 miles) tentatively classified as “wild,” 0 acres as “scenic,” and 1,550 acres (7 miles) as “recreational.”
- Continue the existing Water Canyon/South Fork Indian Canyon ACEC designation and management as an ACEC (220 acres); designate no additional areas as an ACEC.
- Manage no areas as a SRMA, although the area surrounding the Coral Pink Sand Dunes would receive considerable management attention.
- Manage OHV use according to the five LUPs and two emergency orders:
  - 466,600 acres open to cross-country OHV use
  - 21,200 acres closed to OHV use
  - 66,200 acres of limited OHV use, with 55 miles of “designated routes” and 2 miles of routes closed seasonally.
- Manage visual resources to preserve the existing character of the landscape (VRM Class I) in the portions of the Paria Canyon–Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area in the decision area. VRM Classes and associated acreage include the following:
  - VRM Class I: 21,200 acres
  - VRM Class II: 99,900 acres
  - VRM Class III: 68,600 acres
  - VRM Class IV: 321,800 acres
  - Unknown/no VRM Class: 42,500 acres
- Require no prescriptions specifically to maintain WC areas.

## Alternative B (Preferred)

Alternative B is the BLM's preferred alternative. It provides opportunities to use and develop resources within the decision area while ensuring resource protection. Alternative B would provide for continued access and development of resources with stipulations and mitigation to protect natural and cultural resources. Key resource decisions on public lands within the decision area include the following:

- Oil and gas leasing:
  - 48 percent (263,400 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to the standard terms and conditions of the lease form
  - 28 percent (156,700 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to moderate constraints (timing limitations, CSU, lease notices)
  - 10 percent (58,100 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to major constraints (NSO)
  - 14 percent (75,800 acres) closed to leasing.
- Limit vegetation treatments (e.g., wildlife habitat, watershed, and livestock rangeland treatments, wildland fires, fuels treatments, and stewardship contracting) to an annual average of no more than 22,300 acres. Manage sagebrush steppe communities to restore natural disturbance processes with an appropriate pinyon-juniper component for a given ecological site. Manage ponderosa pine stands to restore natural disturbance processes through treatments, resulting in predominantly park-like stands.
- Reallocate 48 animal unit months (AUM) on the Water Canyon Allotment to wildlife for the life of the plan. Combine the Lydia's Canyon Allotment with the Lydia Allotment, and combine the Sawmill Allotment with the South Canyon Allotment. The BLM would not be party to or accept any contingencies or conditions associated with a relinquishment that would require future BLM actions.
- Apply protective management to river corridors associated with seven suitable river segments, along 4,570 acres (25 miles) tentatively classified as "wild," 960 acres (5 miles) tentatively classified as "scenic," and 780 acres (3 miles) tentatively classified as "recreational."
- Designate and manage the potential Cottonwood Canyon ACEC (3,800 acres) as an ACEC; designate no additional areas as an ACEC.
- Identify 7 SRMAs with 12 recreation management zones (RMZ) (125,800 acres):
  - Manage three RMZs specifically for motorized uses (21,700 acres)
  - Manage six RMZs specifically for non-motorized uses (44,900 acres)
  - Manage three RMZs for both motorized and non-motorized uses (59,200 acres)
- Manage OHV use according to open, closed, or limited (seasonally and/or spatially) area and "route designations" as follows:
  - Approximately 1,100 acres open to cross-country OHV use
  - 28,900 acres closed to OHV use.
  - 524,000 acres of limited OHV use, with 1,385 miles of "designated routes," 2 miles of routes closed seasonally, and 118 miles of closed routes.
- Manage visual resources to preserve the existing character of the landscape (VRM Class I) in the portions of the Paria Canyon–Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area in the decision area, all the WSAs, and river corridors associated with wild suitable segments. VRM Classes and acreages include the following:
  - VRM Class I: 76,000 acres
  - VRM Class II: 93,600 acres
  - VRM Class III: 211,500 acres
  - VRM Class IV: 172,900 acres
- Require no prescriptions specifically to maintain WC areas.

## Alternative C

Alternative C emphasizes the protection of the decision area's resource values while allowing commodity uses as consistent with current law, regulation, and policy. Management actions would emphasize resource values such as habitat for wildlife and plant species (including special status species); protection of riparian areas and water quality; preservation of ecologically significant areas; maintenance of wilderness characteristics; and protection of scientifically significant cultural and paleontological sites. Access to and development of resources within the decision area could occur with intensive management and mitigation of surface disturbing and disruptive activities. Key resource decisions on public lands within the decision area include the following:

- Oil and gas leasing:
  - 5 percent (28,400 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to the standard terms and conditions of the lease form
  - 49 percent (269,900 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to moderate constraints (timing limitations, CSU, lease notices)
  - 15 percent (83,100 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to major constraints (NSO)
  - 31 percent (172,600 acres) closed to leasing.
- Implement vegetation treatments (e.g., wildlife habitat, watershed, and livestock rangeland treatments, wildland fires, fuels treatments, and stewardship contracting) on an annual average of at least 4,650 acres, but on no more than 22,300 acres annually. Manage sagebrush steppe communities to restore natural disturbance processes with an appropriate pinyon-juniper component in a given ecological site. Manage ponderosa pine stands to restore natural disturbance processes through treatments, resulting in predominantly park-like stands.
- Suspend 88 AUMs on the Water Canyon, Lower North Fork, and Sawmill Allotments to livestock grazing for the life of the plan. The BLM would not be party to or accept any contingencies or conditions associated with a relinquishment that would require future BLM actions.
- Apply protective management to river corridors associated with the 15 suitable river segments, along 7,680 acres (39 miles) tentatively classified as “wild,” 0 acres (0 miles) tentatively classified as “scenic,” and 1,550 acres (7 miles) classified as “recreational.”
- Designate and manage all five areas with identified relevant and important values (potentially Cottonwood Canyon, Welsh's Milkweed, Vermilion Cliffs, White Cliffs, and Parunuweap Canyon ACECs) as ACECs (60,600 acres).
- Identify 7 SRMAs with 10 RMZs (129,050 acres):
  - Manage no RMZs specifically for motorized uses (0 acres)
  - Manage seven RMZs specifically for non-motorized uses (60,250 acres)
  - Manage three RMZs for both motorized and non-motorized uses (68,800 acres)
- Manage OHV use according to open, closed, or limited (seasonally and/or spatially) area and route designations as follows:
  - 0 acres open to cross-country OHV use
  - 165,700 acres closed to OHV use.
  - 388,300 acres of limited OHV use, with 884 miles of “designated routes,” 306 miles of routes closed seasonally, and 315 miles of closed routes.
- Manage visual resources to preserve the existing character of the landscape (VRM Class I) on the portions of the Paria Canyon–Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area in the decision area, all the WSAs, the Orderville Canyon SRMA, and river corridors associated with wild suitable segments. VRM Classes and the acreages include the following:
  - VRM Class I: 168,300 acres
  - VRM Class II: 100,000 acres
  - VRM Class III: 128,300 acres

- VRM Class IV: 157,400 acres
- Manage the 10 WC areas (approximately 89,780 acres) to specifically maintain their wilderness characteristics.

## Alternative D

Alternative D emphasizes opportunities to use and develop resources within the decision area. It would provide for motorized access and commodity production with minimal restrictions, while providing protection of natural and cultural resources to the extent required by law, regulation, and policy. Alternative D would largely rely on existing laws, regulations, and policies, rather than on special management or special designations, to protect sensitive resources. Key resource decisions on public lands within the decision area include the following:

- Oil and gas leasing:
  - 71 percent (391,300 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to the standard terms and conditions of the lease form
  - 12 percent (64,600 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to moderate constraints (timing limitations, CSU, lease notices)
  - 4 percent (23,000 acres) open to oil and gas leasing subject to major constraints (NSO)
  - 13 percent (75,100 acres) closed to leasing.
- Limit vegetation treatments (e.g., wildlife habitat, watershed, and livestock rangeland treatments, wildland fires, fuels treatments, stewardship contracting) to an annual average of no more than 22,300 acres. Manage sagebrush steppe communities to restore natural disturbance processes with an appropriate pinyon-juniper component for a given ecological site. Manage ponderosa pine stands to restore natural disturbance processes through treatments, resulting in predominantly park-like stands.
- Reallocate 40 AUMs on the Lower North Fork and Sawmill Allotments to wildlife for the life of the plan. The BLM would not be party to or accept any contingencies or conditions associated with a relinquishment that would require future BLM actions.
- Determine no eligible rivers or river segments as suitable for congressional Wild and Scenic River designation. Do not apply protective management to any acres within eligible river corridors.
- Do not designate or manage any areas with identified relevant and important values (existing or potential ACECs) as ACECs.
- Identify four SRMAs with seven RMZs (122,800 acres):
  - Manage three RMZs specifically for motorized uses (81,500 acres)
  - Manage three RMZs specifically for non-motorized uses (27,300 acres)
  - Manage one RMZ for both motorized and non-motorized uses (14,000 acres).
- Manage OHV use according to open, closed, or limited (seasonally and/or spatially) area and route designations as follows:
  - Approximately 1,100 acres open to cross-country OHV use; in addition ephemeral washes throughout the decision area would be open.
  - 27,600 acres closed to OHV use.
  - 525,300 acres of limited OHV use, with 1,462 miles of “designated routes,” 2 miles of routes closed seasonally, and 41 miles of closed routes.
- Manage visual resources to preserve the existing character of the landscape (VRM Class I) on the portions of the Paria Canyon–Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area in the decision area and all the WSAs. VRM Classes and acreages include the following:
  - VRM Class I: 75,400 acres
  - VRM Class II: 59,900 acres
  - VRM Class III: 245,600 acres

- VRM Class IV: 173,100 acres
- Require no prescriptions specifically to maintain WC areas.

## AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Draft RMP/EIS decision area is geographically located in an area that results in a diverse array of natural resources and subsequent opportunities for use of those resources. Resources within the decision area are important ecologically and scientifically, as evidenced by the continued interest in the area by recreationists, biologists, hunters, researchers, and environmentalists. The decision area's natural areas and values, such as the large open landscapes, soil and water resources, and vegetation communities provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife and special status species, including high-quality big game populations. The remote nature of the area and the dispersed uses have protected cultural and paleontological resources. The resources in the decision area have also provided the context for diverse land uses.

Resource uses have historically focused on livestock grazing and recreation and tourism, including several destination locations for OHV use. Use of forest and woodland products is minimal, but consistent. Mineral uses focus on sand and gravel, although there is a coal lease currently being considered, and there is a potential for low levels of oil and gas exploration and development. The decision area is viewed as some of the remaining lands in the region where traditional commercial uses and relatively unrestricted recreational activities can still occur. These lands are considered by many vital to meet the developing needs of neighboring communities and to contribute to the economic and social well-being of the area.

Special designations are designed to protect or preserve unique values or uses of specific areas. These areas require management activities different from those that would be applied to the surrounding public lands. There is one existing ACEC and five ACECs nominated for review during this planning process. In addition, there are 15 river segments eligible for suitability considerations into the NWSRS. Five WSAs (53,900 acres) and one wilderness area (21,200 acres) are wholly or partially within the decision area. In addition, small portions of two segments of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail follow U.S. Highway 89 in the northern and southern portions of the decision area.

Socioeconomic conditions indicate that there are small but increasing populations within the two counties that have lower income and higher unemployment rates than the average for the State of Utah. Labor income has been decreasing over the past 20 years, while investment and transfer income has increased. The services sector and the government sector have provided the greatest amount of wages and salaries, and both show substantial upward trends. In Garfield County, both mining and construction earnings declined substantially in the early 1980s and have not gone back up. In Kane County, the trade industry has provided substantial and increasing amounts of wages and salaries. Agricultural wages and salaries have been volatile in both counties, including some periods of negative earnings. Today, although fewer families earn their livelihood solely from natural resources such as grazing, timber, and minerals than in previous times, the descendants of the area's settlers still have strong connections to the land. Access to public land and resources, whether for earning a living or for recreation, is important to the local people.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Selection of Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, would maintain the current rate of progress in meeting land health standards and protecting resource values. It would allow for use levels to continue mostly at current levels in the same places in the planning area, with adjustments required to meet

Standards for Rangeland Health or to mitigate resource concerns in compliance with existing laws and regulations. Impacts from increasing levels of cross-country OHV use would affect long-term condition of soils, water quality, and vegetation communities.

Alternative B would allow for many uses to continue, but would constrain certain activities to maintain or protect important natural resources. Limiting OHV use to “designated routes” would continue to provide for this experience, but it would reduce the impacts to soil, water, vegetation, and cultural resources while also protecting much of the undeveloped nature of the decision area. Although restrictions in some areas could result in a loss of opportunities to resource-extraction businesses, the areas remaining open for such uses would provide for the anticipated levels of demand. Local economies would retain natural resource development opportunities while allowing for economic development of diverse recreational opportunities.

Alternative C would provide the greatest level of protection to physical, biological, and cultural resources and would protect a variety of vegetation types and wildlife habitats. Managing all WC areas for their wilderness characteristics would preserve existing vegetation and wildlife trends. Alternative C would be the most restrictive to resource extraction. Consequently, Alternative C would have the greatest potential to limit opportunities for natural resource use and development. In addition, recreation would be limited to non-motorized opportunities in approximately 30 percent of the decision area, and closing OHV routes to protect various natural and cultural resources and values would limit access to much of the decision area to non-motorized transportation.

Alternative D would offer the greatest potential for development of natural resources within the constraints of existing laws and policies. Resource extraction uses would generally be least encumbered by management decisions under this alternative. Water, soil, vegetation, and wildlife resources could be affected by development, which would be allowed in more areas of the decision area, including some sensitive soil and habitat areas.

A summary of potential impacts by alternative is presented in Table 2.5 in Chapter 2. Detailed descriptions of impacts of the four alternatives are provided in Chapter 4, along with a discussion of the cumulative impacts, irretrievable and irreversible commitments of resources, and unavoidable adverse impacts of the alternatives.

## **PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

Alternative B is the BLM’s preferred alternative based on the following factors:

- Balance of use and protection of resources
- Extent of environmental impacts
- Incorporation of formal recommendations from cooperating agencies and the public.

Alternative B was selected because it resolves the major planning issues while also providing for common ground among conflicting opinions and multiple uses of public lands in a sustainable fashion. It provides the best balance of resource protection and use within legal constraints.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The comment period on this Draft RMP/EIS will extend for 90 days following publication of the EPA’s Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. After comments are received they will be evaluated.

Substantive comments could lead to changes in one or more of the alternatives, or in the analysis of environmental consequences. A Proposed RMP/Final EIS will then be completed and released. If protests are received on the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, they will be reviewed and addressed by the Director of the BLM before a Record of Decision and Approved Plan is released.