

Master Leasing Plan (MLP) Assessment Glen Canyon-San Juan River

Utah State Office
Monticello Field Office
November 2010

Name and Location of MLP Area: Glen Canyon-San Juan River in southeastern Utah.

Internal or External Proposal:

DESCRIPTION:

EXTERNAL - submitted by Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), 9/27/2010.

The area includes 1,356,491 acres in southeastern Utah and extends 75 miles east to west, and 50 miles north to south in San Juan County. The area is irregularly shaped and identifies areas adjacent to Canyonlands National Park and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and also abuts the Navajo Nation reservation, the Colorado border and the Manti LaSal National Forest, along with numerous Wilderness Study Areas.

INTERNAL: BLM developed a proposal which consists of the eastern part of the SUWA proposed MLP. This proposal is 648,366 acres and extends north of SUWA's northern boundary, but excludes the area to the west of the Grand Gulch. The area proposed in the external MLP west of Grand Gulch does not have any leases or development. Since the area west of Grand Gulch does not have any industry interest and there is no new information or changed circumstances for the region since the completion of the RMP, the Utah BLM did not feel that it qualified as a candidate for a MLP. However, the Utah BLM did look closer at the eastern side of the proposal. After narrowing the geographical area, the interdisciplinary team analyzed the proposal to assess whether or not it would benefit from a MLP.

Map A illustrates the MLP proposals (external and internal) locations including the authorized, pending and deferred leases within Utah. Map B shows oil and gas fields, shut in wells, abandoned wells and producing wells. The Utah BLM recommendation is the internal Glen Canyon/San Juan River MLP as delineated on the map Glen Canyon/San Juan River A.

Does the area meet the criteria and qualify for MLP analysis?

Both proposals encompass the same general area but the boundary was adjusted for the internal proposal to better fit the criteria. There does not appear to be any new information or changed circumstances in the proposed areas since the RMP was completed. However, the State Director proposes to exercise his discretion to take a closer look at the area and recommends that an MLP be prepared for the internally proposed area delineated on the attached maps.

Supporting Information:

1. What Resource Management Plan(s) are applicable to the MLP area?

Monticello Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP); dated November 17, 2008¹ (as maintained).

2. Potential resource issues raised in the MLP proposal

The External MLP proposal describes climate considerations (dust melting snow, regional climate change, and global climate change), cultural resources (Hole in the Rock Trail and Alkali Ridge National Historic Landmark), wildlife resources (big game/wide ranging mammals, and raptors/special status species), Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), wild and scenic rivers, opportunities for hiking, camping, river running and primitive hunting. They also claim that the proposal encompasses ten Citizen Wilderness Proposal (CWP) areas (Red Rock Plateau/Copper Point, Nokai Dome, White Canyon/Fort Knocker Canyon/Tuwa Canyon, Upper Red Canyon/The Needle, Arch Canyon/Allen Canyon/Hammond Canyon, Valley of the Gods/Lime Creek, The Tabernacle/San Juan River, Comb Ridge/Fish & Owl Creek Canyons/Road Canyon, Dark Canyon, and Tin Cup Mesa/Cross Canyon/Monument Canyon), six ACECs [designated ACECs (Valley of the Gods, Alkali ridge, Hovenweep and San Juan River) and other areas (portions of Hovenweep, Alkali Ridge, Cedar Mesa, and Scenic Highway)], wild and scenic rivers (San Juan River-Segment 5) including all San Juan River and Arch Canyon.

3. How does the current Plan address these issues?

The decisions within the Approved RMP were developed through an interdisciplinary process and extensive public participation including SUWA. The RMP also considered provisions of other state, county & federal plans, habitat management plans, endangered species recovery plans, and numerous activity plans and policies. All of the resource issues/values identified were addressed during the recent planning process.

The National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation requirements were completed and the State Historic Preservation Office concurred with a No Adverse Effect determination.

Likewise, Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation was based on appropriate surface disturbing activities and a Biological Assessment was completed. The effects determinations for each species based on conservation measures and stipulations are affirmed by United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in their Biological Opinion (RMP, Appendix E). Appropriate stipulations and environmental best practices applicable to oil and gas leasing and other surface-disturbing activities were developed for each species and can also be found within the RMP (RMP, Appendix B and G). Sensitive species and other wildlife specific stipulations/notices were developed in cooperation with the State of Utah's Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) and USFWS. The RMP details T&E conservation measures (RMP,

¹ Accessed online at: <http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/monticello/planning.html>.

Appendix M) and raptor best management practices (RMP, Appendix N) including map delineations (RMP, Map 14).

Additional special status species decisions cover conservation measures and notices, mineral development best management practices, inventory & monitoring, implement current & future conservation agreements, population augmentations, Gunnison prairie dog protection from surface-disturbing activities, Gunnison sage-grouse habitat prescriptions (lek and year round habitats) and crucial habitat for Mexican spotted owl and flannelmouth sucker in Arch Canyon (RMP pages 136-140). Likewise, additional wildlife and fisheries resource decisions for migratory birds, raptors, big horn sheep (lambing and rutting), animal damage control, introduction/transplantation/augmentation, habitat improvements/protection, mitigation, habitat boundaries, seasonal wildlife protection areas, pronghorn fawning, and winter range (mule deer and elk) are also detailed (RMP pages 152-156).

Management considerations in selecting the approved RMP included air quality, cultural resources, fire management, lands & realty, livestock grazing, mineral resources, recreation, riparian areas, soil & water, special designations (ACECs, wild and scenic rivers, and historic trails), non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, travel management, vegetation, visual resource management, wildlife & fisheries, special status species, and woodlands.

Management protection was provided for potential ACECs not designated in the Approved RMP (Tables 2 and 3, Pages 31-34). Management provisions which protect the relevant and important (R&I) values are extensive. Some management protections include Interim Management Policy provisions, special recreation management area designations, travel limitations, VRM Class I or II, established user permit systems, camping prohibitions, specific recreation management zones designed to protect cultural resources, and Wild and Scenic River segments closed to leasing. Additional provisions were not necessary to protect R&I values.

The MLP includes portions of special recreation management areas and management zones. The recreation resource was analyzed in detail within the RMP and included specific provisions for the management of oil and gas activity. Impacts were disclosed and management prescriptions were developed to meet the program goals and objectives. The RMP specifically contains management actions for hiking, camping, river running and primitive hunting activities (pages 88-112). For example, oil and gas leasing is subject to no surface occupancy within development recreation sites. McLoyd Canyon-Moonhouse and Comb Ridge recreation management zones occur within this MLP and contain areas of high cultural resources and importance. Specific management prescriptions were made to manage recreation use. Some areas are closed to pack animals and camping may be limited to designated sites.

A listing of RMP protesting parties and a summary of issues are contained in the Director's Protest Resolution Report prepared on November 14, 2008². Challenges to the RMP were appropriately addressed during the planning process. RMP decisions were reviewed against the protest merits and specifically addressed ACECs (areas that were previously considered and not designated as an ACEC), non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics and wild and scenic river designations. In his report, the Director affirmed BLM's review process and stands firmly on its subsequent decisions regarding the selection and management recreation and special designations.

If MLP analysis is warranted, describe how and when MLP analysis will likely occur:

The RMP for this area was completed in 2008. An MLP would be a "stand-alone" effort and not part on an ongoing or planned RMP revision. Upon receiving a decision from the director on Utah's proposed MLP submission, the MLPs would be prioritized and initiated as budgets allow.

Describe the process used for review:

For each of the proposals (the external and the internal) interdisciplinary teams looked at a range of GIS layers to determine if the proposal area fit the four criteria listed to require a MLP. The following GIS layers were reviewed as part of the interdisciplinary review process: existing leases, wells (active and plugged-and-abandoned), land ownership, deferred parcels, unissued leases with pending protests, leases which are under suspension due to court decisions, and expressions of interest (EOI) - all overlaid with resource data. The resource data included WSA's, citizen proposed wilderness areas (Red Rocks), ACEC's, Wild and Scenic Rivers, BLM natural areas, and especially sensitive wildlife habitat data like sage grouse and white tailed prairie dog. Mineral potential was also a resource that was evaluated during this process.

Describe how and why each of the following criteria are met or not met:

1. A substantial portion of the area to be analyzed in the MLP is not currently leased.

EXTERNAL Proposal – 89% unleased BLM land.

INTERNAL Proposal – 71% unleased BLM land.

2. There is a majority Federal mineral interest.

EXTERNAL Proposal – 81% Federal.

INTERNAL Proposal – 72% Federal.

3. The oil and gas industry has expressed a specific interest in leasing, and there is a moderate or high potential for oil and gas confirmed by the discovery of oil and gas in the general area.

EXTERNAL – Over half of the MLP proposal (the western portion – west of the Grand Gulch area) does not have any leasing activity nor any discovery or development. The information for eastern portion of the proposal has been captured in the description for the internal proposal since they overlap.

² Accessed online at:

http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Planning_and_Renewable_Resources/utah.Par.95976.File.pdf/Monticello_RMP_Directors_Protest_Resolution_Report.pdf.

INTERNAL – The eastern portion of this proposal contains scattered producing oil and gas wells in fairly regular pattern that following the geologic patterns of the oil and gas formations. There has not been a high amount of recent leasing interest in the eastern portion of the proposal like there has been seen in the western portion of the proposal. The western portion of the area is completely unleased, but has a large amount of interest in the last two years. Although there are several plugged and abandoned wells within the area of interest, there has not been a discovery. A majority of the leases in the entire proposal have been drilled on; however the success of the wells has varied greatly. Many have been dry holes due the geologic formations. Although the RMP asserts that the mineral potential throughout the Monticello Field Office is high, it is apparent by the drilling results that the area has high potential but low certainty throughout the Field Office.

4. Additional analysis or information is needed to address likely resource or cumulative impacts if oil and gas development were to occur where there are:

○ **multiple-use or natural/cultural resource conflicts;**

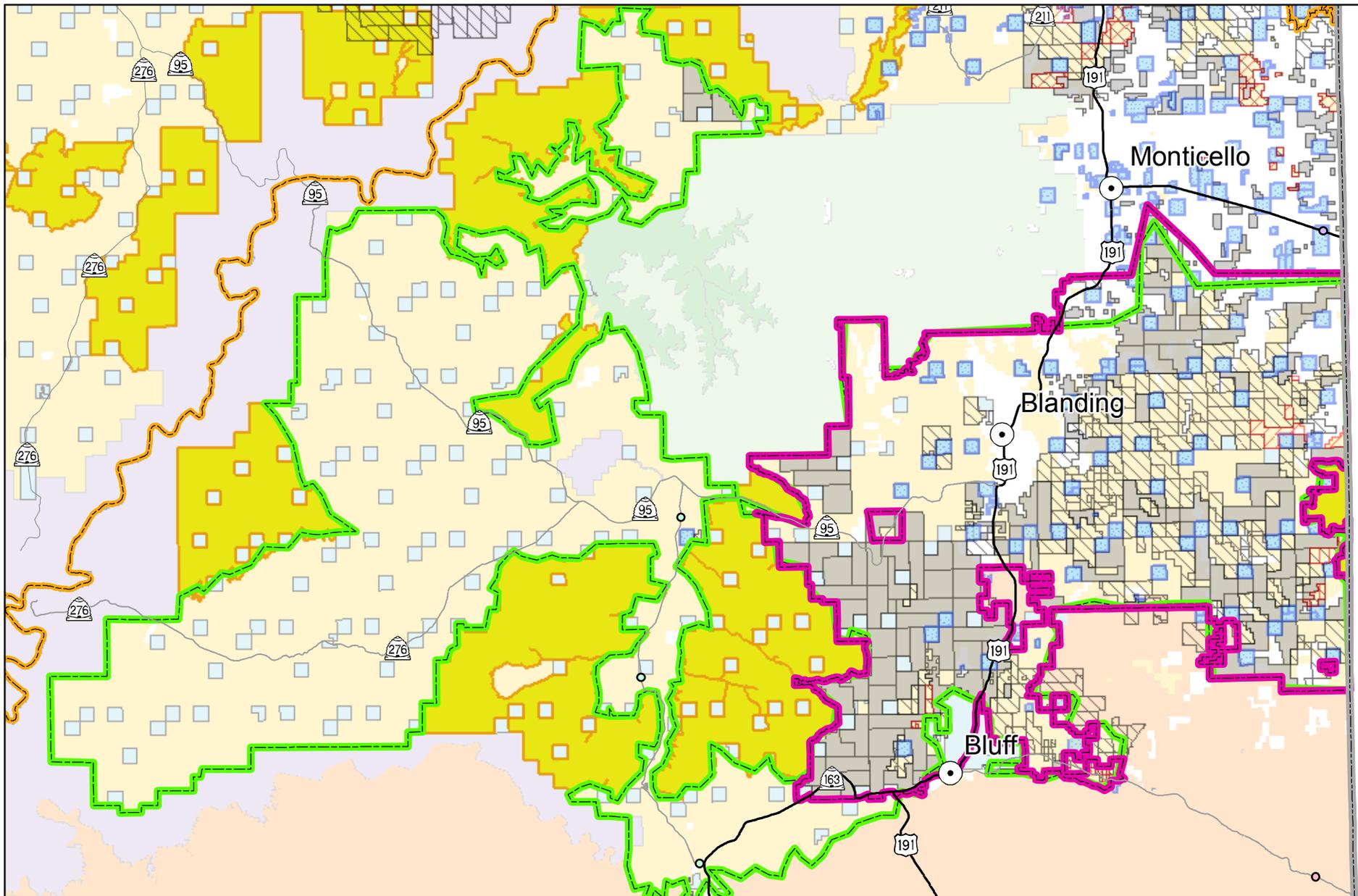
The area contains protested (sold-but-not-issued) and suspended leases with issues such as wildlife, and citizen proposed wilderness. These issues could be resolved with environmental assessments tiered to the new RMP or as part of a MLP.

○ **impacts to air quality;**

Air quality is not a resource specifically at issue in the external proposal; however air quality will be addressed in any document that is completed before leasing is commenced in the area.

○ **impacts on the resources or values of any unit of the National Park System, national wildlife refuge, or National Forest wilderness area, as determined after consultation or coordination with the NPS, the FWS, or the FS; or impacts.**

The western region of the external proposal is adjacent to the Canyon Rims Recreation Area, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Natural Bridges National Monument, the Manti-LaSal National Forest and Dark Canyon Wilderness Area within the Manti-LaSal National Forest. As indicated above, the proposed MLP excludes this area. However, Utah BLM will ensure incorporation of all appropriate office to assure that the proper resources are analyzed within any document. Specifically, the BLM intends to coordinate with the National Park Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, the US Fish and Wildlife Services, the US Forest Service and the State of Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration.



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Leases At Issue

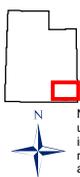
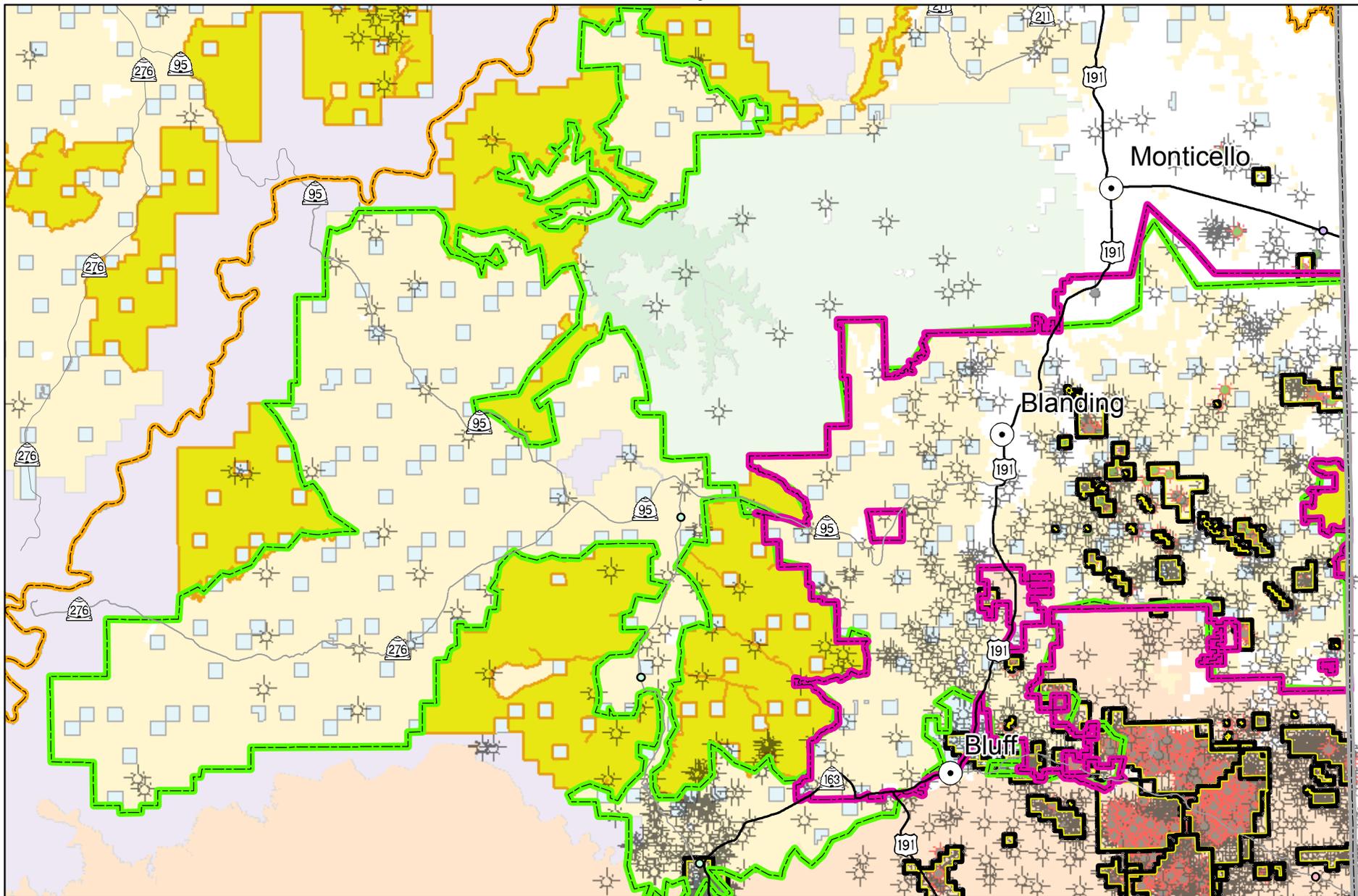
- Issued_Suspended
- Sold_Not Issued

Stiles Report Recommendations

- Closed
- Defer
- Lease
- Internal Analysis Area
- External Analysis Area
- Authorized Parcels
- Deferred Parcels
- SITLA Parcels

- BLM
- BLM Wilderness
- WSA
- USFS
- NPS
- N. A. Res.
- State
- Private
- Military





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Internal Analysis Area
External Analysis Area

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| ✱ Abandoned | Wells | ● Shut In Gas Well |
| ✱ Producing Gas Well | ● Shut In Oil Well | ■ Oil and Gas Fields |
| ✱ Producing Oil Well | | |

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| ■ BLM | ■ USFS |
| ■ BLM Wilderness | ■ NPS |
| ■ WSA | ■ N. A. Res. |
| | ■ State |
| | ■ Private |
| | ■ Military |

