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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### INTRODUCTION

This Moab Master Leasing Plan and Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendments/Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Moab and Monticello Field Offices (MLP/FEIS) has been prepared by the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Canyon Country District.

The BLM Washington Office (WO) Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. 2010-117: *Oil and Gas Leasing Reform – Land Use Planning and Lease Parcel Reviews* (May 17, 2010) and BLM Handbook H-1624-1: *Planning for Fluid Mineral Resources* (January 28, 2013) outline the process and criteria for preparing a Master Leasing Plan (MLP). Although the IM and the Handbook pertain to oil and gas leasing decisions, the BLM determined that the MLP concepts are also applicable to potash leasing decisions. An MLP is a mechanism for completing additional planning, analysis, and decision making that may be necessary for areas meeting the criteria for preparing an MLP. Through the MLP process, the BLM will reconsider mineral leasing decisions in a portion of the Moab and Monticello Resource Management Plans (RMP) that are covered in the designated Planning Area. The planning effort is to prepare the Moab MLP, proposed amendments to the Moab and Monticello RMPs, and a single Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The scope of the decisions in the Moab MLP is limited to oil and gas and potash leasing and development within the Planning Area. This planning effort is not a full RMP revision, but rather is focused on the issues of oil and gas and potash leasing and development in portions of the Moab and Monticello Field Offices.

The majority of the public lands within the Planning Area are managed by the Moab Field Office. Approximately 581,624 acres are managed by the Moab Field Office and 203,943 acres are managed by the Monticello Field Office. An additional 124,295 acres of land in the Planning Area are managed by the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA), and 4,377 acres are managed by Utah State Parks.

The geographic area being considered in this planning process includes a portion of BLM-administered public lands and Federal mineral estates managed by the BLM's Moab and Monticello Field Offices in Grand and San Juan Counties, Utah (Map 3-1). The Planning Area includes approximately 785,567 acres of public lands in southeast Utah south of Interstate 70. The area adjoins the town of Moab and Arches National Park. The western boundary is the Green River and the northeastern boundary of Canyonlands National Park. To the south of Moab, the Planning Area includes the Indian Creek/Lockhart Basin/Hatch Point area between Canyonlands National Park and Highway 191.

The Planning Area encompasses a mix of land uses including developed and dispersed recreation, oil and gas development, and a potash facility on State and private land. There is interest in potash exploration and development in the area. Table ES-1 shows the total acreage within the Planning Area including private, state, and other Federal ownership.

**Table ES-1. Land Ownership within the Planning Area**

<b>Land Status</b>	<b>Moab Field Office Acres</b>	<b>Monticello Field Office Acres</b>	<b>Planning Area Total Acres</b>
BLM	581,624	203,943	785,567
State	91,805	32,490	124,295
State Parks	4,337	40	4,377
Private	17,855	14,375	32,230
Split Estate*	9,855	5,281	15,136
<b>Total*</b>	<b>695,621</b>	<b>250,848</b>	<b>946,469</b>

\*Acreage not additive  
Source: BLM Canyon Country District

The MLP/FEIS was prepared using the BLM's planning regulations and guidance issued under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. An EIS is incorporated into this document to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508) and requirements of BLM's NEPA Handbook 1790-1.

## PURPOSE AND NEED

### Purpose

The MLP process will provide additional planning and analysis prior to new leasing of oil and gas and potash within the Planning Area. The MLP will enable the Moab and Monticello Field Offices to 1) evaluate in-field considerations such as optimal parcel configurations and potential development scenarios; 2) identify and address potential resource conflicts and environmental impacts from development; 3) develop mitigation strategies; and 4) consider a range of new constraints, including prohibiting surface occupancy or closing areas to leasing. New mineral leasing stipulations and development constraints would be accomplished through proposed amendments to the existing land use plans (Moab and Monticello RMPs). The EIS analyzes likely development scenarios and land use plan alternatives with varying mitigation levels for mineral leasing.

### Need

The BLM introduced the MLP process as part of its 2010 Oil and Gas Leasing Reform effort (IM 2010-117). The BLM determined that the Planning Area meets the criteria for preparing an MLP and therefore additional planning and analyses are necessary prior to new or additional mineral leasing and development. Furthermore, the BLM has identified a need to evaluate mineral leasing decisions as a result of changing circumstances, updated policies, and new information.

### Planning Issues

Planning issues were identified during the public scoping process and were considered during the preparation of the MLP/FEIS. These resource issues were utilized in the development of the management actions in the alternatives, the resources addressed in the affected environment, and form the basis of the analysis for the environmental consequences. A summary of the planning issues are highlighted below and are organized by resource category.

**Air Quality:** Emissions, pollutants, impacts to air quality, and how BLM will address those issues.

**Climate Change:** Minimizing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Cultural and Paleontology Resources:** Protecting cultural and paleontological resources from damage, and protecting the Old Spanish National Historic Trail segments and the associated viewsheds.

**Lands and Realty:** Protecting high use filming locations, utility corridors, roads; and had questions about stipulations for mineral withdrawals and addressing private inholdings.

**Lands with Wilderness Characteristics:** Protecting lands with wilderness characteristics.

**Minerals (oil and gas and potash):** Impacts of oil, gas, and potash leasing and development.

**Recreation:** Protecting viewsheds and recreation opportunities; and conflicts between mineral development and recreation use.

**Socioeconomics:** Economic impacts from mineral development and revenue from recreation.

**Soil and Water Resources:** Protecting water resources, such as water quality, springs, watersheds, and aquifers. Minimizing impacts to soils and reducing erosion.

**Special Designations:** Protection of special designation areas (areas of critical environmental concern [ACEC], Wild and Scenic Rivers [WSR], and National Historic Trails).

**Special Status Species:** Protection of special status wildlife, fish, and plants.

**Vegetation:** Vegetation protection, reclamation and Best Management Practices, and invasive species and noxious weed control.

**Visual Resource Management and Auditory Management:** Protecting viewsheds, visual quality, soundscapes, and night skies.

**Wildlife and Fisheries:** Protecting wildlife and fisheries, including water quality, habitat fragmentation, and lease stipulations to protect habitat and species.

## MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

### Alternatives Development Process

The alternatives were prepared by BLM in conjunction with cooperating agencies. In addition, a preliminary range of alternatives was presented to the public at an open house meeting and on the Moab MLP website on May 14, 2014. Feedback from the public on the preliminary range of alternatives was taken through May 28, 2014. This feedback, as well as that of cooperating agencies, was used to assist the BLM in finalizing the alternatives for the MLP/DEIS and the MLP/FEIS.

## Summary Description of the Management Alternatives

The proposed plan and three alternatives are presented in the MLP/FEIS.

### **Alternative A (No Action Alternative—Continuation of Existing Management)**

Alternative A is the No Action alternative and represents the continuation of existing mineral leasing management (oil, gas, and potash) under the Moab and Monticello Resource Management Plans (2008). This alternative is the least restrictive to mineral leasing and development; however, current management provides protection for special designations and constraints for sensitive resources. Alternative A allows for oil, gas, and potash leasing and development to occur on the same tracts of land where it is consistent with the leasing decisions in the RMPs. The No Action alternative is required by the Council on Environmental Quality.

### **Alternative B**

Alternative B provides for mineral leasing and development outside of areas that are protected for high scenic quality (including public lands visible from Arches and Canyonlands National Parks), high use recreation areas, special designations, and other sensitive resources in a manner that minimizes surface disturbance and associated potential resource impacts. Alternative B provides a limited number of specific exceptions to leasing stipulations. Mineral leasing decisions are divided into two options specified as Alternative B1 and Alternative B2 (Tables 2-5 and 2-6). The stipulations devised for the protection of specific resources in Alternative B apply to the leasing decisions in both Alternative B1 and Alternative B2.

Alternative B1 provides for both oil and gas leasing and potash leasing. In Alternative B1, surface impacts would be minimized by separating the new leasing of the two commodities (oil/gas and potash), limiting the density of development in a manner that would not dominate the landscape, and locating potash processing facilities in areas identified with the least amount of sensitive resources. Separating leasing of oil/gas and potash would eliminate redundant infrastructure and ensure orderly development by setting apart the competing objectives of the two commodities. Potash leasing would involve a phased approach and would initially only be issued within identified areas. A phased approach to potash leasing would provide the opportunity to lease a limited portion of the Planning Area in order to determine the feasibility of potash development and methods for reducing resource conflicts.

Alternative B2 provides for only oil and gas leasing; no new potash leasing would occur. Oil and gas is a proven economic commodity in the Planning Area while the feasibility of developing deep potash deposits with solution mining methods has not been established on public lands within the Planning Area. Leasing for oil and gas alone would meet the objective of minimizing surface impacts by eliminating the potential for redundant infrastructure associated with co-development of oil, gas, and potash and eliminating the potential for potash processing facilities. Alternative B2 would also minimize surface impacts by limiting the density of oil and gas development in a manner that would not dominate the landscape.

### **Alternative C**

Alternative C emphasizes resource protection over mineral leasing and development. Alternative C provides for only oil and gas leasing; no potash leasing would occur. This alternative affords the greatest protection to areas with high scenic quality, recreational uses, special designations, BLM lands adjacent to Arches and Canyonlands National Parks, and other sensitive resources. Alternative C provides minimal exceptions to leasing stipulations. In areas open for oil and gas development, surface impacts would be

minimized by limiting the density of oil and gas development in a manner that would not dominate the landscape.

### **Alternative D (Proposed Plan)**

Alternative D is the BLM's proposed plan and provides for both oil and gas leasing and potash leasing. Mineral development would be precluded in many areas with high scenic quality, in some high use recreation areas, specially designated areas, and in other areas with sensitive resources. Outside of these areas, surface impacts would be minimized by separating leasing of the two commodities (oil/gas and potash), locating potash processing facilities in areas with the least amount of sensitive resources, and limiting the density of mineral development. Potash leasing would involve a phased approach and would initially only be issued within identified areas. Alternative D provides operational flexibility for mineral leasing and development through some specific exceptions and closes BLM lands adjacent to Arches and Canyonlands National Parks to mineral leasing and development.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

The affected environment provides a description of the existing physical, biological, and cultural resources as well as resource uses that could be affected by implementing the mineral leasing decisions in the alternatives. The information presented in the affected environment is utilized in analyzing the potential environmental consequences of the management actions in the alternatives.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

The purpose of the analysis of environmental consequences is to determine the potential for significant impact of the "Federal action" on the "human environment." The CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA states that the "human environment" shall be interpreted comprehensively to include the natural and physical environment, and the relationship of people with that environment (40 CFR §1508.14). The "Federal action" is the BLM's selection of a MLP on which future mineral leasing and development will be based.

The environmental analysis identifies impacts that may enhance or improve a resource as a result of management actions, as well as those impacts that have the potential to impair a resource. The analysis of the alternatives is focused on identifying the types of impacts anticipated to occur and estimating their potential intensity. The analysis is organized by resource program and discloses the potential impacts on each resource program from implementing each of the proposed alternatives. The analysis also includes an assessment of cumulative effects, which are defined as the impacts that result from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.

## **CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

The MLP/FEIS was prepared in consultation and coordination with various Federal, State, and local agencies, organizations, and individuals. Agency consultation and public participation have been accomplished through a variety of formal and informal methods, including public meetings, workshops, correspondence (both traditional and electronic), and meetings with various public agencies and interest groups.

## COOPERATING AGENCIES

The BLM extended cooperating agency status to government entities and agencies throughout the Planning Area. The following is a list of the cooperating agencies that have actively attended the cooperators meetings leading to the development of the MLP/FEIS.

- Grand County
- San Juan County
- State of Utah
- National Park Service (NPS) (U.S. Department of the Interior [DOI])

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are also actively involved in the planning process.

As part of the planning process, the BLM initiated consultation with culturally affiliated Native American Tribes. The Hopi Indian Tribe accepted BLM's invitation to become involved in the MLP process.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The public scoping period began with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* on March 5, 2012. The scoping period included three public scoping meetings held in Moab, Monticello, and Salt Lake City, Utah. The formal scoping period ended on May 7, 2012. The majority of comments pertained to policy and administrative actions, socioeconomic, water and soil resources, fish and wildlife and special status species, air resources, and visual resource management and noise.

On August 21, 2015, the BLM published a Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Moab MLP/Draft RMP Amendments/Draft EIS (MLP/DEIS) in the *Federal Register* which initiated a formal public comment period (94-days) which ended on November 23, 2015. The MLP/DEIS was distributed to appropriate Federal agencies with jurisdiction by law or special expertise and to State and local agencies, including Indian Tribes. Copies of the MLP/DEIS were also made available to the public at public libraries, the MLP website, and BLM offices.

The public was provided with an opportunity to review and comment on the MLP/DEIS during the 94-day public comment period. Three public meetings were held in Moab, Monticello, and Salt Lake City during the comment period to inform the public about the MLP/DEIS.

## CHANGES FROM THE MLP/DEIS TO THE MLP/FEIS

Comments received on the MLP/DEIS from the public and internal BLM review were considered and incorporated as appropriate into the proposed RMP amendments and FEIS. Public comments resulted in the addition of clarifying text, but did not significantly change proposed land use plan decisions. Adjustments and clarifications have been made to the preferred alternative in the DEIS which is now presented as the proposed plan in the FEIS. Changes made in the text of the MLP/DEIS that are based on public comment and BLM internal review are shaded in gray in the MLP/FEIS. Refer to the end of Chapter 1 (Table 1-2) for a complete listing of every change from the MLP/DEIS to the MLP/FEIS.

## NEXT STEPS

Following the Environmental Protection Agency's publication of the NOA for the MLP/FEIS in the *Federal Register*, there will be a 30-day protest period. In addition, a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review period will start at the same time as the protest period.

At the end of the protest period on the proposed plan amendments and FEIS and after protests are resolved, a Record of Decision (ROD) is issued. The ROD serves as a concise and useful tool for summarizing the findings and decisions brought forward into the Moab MLP and approved Moab and Monticello RMP amendments. After the ROD is signed, implementation level decisions, such as lease issuance, applications for permit to drill, geophysical operations, and sundry notices, will be appealable for 30 days from the date of the decision for these actions.