

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to develop and periodically revise its Resource Management Plans (RMPs), which guide management of BLM-administered public lands. The BLM Field Office (FO) in Monticello, Utah, is revising the San Juan RMP, which was last updated in 1991 (BLM 1991a). The new RMP, called the Monticello RMP, will provide planning guidance for public lands managed by the Monticello FO in San Juan and Grand Counties in southeastern Utah.

The Monticello planning area (PA) includes approximately 4.5 million acres of private, State of Utah, Indian reservation, national forest, national park, and BLM-administered public lands. Within the PA, BLM manages more than 1.8 million surface acres and nearly 2.5 million subsurface acres. The Monticello PA lies almost entirely within San Juan County, with a small portion in southern Grand County.

### **1.1 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PLAN**

#### **1.1.1 PURPOSE**

The purpose of the RMP is to provide a comprehensive framework for BLM management of public lands within the PA and allocation of resources pursuant to the multiple-use and sustained-yield requirements of the FLPMA, which stipulates that the BLM "develop, maintain, and when appropriate, revise land use plans" (43 United States Code [U.S.C.] 1712 [a]). Revising the plan will allow the BLM to re-evaluate, with public involvement, existing conditions, resources, and uses and determine how to allocate resources and make management decisions that balance uses against resource protection. The planning process identified a reasonable range of possible management alternatives, and this draft RMP/draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) describes and evaluates these alternatives. The purpose of the DEIS is to disclose and assess the direct, indirect, and cumulative impact of reasonably foreseeable future actions resulting from the management decisions in each alternative as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), its implementing regulations, and other applicable law.

The resulting Monticello RMP will establish consolidated guidance, updated objectives, and management actions for BLM-administered public lands in the PA. The RMP will be comprehensive in nature and will address issues that have been identified through agency, interagency, and public scoping.

#### **1.1.2 NEED**

The plan revision is necessary to allow the BLM to review the management of public lands comprehensively and inventory their resources and, with public involvement, to make decisions for managing those lands and their resources and allocating present and future uses. The revised plan will incorporate new information, changes in resources and their uses, and new policies, guided by multiple-use and sustained-yield principles in the FLPMA.

A Special Evaluation Report, completed in 2001 by the BLM, showed that a revision to the 1991 RMP was necessary to address changes in resource uses such as increased visitation, different types of recreation activities, and the growing demand for energy development. The policies of

several resource programs have changed since the 1991 RMP was approved, and these changes need to be considered and implemented. A growing sector of the public is challenging traditional consumptive use and development in favor of aesthetic values such as the preservation of open space, nonmotorized recreation (hiking, biking), protection of visual resources, and tourism. These new priorities need to be addressed in terms of the way they affect local communities, state and regional interests (socioeconomic and otherwise), and ecosystem health within the BLM's land-use planning authority.

## 1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE MONTICELLO FO PLANNING AREA

Of the more than 4.5 million acres contained within the Monticello PA in southeastern Utah, the Monticello FO administers 1,785,127 surface acres of public lands (see Map 1) and nearly 2.5 million subsurface acres. The Monticello PA lies primarily within San Juan County, although a small portion extends into Grand County to the north.

The Monticello PA includes within its boundaries a number of national parks, national monuments, and lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Canyonlands National Park lies along the northwestern portion of the PA boundary; Natural Bridges National Monument lies in its southwestern part; and a large unit of the Manti-La Sal National Forest lies in the center. Land ownership within the PA consists primarily of large blocks of BLM-administered public land interspersed with smaller, privately owned tracts and land owned by the State of Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA). The McCracken Split Estate is jointly administered by the BLM and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and all of the land south of the San Juan River is within the Navajo Nation Reservation. Table 1.1 shows land ownership and corresponding acreages within the Monticello PA.

**Table 1.1. Land Ownership within the Monticello PA**

Ownership	Acres
BLM	1,785,127
Navajo Nation Reservation	1,278,476
National Park Service (NPS)	528,565
Private	353,516
SITLA	202,318
USFS	319,933
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,467,935</b>

Source: BLM 2004a.

The Monticello PA is known for its topographic diversity, extraordinarily striking landforms, and scenic attractions. It contains a wide variety of cultural and paleontological resources with numbers and concentrations of sites exceeding those found elsewhere in the region. The topography is defined largely by high mountains, steep escarpments and ridges, and incised canyons, which are primarily a product of eroded sandstones and exposed igneous intrusions, such as the Abajo and La Sal Mountains. Elevations vary from approximately 3,700 feet above sea level near Lake Powell to over 11,000 feet in the Abajo Mountains. Much of the Monticello PA provides habitat for desert bighorn sheep, pronghorn, Rocky Mountain elk, and mule deer.

Numerous raptor species, including bald eagles and peregrine falcons, also live in the area. Fish species that inhabit the rivers and waterways include humpback chub, Colorado squawfish, and razorback sucker.

Historical and traditional land uses within the Monticello PA, such as livestock grazing, hard-rock mining, and energy and mineral development, continue to be widely practiced. Energy and mineral resources include oil, natural gas, uranium, vanadium, and building stone. However, recreational activities, such as backpacking, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, and sightseeing, are becoming increasingly popular within the PA. Recreational resources provide opportunities for public enjoyment as well as revenue for businesses in and adjacent to the Monticello PA.

### 1.3 PLANNING PROCESS

The FLPMA requires the BLM to use land-use plans as tools by which "present and future use is projected." The FLPMA's implementing regulations for planning, 43 CFR, Part 1600, state that land-use plans are a preliminary step in the overall process of managing public lands, "designed to guide and control future managements actions and the development of subsequent, more detailed and limited scope plans for resources and uses." Public participation and input are important components of land-use planning. The Monticello FO initiated the process by publishing a notice of intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* on June 4, 2003.

The RMP planning process can be broken down into the following nine steps:

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| Step 1 | Scoping and identifying issues, concerns, and opportunities  |
| Step 2 | Development of planning criteria/legislative constraints   |
| Step 3 | Collection of inventory data and information   |
| Step 4 | Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS)   |
| Step 5 | Formulation of alternatives  |
| Step 6 | Estimation of effects of alternatives  |
| Step 7 | Selection of preferred management plan. This step includes preparation and public distribution of the Draft RMP/EIS. |
| Step 8 | Selection of the RMP. This step involves preparation and public distribution of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS           |
| Step 9 | Monitoring and evaluation  |

The major documents produced during the RMP preparation process include the following:

- The preplanning analysis;
- Scoping Report;
- Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS);
- Draft RMP/EIS, which includes the Preferred Alternative;
- Proposed RMP/Final EIS; and
- Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved RMP.

### **1.3.1 SCOPING AND IDENTIFYING ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Public scoping is a process designed to meet the public-involvement requirements of the FLPMA and NEPA. Public input helps focus management analysis and actions. During scoping, concerns are raised, and important issues are prioritized for analysis. Information gathered is carefully considered and used to develop land-use allocations or alternative management plans to protect natural, historical, or cultural resource values and provide recreational and commercial opportunities. This process includes working closely with cooperating agencies (state and local governments and other federal agencies) and soliciting input from interested organizations and individuals on issues, concerns, needs, and resource uses, development, and protection.

The scoping period for the Monticello RMP began on June 4, 2003, with publication of the notice of intent in the *Federal Register* and ended on January 31, 2004. Scoping included scheduled public meetings in six communities (Green River, Moab, Monticello, Blanding, and Salt Lake City, Utah; and Grand Junction, Colorado). In addition to the meetings, comments were solicited from the public via an Internet Web site, by mail, and by staff, who traveled to popular recreation locations within the PA. For the Monticello planning process, comments from the public were categorized in one of three ways:

1. Issues to be addressed in the Monticello RMP;
2. Issues to be addressed through policy or administrative action (and therefore not addressed in the RMP); and
3. Issues beyond the scope of the RMP.

During scoping, all stakeholders were given the opportunity to voice concerns, identify issues, and nominate Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs). Additionally, discussions with BLM resource specialists identified management concerns. All the information obtained was then used to define the relevant issues to be addressed in a broad range of alternative management scenarios. The environmental impacts of these alternatives are analyzed and addressed in this DEIS, which will be made available for public review.

The RMP revision process provides the BLM, its cooperators, and the public the opportunity to resolve resource-management conflicts or concerns and respond to opportunities that fulfill the BLM's multiple-use, resource-management mission. Such issues may be identified as local, state, or national, or they may reflect conditions specific to the Monticello PA. Here are the planning issues that will be addressed in the Monticello RMP.

#### **1.3.1.1 CULTURAL RESOURCES**

The planning area is known for its extraordinarily high density of cultural resources, particularly Anasazi sites, many of which are yet to be recorded. Changes in legislation governing the management of cultural resources on federal lands or associated with federal projects have been implemented since the publication of the 1991 RMP. Other laws and regulations regarding tribal-government sovereignty and orientation between governments did not exist during development of the 1991 RMP. Cultural resources provide a direct link between Native Americans and their past, and they request protection for these resources.

The RMP provides an opportunity to enhance cultural-resource management within the PA and address tribal concerns and values in compliance with new requirements. Issues of concern include these:

- Conflicting BLM policies of providing OHV use and protecting cultural resources as required by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA, Section 106);
- Need for an OHV travel plan that limits use to designated trails to prevent impact to cultural resources;
- Impact on cultural resources created by increasing demand for access to public lands;
- Need for additional access to public lands by Native Americans for their traditional uses and practices;
- Resolution of the increasing conflict that pits other land uses (such as recreation activities, livestock grazing, woodcutting, and energy exploration and development) against the protection and preservation of cultural resources;
- Protection of sensitive cultural resources through special-area designations;
- Protection of sensitive cultural resources from vandalism;
- Management of National Historic Trails (Old Spanish National Historic Trail and Hole in the Rock Trail) in compliance with the intent of the enabling legislation so that the historic resource is protected; and
- Need to revise existing management plans for Butler Wash, Cedar Mesa, and Hovenweep ACECs and limit recreation use that has adverse effects on cultural resources.

### **1.3.1.2 MINERALS AND ENERGY RESOURCES**

There are a number of concerns regarding the level of oil, natural gas, and hard-rock mining activities within the planning area:

- Resolving the impact of surface disturbances from mineral exploration and development on other resources and uses (particularly cultural and visual resources, wildlife, and recreation) while remaining in compliance with federal energy policies;
- Improving mitigation standards for reclamation and restoration following mineral development;
- Making oil and natural gas development compatible with dispersed and remote recreational opportunities;
- Identifying areas which require mineral withdrawal to resolve conflicts between resource development and special protection for cultural and water resources, wildlife habitat, unique geologic formations, or high scenic values;
- Making development of alternative energy resources compatible with other resource decisions;
- Determining social and economic impacts of mineral development on the governments and citizens of the counties within the Monticello PA;
- Determining social and economic impacts of mineral development on a PA that contains extraordinary scenic and visual resources;
- Determining impacts of mineral development (nighttime lighting) on the quality of the scenic and wilderness experience;
- Managing and developing oil and natural gas resources on the McCracken Split Estate; what regulations will foster energy production while protecting other resource values and uses?

- Managing and developing oil and natural gas resources in Lockhart Basin to limit impact on the outstanding scenic values of the area, as viewed from both within the basin and adjacent public lands and national parks.

### **1.3.1.3 NON-WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA) LANDS WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

Management of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics is being considered as an option in this land use planning process for those lands that the BLM has determined have wilderness characteristics. Pursuant to the FLPMA and the *Land Use Planning Handbook* (BLM 2005a), the BLM may not establish new WSAs, but may consider managing non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics through land-use planning, and has the option to manage such lands in a way that would protect or preserve some or all of those characteristics. This may include protecting certain lands in their natural condition and providing outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

### **1.3.1.4 RECREATION**

Recreation use in the Monticello PA has continued to grow in popularity since the approval of the 1991 RMP. The wide range of recreational opportunities available and the spectacular scenery, both within the PA and in the nearby national parks and monuments, draws many visitors to the area. With the number of visitors continuing to grow, recreation activity is expanding farther into the backcountry, and resource and user conflicts are becoming more common, more intense, and more difficult to manage. Recreation resource issues to be addressed in the planning process include these:

- The need to manage OHVs by developing a travel plan with maps showing motorized (single-track vehicles, ATVs, jeeps, etc.) and nonmotorized (equestrian, hiking, biking) travel trail systems to identify recreation opportunities, prevent conflicts among recreation users, and minimize adverse impacts to sensitive resources (cultural resources, wildlife and their habitat, etc.);
- The need to develop specific management plans for high-use areas, including Dark Canyon, Cedar Mesa, Hole in the Rock, the San Juan River, and the Colorado River, that manage use, provide opportunities, and minimize conflicts with other resource values and uses;
- The need to develop management plans for the Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and the Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA) that provide the desired activities, settings, experiences, and benefits (benefits-based management) consistent with the objectives of recreation management;
- The need to resolve recreation-related human health and safety problems, including hazardous road conditions, disposal of human waste, and protection of water quality;
- The need to manage visitors to adjacent national parks and monuments who spill over onto public lands in the PA. Visitor management is needed not only to maintain desired environments and facilities but also to resolve conflicts among users and minimize impacts to other resources;
- The need to alleviate impacts of other resource uses on recreation opportunities, including motorized and nonmotorized travel, livestock grazing, mineral development, and fire management;

- The need for a private permit system to promote the optimum recreation experience and resolve endangerment of other resource values in areas being "loved to death" by growing recreation use;
- The need to resolve conflicts between private and commercial river users and establish limits on use that enhance recreation experiences and protect other resource values; and
- The need to minimize impacts of increasing backcountry recreation use on other resource values and reduce tension among recreation users.

### **1.3.1.5 SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS**

The existing RMP does not reflect the current level of use and the demands on certain resources, including ACECs, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness areas, and WSAs, within the Monticello PA. BLM policy and regulations require that priority be given to designation and protection of ACECs during land-use planning. Section 5(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act directs federal agencies involved in planning the use and development of water and related land resources also to consider their potential for national wild, scenic, and recreational river areas. The WSAs in the PA were created under FLMPA 603 and continue to be managed in accordance with the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands under Wilderness Review (IMP) to protect their values. This planning process, however, will establish OHV management objectives (closed or limited) within WSAs. The Monticello FO will review all current special designations, as well as other lands within the PA that meet special-designation criteria, and determine the appropriate management for them. Reviewing lands to determine whether or not an area should be specially designated does not apply to WSAs. No new WSAs will be established, and no existing ones will be altered. The only designations made for WSAs will be OHV class, VRM class, and travel-route ones.

Concerns about designation and management of special areas encompass issues that pertain to all other resources, depending on the location. Issues and concerns in these areas include pressures from increased visitation and resource development on cultural resources, biodiversity, and habitat and access questions. If special designation is required to protect sensitive resources, how will these restrictions impact development of minerals and other surface-disturbing activities?

### **1.3.1.6 TRAVEL**

Since the current RMP was approved, travel within the PA has increased. Travel access and use levels are creating conflicts with natural and cultural resources and among different forms of travel (motorized, nonmotorized, nonmechanized, and OHVs). BLM guidance for OHV use and travel has changed, and policy requires that comprehensive travel-management planning address all travel modes and conditions, as well as the travel needs of all resource programs administered by the Monticello FO. Travel-related issues include these:

- The need for a travel plan with maps showing motorized and nonmotorized use;
- The need to define OHV categories that are compatible with other resource decisions;
- The need to resolve conflicts over OHV use and identify recreation opportunities, prevent conflicts among recreation users, and minimize adverse impacts to sensitive resources (cultural and riparian resources, wildlife and their habitat, etc.);

- The need to resolve conflicts among groups, such as nonmotorized and motorized users, river runners and OHV users, and commercial and private users, and regulate OHV use and camping; and
- The need to incorporate the BLM OHV national strategy and Utah OHV strategy into planning efforts.

### **1.3.1.7 VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (VRM) CLASS DESIGNATIONS**

Visual resource management (VRM) class designations are a planning concern, especially considering the extraordinary abundance and diversity of landscapes in the Monticello PA. The 1991 RMP does not address cumulative impacts of recreational activities, livestock grazing, and oil and gas exploration and development on visual resources. Also the 1991 RMP does not reflect increases in recreation visitation or changes in visitor use patterns, which ultimately intensify encroachment into scenic areas. Issues related to VRM include the following:

- The need to review and establish VRM class designations that reflect changes in recreation visitation and other resource uses;
- The need to study the impact of increasing OHV use on landscapes and visual resources throughout the PA and limit OHV use to roads and trails; and
- The need to investigate the impact of mineral development (nighttime lighting) on landscapes in remote areas.

### **1.3.1.8 WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES RESOURCES**

The current RMP does not reflect modifications in crucial habitat boundaries, habitat fragmentation, or raptor protection guidelines. The various goals, objectives, and management plans for wildlife and their habitat in the 1991 plan need to reflect these changes. This planning process will establish desired future conditions and address wildlife and fisheries concerns, including the following:

- The need to address impacts of other resource uses (e.g., livestock grazing, recreation activities, OHV use) on wildlife and their habitat;
- The need to protect riparian habitat;
- The need to investigate the impact of increased recreation use, primarily camping and OHVs, on riparian areas;
- The need to increase quality habitat for fish;
- The need to determine the impact of other resource uses on wildlife habitat fragmentation;
- The need to protect sage grouse habitat along with other resource uses of public lands and explore the possibility of buffer zones around leks;
- The need to establish seasonal restrictions on mineral extraction and visitor use to protect species during sensitive periods;
- The need to assess the impact of fire management on wildlife habitat and populations;
- The need to discover causes for the decline in bighorn sheep and pronghorn populations and new habitat areas;
- The need to protect new habitat areas, particularly for Lockhart Basin bighorn sheep;

- The need to investigate the impact of drought on the declining quality of existing wildlife habitat;
- The need to assess the impact of increasing antler-collection activities (presence and noise of people and vehicles, cross-country OHV travel, and related surface and vegetation disturbance) on wildlife populations and their habitat; and
- The need to investigate the transmission of West Nile virus, chronic wasting disease, and hantavirus that have been documented in and adjacent to the PA.

### **1.3.1.9 OTHER ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND OPPORTUNITIES**

In addition to the issues already identified for resolution in this planning process, Appendix C of the BLM's *Land Use Planning Handbook* (BLM 2005a) requires that a variety of other decisions be made. The following is a brief description of these issues, concerns, and opportunities. For a more detailed discussion, please refer to the scoping report (BLM 2004b).

#### **1.3.1.9.1 AIR QUALITY**

Air quality within the PA can be impacted by increases in vehicle emissions, as well as smoke from prescribed and naturally caused wildland fires and other surface-disturbing activities.

#### **1.3.1.9.2 FIRE MANAGEMENT**

The planning process provides the opportunity to incorporate the Utah Land Use Plan (LUP) amendment for fire and fuels management into the RMP.

#### **1.3.1.9.3 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The RMP process will address hazardous materials produced by abandoned mines, oil and natural gas exploration and development, abandoned structures, hazardous-waste spills, or uranium-tailings disposal.

#### **1.3.1.9.4 LANDS AND REALTY**

The RMP will identify lands for retention, disposal, and acquisition. Further, the plan will designate utility corridors and communication sites, as well as lands to avoid and restrict rights-of-way.

#### **1.3.1.9.5 LIVESTOCK GRAZING**

The RMP will address areas available and unavailable for livestock grazing.

#### **1.3.1.9.6 PALEONTOLOGY**

The RMP will set objectives for protecting fossils and address the impacts of surface-disturbing activities on them and the conflicts with other resource values and uses.

#### **1.3.1.9.7 SOIL AND WATER RESOURCES**

The RMP will establish watershed objectives for the PA and address issues such as sensitive soils; biological soil crusts; soil erosion, salinity, and sedimentation; priority watersheds; floodplains; water quality; and pollution.

### **1.3.1.9.8 SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES**

The RMP will identify and update special-status species habitat within the PA and establish objectives to manage that habitat for species that include the Mexican spotted owl, southwestern willow flycatcher, western yellow-billed cuckoo, and Gunnison sage grouse. Also included is the protection of aquatic and riparian habitat for these and other listed and candidate species.

### **1.3.1.9.9 VEGETATION, INCLUDING RIPARIAN RESOURCES**

Some resource uses (e.g., grazing, mineral development, OHV use, and recreation) can impact the natural function and condition of watersheds. A healthy cover of perennial vegetation stabilizes the soil, increases infiltration, prevents runoff, provides clean water to adjacent streams, and minimizes noxious-weed invasion. The RMP will establish objectives to protect, maintain, and restore upland and riparian vegetation.

### **1.3.1.9.10 WOODLANDS**

The RMP will address a number of woodland issues, including forest health, fuel loading, human-caused wildland fire risks and hazards, desired woodland composition and function, and forest needs/harvesting.

## **1.3.2 ISSUES ADDRESSED THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE OR POLICY ACTION**

Policy or administrative actions include those implemented by the BLM because they are standard operating procedures; because federal law, rule, or regulation requires them; or because they are BLM policy. Administrative actions do not require a planning decision to be implemented. The following issues raised during scoping are addressed by administrative actions:

- Compliance with existing laws and policies (e.g., FLPMA, NEPA, Endangered Species Act (ESA), American Antiquities Act, Clean Air Act, National Historic Preservation Act);
- Education, enforcement/prosecution, vandalism, and volunteer coordination;
- Consistency with existing federal, state, and local plans;
- Management of cultural resources, which includes up-to-date inventories, nondisclosure of sensitive sites, proposal of cultural sites for the National Register of Historic Places, and Native American consultation;
- Management of existing WSAs, which will continue under the IMP (BLM 1995) except for decisions related to VRM class, OHV, and route designations, which will be made in this RMP. Only Congress can release a WSA from consideration. Should all or part of a WSA be released from consideration, proposals in the released area would be examined on a case-by-case basis for consistency with the goals and objectives of the RMP. Actions inconsistent with RMP goals and objectives would be deferred until completion of requisite planning amendments. Because the management of the released land would continue in accordance with the goals and objectives established in the RMP, no separate analysis is required in this land-use plan to address resource impacts if any WSAs are released.
- Management of existing wilderness under its authorizing legislation—the Wilderness Act—and applicable law and policy;

- Completion of the inventory of riparian and wetland areas and the use of monitoring and mitigation to help protect these resources;
- Recreation-management public outreach and education, including a comprehensive sign system and maps;
- Administration of existing mineral leases, permits, and other authorized uses;
- Monitoring of wildlife and biodiversity;
- Monitoring of air quality;
- Mitigation measures for approved, site-specific projects;
- Control of noxious weeds;.
- Establishment of forage utilization levels, on a site-specific basis, to maintain rangeland health.
- Allocation of forage between livestock and wildlife and the application of specific management practices on allotments within the PA.
- Eligibility standards for specially designated areas;
- Coordination with local, state, and federal agencies; and
- Cooperation with user groups.

### **1.3.3 ISSUES BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THE PLAN**

Issues beyond the scope of the RMP planning process include all those that do not relate to RMP decisions. They include decisions that are not under the jurisdiction of the Monticello FO or that the BLM cannot resolve as part of the planning process. Issues identified in this category include the following:

- Settlement of R.S. 2477 (i.e., right-of-way) claims. The State of Utah and San Juan and Grand Counties may hold valid existing rights-of-way in the PA according to Revised Statute (R.S.) 2477, Act of July 28 1866, chapter 262, 8, 14 Stat. 252, 253, *codified at* 43 U.S.C. 932. On October 21, 1976, Congress repealed R.S. 2477 by passing the FLPMA. This RMP does not adjudicate, analyze, or otherwise determine the validity of claimed rights-of-way. However, nothing in the RMP extinguishes any valid right-of-way or alters in any way the legal rights the state and counties may have to assert and protect R.S. 2477 rights or challenge in federal court or other appropriate venues any use restrictions imposed by the RMP that they believe are inconsistent with their rights.
- Creation of new WSAs or wildernesses. No new WSAs will be established, and no existing ones will be altered.
- Elimination of grazing, mineral development, and OHV use on all public lands;
- Regulation of activities and uses beyond the jurisdiction of the BLM;
- Revision of existing laws, policies, and regulations;
- Availability of funding and personnel to manage programs, including law enforcement; and
- Consideration of alternative energy sources as substitutes for mineral development.

### **1.3.4 DEVELOPMENT OF PLANNING CRITERIA/LEGISLATIVE CONSTRAINTS**

Planning criteria are the constraints that guide and direct the RMP planning process, determine the way the planning team approaches the development of alternatives, and help in selecting the Preferred Alternative. These criteria are based on appropriate laws, regulations, and policy, as well as public participation and coordination with cooperating agencies, other federal agencies, state and local governments, and Indian tribes. The planning criteria ensure that the RMP is consistent with the identified issues and concerns and that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided.

The planning criteria developed during the preplanning analysis for the Monticello RMP include the following:

- The RMP would recognize valid existing rights.
- Decisions made in the RMP would apply only to public lands and resources managed by the BLM.
- The BLM would use a collaborative and multijurisdictional approach, where possible, to determine jointly the desired future condition of public lands.
- The BLM would make all possible attempts to ensure that its management prescriptions and actions are as complementary as possible with other planning jurisdictions (both federal and nonfederal), subject to applicable law and policy.
- Similar management prescriptions would be considered on adjoining lands to minimize inconsistency. To the extent possible, inventories, planning, and management programs would be coordinated with other federal, state, and local agencies and tribal governments.
- Management plans would focus on the relative values of resources.
- The BLM would use the most current, available scientific information, research, technologies, and results of inventorying, monitoring, and coordination to determine appropriate local and regional management strategies to enhance or restore impaired ecosystems.
- Management of WSAs would continue under the IMP (BLM 1995). Should Congress release all or part of a WSA from consideration, resource management would be consistent with the final RMP, subject to other constraints on the relevant lands. Should the need arise, the BLM may consider amending the plan consistent with applicable law.
- The BLM would continue to inventory public-land resources and other values, including characteristics associated with wilderness, and consider such information during land-use planning.
- Utah BLM Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management (adopted in 1997), and Guidelines for Recreation Management (adopted in 2001) would continue to be implemented. The standards and guidelines would apply to all alternatives analyzed in this EIS.
- Decisions regarding OHV use would be consistent with the BLM's National OHV Strategy.
- VRM class designations would be analyzed and modified to reflect present conditions and future needs. Areas where specific land uses need to be modified or restricted to resolve conflicts would be identified.

- Sensitive watersheds would be identified, and watershed conditions would be determined. Emphasis would be placed on watersheds identified as high priority in conjunction with other cooperators such as the Utah State Division of Water Quality and the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum.
- Baseline reasonable/foreseeable management/development scenarios would be developed and implemented based on historical, existing, and projected levels for all resource programs.
- Planning would include the preservation, conservation, and enhancement of important historical, cultural, paleontological, and natural components of public-land resources. Coordination would be maintained with Native American tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious heritage.
- Endangered-species recovery goals, including plans to reintroduce endangered and other species, would be addressed. In accordance with the Interagency Memorandum of Agreement on the ESA regarding Section 7 consultation, the BLM would jointly prepare a programmatic consultation agreement with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).
- The socioeconomic impacts of the alternatives would be addressed.
- Vegetation management objectives or desired future conditions would be developed for all parts of the PA.

### **1.3.5 COLLECTION OF INVENTORY DATA AND INFORMATION**

Monticello FO resource specialists have collected inventory data and resource information to provide the basis for preparing the RMP. When available, new information will be used in analyzing the EIS alternatives and making planning decisions.

Geographic information systems (GIS) have been and will be used throughout the EIS analysis to store, display, and analyze resource information and data, including acreage calculations, site locations, maps, and areas of potential conflicts over resource use. After completion and approval of the RMP, this GIS information will continue to be used for resource management and activity and project planning, and additional updated resource data will continue to be collected and entered into the GIS.

Other documents that were prepared to help guide the development of this RMP include the following:

- The Mineral Potential Report (BLM 2005b)
- The Scoping Report (BLM 2004b)
- Analysis of the Management Situation (BLM 2005c)
- Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario for Oil and Gas (BLM 2005d)
- ACEC Evaluations for Existing and Nominated ACECs (BLM 2005e)
- Wild and Scenic River Report (BLM 2004c)
- Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Evaluations (BLM 2007a)

### **1.3.6 ANALYSIS OF THE MANAGEMENT SITUATION (AMS)**

The AMS describes the existing status and management of resources and facilities within the Monticello PA. It provides an analysis of the management programs administered by the Monticello FO, assesses the capability of resources to meet current demands, and assesses the

adequacy of current management practices. Where no management concerns or conflicts are identified, current management practices are carried forward into the proposed RMP. Any identified problems or concerns that involve resource allocations, land use, or management practices are resolved through this EIS process. Copies of the AMS for the current planning process are available for public review at the Monticello FO and the BLM Utah State office in Salt Lake City.

### **1.3.7 PREPARATION OF THE DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (DRMP) AND DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (DEIS)**

The draft stage of the RMP comprises the formulation of alternatives, analysis and disclosure of impacts, and selection of a Preferred Alternative.

The No-Action Alternative described in the DEIS is management under the current RMP, plus subsequent planning documents and amendments. As required by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, alternative actions are formulated to represent a reasonable range of management options that emphasize certain uses or resource values over others under the multiple-use and sustained-yield mandate of the FLPMA to achieve certain goals or objectives (see Section 1.3.1., Scoping and Identifying Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities). The NEPA requires the BLM to analyze and disclose the effects of the various alternatives. Based on that analysis, the BLM has, at this time, identified and recommended Alternative C as the Preferred Alternative. This is documented in the DRMP/DEIS, which will be distributed to the public for review and comment.

### **1.3.8 SELECTION OF THE PROPOSED RMP/FINAL EIS**

Following review and analysis of public comments on the DRMP/DEIS, the BLM will make adjustments as warranted and select a proposed RMP. In developing the proposed RMP and final EIS, the decision maker has the authority and discretion to select an alternative in its entirety or combine components of the various alternatives presented. The regulations at 43 CFR §§1610.3-2(e) and 1610.5-2, respectively, provide, prior to the approval of the proposed RMP, a 60-day period for the governor of Utah to make a "consistency review" and a 30-day period for "any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the approval" of the proposed RMP/final EIS to protest to the BLM director.

### **1.3.9 COMPLETE RECORD OF DECISION (ROD) AND APPROVED PLAN**

The publication of the ROD and approved RMP completes the RMP planning process. Substantial changes to the proposed plan due to the governor's review or a protest resolution will be published and subject to public review prior to final approval. The ROD will include appeal provisions for any implementation decisions in the approved RMP. Monitoring and evaluation are an ongoing step in the planning process and continue during the life of the plan.

### **1.3.10 MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

During this step, resource condition and trend data are collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the RMP in resolving the identified issues and achieving desired results. Adaptive management practices may be used where applicable. Implementation of decisions requiring subsequent action is also monitored. Monitoring continues from the time the RMP is

completed until changing conditions require revision of the whole plan or any portion of it. Monitoring and evaluation of the approved RMP follow a set schedule and will be documented via plan supplements, amendments, or addenda.

## **1.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER POLICIES, PLANS, AND PROGRAMS**

This planning process must recognize the many ongoing programs, plans, and policies that are being implemented in the Monticello PA by other land managers and government agencies. The BLM will seek to be consistent or complementary with other management actions whenever possible. Plans and policies that need to be considered during the Monticello planning effort are as follows:

### **1.4.1 STATE OF UTAH PLANS**

- SITLA cooperative agreement and other plans
- Canyonlands Natural History Association cooperative agreement
- Regional plans of the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)
- State of Utah plans relating to water quality and management, nonpoint-source pollution, watershed management, and air quality
- Utah's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

### **1.4.2 COUNTY LAND-USE PLANS**

- San Juan County, Utah: San Juan County Master Plan (1996)
- Grand County, Utah: Grand County General Plan Update (2004)

### **1.4.3 OTHER FEDERAL PLANS**

- Canyonlands National Park Natural Resource Management Plan (1994)
- Canyonlands National Park General Management Plans (1974)
- Canyonlands National Park Backcountry Management Plan (1984, 1995)
- Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1986)
- Strategic Plans for Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument (2005, 2007)
- Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Plan (draft)
- Hovenweep National Monument Plan (draft)

### **1.4.4 ENERGY POLICY AND CONSERVATION ACT (EPCA)**

In May 2001, the Comprehensive National Energy Policy was issued, which directed the secretary of the interior to "...examine land status and lease stipulation impediments to federal oil and gas leasing, and review and modify those where opportunities exist (consistent with the law, good environmental practice and balanced use of other resources)" (NEPDG 2001).

Under this directive, the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Lands and Minerals Management delivered to Congress an inventory of U.S. oil and gas resources in five western basins, as well as the extent and nature of any restrictions or impediments to their development. This report was

prepared at the request of Congress under the provisions of the 2000 Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) (BLM 2003a).

In April 2003, the BLM specified four EPCA integration principles, as follows:

1. Environmental protection and energy production are both desirable and necessary objectives of sound land management and are not to be considered mutually exclusive priorities.
2. The BLM must ensure appropriate accessibility to energy resources necessary for the nation's security while recognizing that special and unique nonenergy resources can be preserved.
3. Sound planning will weigh relative resource values, consistent with the FLPMA.
4. All resource impacts, including those associated with energy development and transmission, will be mitigated to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation (BLM 2003a).

#### **1.4.5 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN THE U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR AND U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE—IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTION 225 OF THE ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2005 REGARDING GEOTHERMAL LEASING AND PERMITTING**

The purpose of this MOU is to facilitate interagency coordination and establish policies and procedures to implement Section 225 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, Public Law 109-58 (hereinafter, the Act). Section 225 requires the coordination of geothermal leasing and permitting on public lands and National Forest System (NFS) lands between the secretaries of the interior and agriculture.

#### **1.4.6 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN THE U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT AND U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE FOREST SERVICE**

The purpose of this MOU is to establish joint BLM and Forest Service policies and procedures for managing oil and gas leasing and operational activities pursuant to oil and gas leases on NFS lands.

#### **1.4.7 OIL SHALE AND TAR SANDS LEASING PROGRAMMATIC EIS (PEIS)**

The Monticello FO contains areas of tar sands. This resource has been, and currently is, available for lease under the Combined Hydrocarbon Leasing Act of 1981 and in accordance with the decisions in the existing BLM land-use plans/amendments.

These major tar-sand resources lie only in Utah within 11 designated special tar-sands areas (STSAs) managed by the BLM Vernal, Price, Richfield, and Monticello FOs. One of these STSAs lies within the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, where leasing is prohibited. The Monticello FO manages one of the remaining 10 STSAs.

When the Monticello RMP revision was initiated in 2002, there was no reasonable foreseeable development expectation for tar sands over the life of the plan. The mineral report identified this resource but did not expect any leasing or development due to prevailing and anticipated economic factors.

After the start of this RMP revision, Congress enacted the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Section 369 of the Energy Policy Act requires the Secretary of the Interior to "complete a programmatic

environmental impact statement for a commercial leasing program for oil shale and tar sands resources on public lands, with an emphasis on the most geologically prospective lands within each of the States of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming." On December 13, 2005, the BLM published a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* initiating a Programmatic Environmental impact statement (PEIS) to support a commercial oil-shale and tar-sands leasing program on federal lands in these three states.

In light of this statutory requirement, all decisions related to tar-sands leasing in this RMP are being deferred to the ongoing PEIS on oil-shale and tar-sands leasing. In the event that the ROD on the final PEIS on oil shale and tar sands is issued before one for the Monticello proposed RMP/final EIS, the decisions in the oil-shale and tar-sands ROD will be incorporated into the Monticello RMP.

Combined hydrocarbon and tar-sand leasing in the STSAs will also be deferred to the PEIS. Additional opportunities for public involvement and comment will occur when the draft of the PEIS becomes available. Site-specific requirements will be addressed in future NEPA analysis for particular project applications after the PEIS is completed. This RMP will, however, develop allocation decisions for conventional oil and gas leasing in the STSAs.

#### **1.4.8 THE ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2005 AND THE WESTERN ENERGY CORRIDOR PEIS**

An interagency West-wide energy corridor PEIS is currently being developed to implement Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Energy Right-of-way Corridors on Federal Land). The final West-wide energy corridor PEIS will amend RMPs in the western U.S., providing decisions to address numerous energy corridor issues, including the utilization of existing corridors (with enhancements and upgrades) and the identification of new ones, supply and demand considerations, and compatibility with other corridor and project-planning efforts. It is likely that the identification of corridors in the West-wide energy corridor PEIS will affect the Monticello PA. Consequently, the decisions in the ROD on the final West-wide energy corridor PEIS will be incorporated into the Monticello RMP.

#### **1.4.9 ENDANGERED SPECIES RECOVERY PLANS**

- Northern States Bald Eagle Recovery Plan (USFWS 1983)
- The Recovery Implementation Plan for the Endangered Fish Species in the Upper Colorado River Basin (USFWS 1987)
- Bonytail Chub Recovery Plan (USFWS 1984, 1990a, 2002a)
- Humpback Chub Recovery Plan (USFWS 1979, 1990a, 2002b)
- Colorado Pikeminnow Recovery Plan (USFWS 1978, 1990, 1991, 2002c)
- Mexican Spotted Owl Recovery Plan (USFWS 1995)
- Razorback Sucker Recovery Plan (USFWS 1999, 2002d)
- Final Recovery Plan for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (USFWS 2002e)

#### **1.4.10 EXISTING EISS**

- Utah Combined Hydrocarbon Leasing Regional Final EIS (1984)
- Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness EIS (1990)
- Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Report (2007b)
- Programmatic EIS on Wind Energy Development on BLM-administered lands in the Western United States (BLM 2005f)
- Vegetation Treatment on BLM lands in 13 Western states (BLM 1991b)