

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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## **ES. 1 INTRODUCTION**

The Bureau of Land Management Utah (BLM) Monticello Field Office (Monticello FO) has prepared this Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (Proposed RMP/Final EIS) to provide direction for managing public lands within the Monticello FO and to analyze the environmental effects of a range of management alternatives. A Draft RMP/EIS with five alternatives was presented to the public on November 2, 2007. A 90-day public comment period was held and the comments from the public were used to formulate the Proposed Plan.

The Proposed RMP will replace the San Juan Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP), which was signed in 1991. This revised Monticello RMP covers the same area as did the 1991 RMP, which is two-thirds of San Juan County, with a small portion located within southern Grand County (BLM 1991). The Monticello FO planning area (Monticello PA) comprises approximately 4.5 million acres of land, which includes approximately 2.5 million acres of mineral estate and 1.8 million acres of public land administered by the BLM. Elevations vary from 3,700 feet above sea level near Lake Powell to 11,360 feet in the Abajo Mountains.

The Monticello PA is situated in the canyon, plateau, and desert areas of the Colorado Plateau Physiographic Province. The Monticello PA encompasses Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, the Abajo Mountains of the Manti-La Sal National Forest, Canyonlands National Park, the Natural Bridges and Hovenweep National Monuments, and the White Mesa Ute and Navajo Indian Reservations. The Monticello FO shares boundaries with lands administered by the BLM Moab FO, and the Dolores FO in Colorado.

The Proposed RMP was prepared using the BLM's planning regulations and guidance issued under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act 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 CFR 1500-1508), and requirements of BLM's NEPA Handbook 1790-1.

## **ES. 2 PURPOSE AND NEED**

### ***ES. 2.1 PURPOSE***

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (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 the existing land-use plan (LUP) and prepare a new RMP for the Monticello PA based on a number of new issues that have arisen since preparation of the existing plan. In general, the purpose of this RMP is to provide a comprehensive framework for BLM's management of the public lands within the Monticello PA and its allocation of resources pursuant to the multiple-use and sustained-yield mandate of FLPMA. In addition, the purpose of this plan revision is to:

- Reevaluate, with public involvement, existing conditions, resources, and uses, and reconsider the mix of resource allocations and management decisions designed to balance uses and the protection of resources pursuant to FLPMA and applicable law.
- Resolve multiple-use conflicts or issues between resource values and resource uses. The resulting Monticello RMP will establish consolidated guidance and updated goals, objectives, and management actions for the public lands in the decision area. The RMP will be comprehensive in nature and will address issues that have been identified through agency, interagency, and public scoping efforts.
- Disclose and assess the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the reasonably foreseeable future actions resulting from the management actions in each alternative pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), its implementing regulations, and other applicable laws.

### **ES. 2.2 NEED**

A revision to the 1991 RMP is necessary because there have been significant alterations in the Monticello PA; specifically new information and changed resources, circumstances, and policies that may be relevant to the future management of public lands and allocation of resources under the multiple-use and sustained yield mandate. This determination is further corroborated by a Special Evaluation Report, completed in 2002 by the Monticello FO, which concluded that some of the decisions within the 1991 RMP are in need of revision.

There have been changes in the laws, policies, and regulations that direct the management of the resources on Monticello PA public lands. There has also been an increase in the amount of new information and resource data that need to be considered to better manage the public lands. Visitation to the region has grown and population demographics have changed; as have public awareness and use of lands within the Monticello PA. Specifically, there is a need to evaluate management prescriptions and resource allocations to address the increases in recreation and visitor use, including scenic quality and open spaces, as well as the increased interest in oil and gas development. Land-use plan decisions may be changed only through the amendment or revision process.

### **ES. 3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Public involvement has been an integral part of BLM's RMP effort. The scoping period for the Monticello RMP began on June 4, 2003, and ended on January 31, 2004. Scoping consisted of scheduled open houses in six communities (Green River, Monticello, Moab, Blanding, and Salt Lake City, Utah, and Grand Junction, Colorado) and visits to 12 locations throughout the planning area by BLM personnel. In addition, news releases and radio announcements were used to notify the public regarding the scoping period and the planning process and to invite the public to provide written comments. Comments obtained from the public during the scoping period were used to define the relevant issues that would be resolved by presenting a broad range of alternative management actions.

The Draft RMP/EIS was released to the public on November 2, 2007, with publication of the notice of availability (NOA) by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). A 90-day public comment period ended on February 4, 2007. The BLM hosted five open houses during the public comment period to provide information on the content of the Draft RMP/EIS and on how to comment. Portions of all the alternatives and information based on the public comment were used to formulate the Proposed Plan, which is presented in this document. Chapter 5 contains additional information on public involvement in the RMP process.

## **ES. 4 PROPOSED PLAN AND DRAFT EIS ALTERNATIVES**

The Proposed Plan and the five alternatives that were presented in the Draft RMP/Draft EIS are now carried forward as part of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. The Proposed Plan is most closely associated with Alternative C, which was the Preferred Alternative in the Draft RMP. The Proposed Plan has been adjusted based on public comment and review of the Draft RMP/EIS.

Some of the decisions in this Proposed Plan RMP/EIS are carried forward from the existing San Juan RMP (BLM 1991) because there are no conflicts or other issues that would cause BLM to change them. These decisions are common to the Proposed Plan and all alternatives from the Draft RMP because a range of alternative decisions is not necessary for these resources or uses. Other decisions are common to the Proposed Plan and all action alternatives (Alternatives B, C, D and E), but are different from the No Action Alternative (A) due to a change in circumstances. An overview of some specific components of the Proposed Plan and each alternative from the Draft RMP is provided below. A full discussion of the Proposed Plan and each alternative is provided in Chapter 2.

### **ES. 4.1 PROPOSED PLAN**

The Proposed Plan consists of a combination of proposed decisions from the full range of alternatives presented in the Draft RMP/Draft EIS. The Proposed Plan was crafted based on public comments on the Draft RMP/Draft EIS, coordination with the Cooperating Agencies, and internal review and comment. It provides for the balance of use and protection of resources while considering the extent of the environmental impacts to the resources and uses. The Proposed Plan best resolves the major issues, provides common ground among conflicting opinions, and provides multiple uses of public lands in a sustainable fashion.

The Proposed Plan would protect important environmental values and sensitive resources while allowing for an appropriate level of development. It would provide a balance between protection of important natural resources and commodity production, as well as offer a full range of recreation opportunities, including additional opportunities for primitive recreation experiences.

Under the Proposed Plan, 0 acres would be open to cross-country, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use; 393,895 acres would be closed to OHV use; and 1,388,191 acres would be limited to designated routes (Table ES1). Approximately 1,947 miles of Class D travel routes would be designated (Table ES2). Under the Proposed Plan, seven Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) (562,824 acres) would be designated (Table ES3).

Seven Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) (73,492 acres) would be designated in the Proposed Plan, and four eligible rivers segments (35.7 miles) would be recommended as suitable for Wild and Scenic River (WSR) designation (Table ES4). Approximately 88,871 acres

of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be managed to protect, preserve, and maintain their wilderness characteristics. Approximately 493,400 acres would be closed to oil and gas leasing, 66,108 acres would be managed with No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulations, and 484,217 acres would be open with standard stipulations (Table ES6). The remaining 594,469 acres would be managed with timing limitations or controlled surface use stipulations.

#### **ES. 4.2 ALTERNATIVE A – NO ACTION**

Alternative A would continue of existing management under the current San Juan Resource Area Management Plan (1991) as amended.

#### **ES. 4.3 ALTERNATIVE B**

Alternative B would offer more protection for wildlife and other natural resources, and favor natural systems over commodities development. It would emphasize the protection of natural resources and landscapes as well as non-motorized recreation.

#### **ES. 4.4 ALTERNATIVE C – PREFERRED**

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative) would protect important environmental values and sensitive resources while allowing for commodities development. It would provide a balance between protection of important natural resources and commodity production, as well as offer a full range of recreation opportunities.

#### **ES. 4.5 ALTERNATIVE D**

Alternative D would emphasize commodity development over the protection of natural resources, and would emphasize motorized recreation.

#### **ES. 4.6 ALTERNATIVE E**

Alternative E would be the same as Alternative B except that 582,360 acres of non-WSA lands would be managed to preserve, protect, and maintain their wilderness characteristics. These lands would be managed as the following: closed to mineral leasing, closed to OHV use, proposed for withdrawal from mineral entry, right-of-way exclusion area, closed to disposal of mineral materials, closed to private and commercial woodland harvest, and managed as VRM I. Large areas on the west side of the Monticello FO would be difficult to access; any kind of surface-disturbing activities would be difficult to conduct in this area. Wilderness characteristics would be enhanced as would adjacent wilderness values found in WSAs.

Tables ES1 through ES6 summarize OHV categories, designated routes, SRMAs, special designations, non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, and oil and gas leasing categories for the Proposed Plan. These tables compare the Proposed Plan to the Draft EIS alternatives.

**Table ES1. OHV Categories (Acres)**

<b>OHV Designation Category</b>	<b>Alternative A No Action</b>	<b>Alternative B</b>	<b>Alternative C Preferred</b>	<b>Alternative D</b>	<b>Alternative E</b>	<b>Proposed Plan</b>
Open	611,310	0	2,311	2,311	0	0
Limited – designated	218,780	1,359,417	1,362,142	1,780,807	812,679	1,388,191
Limited use – seasonal	540,260	NA	3.8	NA	NA	0
Limited – existing	570,390	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Closed	276,430	423,698	418,667	0	970,436	393,895

**Table ES2. Designated Routes**

<b>Areas Limited to Designated Road and Trails</b>	<b>Alternative A No Action</b>	<b>Alternative B</b>	<b>Alternative C Preferred</b>	<b>Alternative D</b>	<b>Alternative E</b>	<b>Proposed Plan</b>
B Roads	0	875	873	873	875	873
D Roads	0	1,521	1,947	2,205	1,342	1,947

<sup>1</sup> Routes were not formally designated in the 1991 San Juan RMP. Use of existing routes includes 890 miles of B Roads and 2,179 miles of D Roads.

**Table ES3. Special Recreation Management Areas**

<b>SRMAs</b>	<b>Alternative A No Action</b>	<b>Alternative B</b>	<b>Alternative C Preferred</b>	<b>Alternative D</b>	<b>Alternative E</b>	<b>Proposed Plan</b>
Number	3	5	5	5	5	7
Acres	614,490	508,861	508,517	505,023	505,517	562,824

SRMAs are established to manage intensively used recreation areas and generally do not restrict other uses.

In Alternative B, non-motorized recreation is emphasized.

In Alternative C (preferred), opportunities for both non-motorized and motorized recreation are provided.

In Alternative D, motorized recreation is emphasized.

**Table ES4. Special Designations**

Type*		Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C Preferred	Alternative D	Alternative E	Proposed Plan
ACEC	number	10	12	7	0	12	7
	acres	492,077	521,142	76,761	0	521,142	73,492
WSR	eligible river segments	6	12	12	12	12	12
		56.8 miles	92.4 miles	18.4 miles	0 miles	92.4 miles	35.7 miles
	suitable segments	not evaluated	12	3	0	12	4
WSA	number	13					
	acres	391,599					

\* Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), Wild and Scenic River (WSR), and Wilderness Study Area (WSA)  
Acreage may overlap (scenic Highway and Cedar Mesa) and are different than previously published values.

\*\*Acreage based on the Statewide Report to Congress.

**Table ES5. Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

Type		Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C Preferred	Alternative D	Alternative E	Proposed Plan
WC Units	Number	0	0	0	0	29	5
	Acres	0	0	0	0	582,360	88,871

**Table ES6. Oil and Gas Leasing Stipulations**

Stipulation	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C Preferred	Alternative D	Alternative E	PROPOSED PLAN
Standard	578,604	365,170	629,472	962,283	213,290	484,217
TL & CSU	659,626	876,740	719,501	421,000	545,641	940,594
NSO	161,224	125,105	39,323	14,175	53,915	66,108
Closed	385,316	416,612	395,329	386,853	974,463	493,400
Projected Wells/LOP	73	66	74	75	54	72

Oil and gas stipulations would apply to other surface-disturbing activities where they are not contrary to laws, regulations, or policy.

The following stipulations would be applied to land-use authorizations: 1) standard stipulations, 2) timing limitations (TL), 3) controlled surface use (CSU), and 4) no surface occupancy (NSO). Areas identified as closed would not be available for oil and gas leasing.

Areas identified as NSO and closed would be avoidance and exclusion areas for rights-of-way, respectively. NSO and closed areas may be recommended for withdrawal of locatable minerals in the future if it is determined that unacceptable resource conflicts are occurring.

## **ES. 5 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

The Monticello FO is known for both its scenic quality and its recreational opportunities, which are an important land use in the planning area. Many visitors enjoy the diverse and varied recreational opportunities of the planning area. Recreation is an important part of San Juan County's economy. Recreational opportunities include scenic driving, mountain biking, hiking, rafting and boating, rock climbing, OHVs, and horseback riding. The many trail-based recreational activities in the planning area are highly dependent upon route systems. Mineral exploration and development comprise another major use of public lands in the Monticello PA. The oldest oil field in Utah is in the Monticello PA, where oil was discovered in Mexican Hat in 1879. In 1956, the development of the Aneth field sparked oil and gas exploration in San Juan County that continues to this day. Oil and gas production is currently taking place in Mexican Hat, Aneth, Lisbon Valley, and the Blanding Basin. There are approximately 42 active oil and/or gas fields in the Monticello PA

Uranium and vanadium deposits can be found within 17 historical mining districts throughout the planning area. With the recent rise in oil, gas and uranium prices, there has been renewed interest in exploration and development of these mineral resources in the Monticello FO. Other mineral resources within the planning area that are likely to be developed include: placer gold, limestone, building stone, sand and gravel, and clay. Other land uses within the planning area include rights-of-way (ROWs) for roads, pipelines, power lines, and communication sites, film permits, and livestock grazing.

Many important natural and cultural resources are found in the Monticello PA. Federally listed wildlife species inhabit the planning area including the Mexican spotted owl, Southwestern willow flycatcher, Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, and bonytail chub. The planning area also contains habitat for mule deer, elk, desert bighorn sheep, pronghorn, Gunnison Sage-grouse, and Gunnison's prairie dog.

Pre-Columbian cultural sites affiliated with Pueblo people, and sites related to Archaic and Paleo Indian cultures are present (12,000–5,000 B. C.). Historic Period (post-Columbian) occupation in the area includes one National Historic Trail (Old Spanish National Historic Trail) and one pioneer historic trail (Hole in the Rock). Other historic properties are related to Ute, Navajo, Apache sites and Anglo ranching, farming and mining locations. Over 28,000 cultural sites have been recorded.

## **ES. 6 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

The Proposed Plan would allow for many uses to continue but would constrain certain activities to maintain or protect important natural resources, including some non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, and crucial wildlife habitats. This could result in some short-term adverse impacts to local economies and resource extraction businesses, but long-term economic benefits would be gained from the emphasis on a diversity of recreational activities.

Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, would maintain the current rate of progress in meeting rangeland health standards and protecting resource values. It would allow for use to mostly continue at current levels in the same places in the planning area, with adjustments required in order to meet Standards for Rangeland Health or to mitigate resource concerns in compliance with existing laws and regulations.

Alternative B would have the least potential to adversely impact physical and biological resources and would protect a variety of vegetation types and wildlife habitats. Alternative B would be restrictive to resource extraction. Alternative B would have the potential for adverse impacts to businesses that depend on public land for resource extraction.

Alternative C, the Preferred Alternative, would allow for many uses to continue but would constrain certain activities in order to maintain or protect important natural resources. This could result in some short-term adverse impacts to local economies and resource extraction businesses, but long-term economic benefits could be gained from the emphasis on a diversity of recreational activities.

Alternative D offers the greatest potential benefits to the local economy from resource extraction, although economic benefits from recreation use would not be maximized. Resource extraction uses would generally be least encumbered by management decisions under this alternative. Alternative D would result in greater impacts on the physical and biological environment than actions proposed under the Proposed Plan or Alternatives B, C, or E.

Alternative E would be the same as Alternative B, except 582,360 acres of non WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be managed to protect, preserve and maintain their wilderness characteristics. This alternative would be the most restrictive for access and resource extraction. Some benefit to back country recreation would be realized.

Table 2.2 at the end of Chapter 2 summarizes potential impacts for the Proposed Plan and by alternatives from the Draft RMP. Detailed descriptions of impacts of the Proposed Plan and five draft 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.

## **ES. 7 BRIEF SUMMARY OF CHANGES BETWEEN THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND THE PROPOSED PLAN**

As a result of public comment, coordination with cooperating agencies, and internal review of the Draft RMP/EIS, the Proposed Plan is based on the Preferred Alternative from the Draft RMP/Draft EIS (Alternative C). Major changes between the Preferred Alternative from the Draft RMP and the Proposed Plan include the following: protecting five areas for their wilderness characteristics; adding a segment of the San Juan River as suitable for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System; reducing the size of the Indian Creek and San Juan River ACECs; expanding the Grand Gulch Plateau SRMA (also referred to as the Cedar Mesa SRMA) to include management zones for McLoyd Canyon–Moon House and Comb Ridge cultural areas (previously described as cultural special management areas) and changing the Beef Basin cultural special management area to a SRMA; allowing for OHV use for the full length of Arch Canyon; making Indian Creek a limited to designated routes OHV area; and expanding the wildlife crucial habitat boundaries, in accordance with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources data. All of these changes fall within the range of alternatives presented in the Draft RMP/Draft EIS. Other changes between the Draft RMP/EIS and the Proposed RMP/FEIS include clarifications in wording, editing, expanded analysis, and the addition of new information. The end of Chapter 1 has a summary of these changes. Appendix S contains a complete listing of changes between the Draft RMP/EIS and the present document.

## **ES. 8 NEXT STEPS**

Following publication by the EPA and the BLM of an NOA of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS in the Federal Register and distribution of the document, there will be a 30-day protest period. In addition, a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review period runs concurrently with the first half of the protest period. The state director will approve the Proposed RMP/Final EIS by issuing a public Record of Decision (ROD), which is a concise document summarizing the findings and decisions from the Proposed RMP. However, approval shall be withheld on any portion of a plan being protested until final action has been completed on such protest. Before such approval is given, there shall be public notice and opportunity for public comment on any significant change made to the Proposed Plan. Among other decisions, the proposed ACEC designations and OHV categories (limitations and closures) will be approved when the ROD is signed. Implementation-level decisions analyzed through this planning process will be appealable for 30 days after the ROD is signed.

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