BLM

Draft Resource Management Plans
Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area
Red Cliffs National Conservation Area

Draft Amendment to the St. George Field Office Resource Management Plan

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
St. George Field Office

July 2015

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Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area
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Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Prepared by the
St. George Field Office
July 2015

Jenna Whitlock
Acting Utah State Director
Bureau of Land Management

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Utah State Office
P.O. Box 45155
Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0155
http://www.blm.gov

In reply to:
1610 (UTCO3000)

Dear Reader:

Attached for your review and comment are Draft Resource Management Plans (Draft RMPs) for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area and Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (NCA), located in Washington County, Utah, and a supporting Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The Draft RMPs were prepared by BLM in consultation with cooperating agencies and in accordance with the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (OPLMA), which established the two NCAs; with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended; with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended; implementing federal regulations, BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1); and other applicable law and policy.

This document also includes a Draft RMP Amendment to the St. George Field Office's Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (approved in 1999, amended in 2001). The need to amend the current St. George Field Office RMP was driven by legislative direction from OPLMA that required BLM to take actions and make land use allocations on public lands in Washington County, Utah related to two planning issues. The three planning efforts were initiated concurrently to facilitate the preparation of a single DEIS to disclose the environmental consequences of implementing the two new NCA RMPs and amending the current St. George Field Office RMP.

The Draft RMPs for the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs NCAs address the long-term management of approximately 108,339 acres of public lands within the two NCAs. Planning issues addressed in these draft RMPs include the conservation, protection, and enhancement of the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, natural, educational, and scientific resources identified as the purposes for Congressional designation of the public lands as NCAs.

The BLM encourages the public to provide information and comments pertaining to the analysis presented in the Draft RMPs and Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS. We are particularly interested in feedback concerning the adequacy and accuracy of the proposed alternatives, the analysis of their respective management decisions, and any new information that would help the BLM as it develops the plans. In developing the Proposed RMPs/Final EIS, which is the next phase of the planning process, the decision-maker may select various management decisions from each of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMPs and Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS for the purpose of creating a management strategy that best meets the needs of the resources and values in this area. As a member of the public, your timely comments will help formulate the Proposed RMPs and Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS. Comments will be accepted for ninety (90) calendar days following the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) publication of its Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. The BLM can best utilize your comments and resource information submissions if received within the review period.

Comments may be submitted electronically to: utsgrmp@blm.gov. Comments may also be submitted by mail to: St. George Field Office, 345 East Riverside Drive, Utah 84790. To facilitate analysis of comments and information submitted, we strongly encourage you to submit comments in an electronic format.

Your review and comments on the content of this document are critical to the success of this planning effort. If you wish to submit comments on the Draft RMPs and Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS, we request that you make your comments as specific as possible. Comments will be more helpful if they include suggested changes, sources, or methodologies, and a reference to the section or page number. Comments containing only opinions or preferences will be considered and included as part of the decision making process; although, they will not receive a formal response from the BLM.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment - including your personal identifying information - may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Public meetings to provide an overview of the document, respond to questions, and take public comments will be announced by local media, website, and/or public mailings at least 15 days in advance. Public meetings are currently scheduled for St. George, Hurricane, and Salt Lake City, Utah.

Copies of the Draft RMPs and Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS have been sent to affected Federal, state and local government agencies, and tribal governments. Copies are available for public inspection at the Washington County Library, 88 West 100 South, St. George, Utah 84770 and the Salt Lake City Main Library, 210 East 400 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111. Copies of the Draft RMPs and Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS are available on the BLM website at www.blm.gov/sgfo. Copies are also available for public inspection at the following BLM locations:

St. George Field Office, 345 E. Riverside Drive, St. George, UT 84790

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

Thank you for your continued interest in the Draft RMPs for the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs NCAs and the Draft Amendment to the St. George Field Office RMP. We appreciate the information and suggestions you contribute to the planning process. For additional information or clarification regarding this document or the planning process, please contact Keith Rigtrup, Environmental Planner, Color County District Office, Bureau of Land Management, 176 East DL Sargent Drive, Cedar City, UT 84721, (435) 865-3063, krigtrup@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

Jenna Whitlock
Acting Utah State Director
Bureau of Land Management

Draft Resource Management Plans for
Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area and Red Cliffs National Conservation Area
and Draft Amendment to the St. George Field Office Resource Management Plan
Washington County, Utah
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

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

Type of Action: Draft (X) Final ( ) Administrative ( ) Legislative ( )

Jurisdiction: Color Country District, St. George Field Office, Utah

Abstract: The purpose of this planning process is to satisfy specific mandates from the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (OPLMA) that directed the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to develop comprehensive plans for the long-term management of Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area (NCA) and Red Cliffs NCA. The legislation also required BLM to take actions and make land use allocations on public lands in Washington County that require the St. George Field Office Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP, approved in 1999, amended in 2001) be amended to address two planning issues. The three planning efforts were initiated concurrently, to facilitate the preparation of a single Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental consequences of implementing the two new land use plans and amending the current SGFO RMP.

The Draft RMPs for the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs NCAs describe four alternatives proposed for the long-term management of approximately 108,339 acres of public lands within the two NCAs. Planning issues addressed in these draft RMPs include the conservation, protection, and enhancement of the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, natural, educational, and scientific resources identified as the purposes for Congressional designation of the public lands as NCAs.

The two issue Draft RMP Amendment to the St. George Field Office RMP contains four alternatives that address the protection of priority biological conservation areas on public lands in Washington County mandated by OPLMA, either through the administrative designation of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) or the identification of management actions developed to meet that goal where ACEC designation would not be warranted. The Draft RMP Amendment also proposes modifications to current area designations for motorized vehicle uses.

The four alternatives proposed in the Draft NCA RMPs and Draft RMP Amendment include Alternative A, the No Action alternative that represents the continuation of current management practices, and Alternative B, the agency Preferred Alternative. The single Draft EIS prepared to support this planning process analyses the environmental consequences of implementing the Draft NCA RMPs and Draft RMP Amendment.

The review period for public comment on the Draft NCA RMPs and the Draft RMP Amendment is 90 days from EPA's publication of its Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. Three public open house public meetings will be held in St. George, Hurricane, and Salt Lake City, Utah. These will be announced at least 15 days in advance through public notices and news releases and mailings. The purpose of the open house meetings is to provide information on the Draft NCA RMPs and Draft RMP Amendment and to collect public comment on the adequacy and accuracy of the analysis in the Draft EIS. Comments may be submitted to the St. George Field Office, 345 East Riverside Drive, St. George, Utah 84790, or sent to utsgrmp@blm.gov. Comments may also be faxed to (435) 688-3252. For more information about or to view the document, visit www.blm.gov/sgfo.

For further information, contact: Keith Rigtrup, BLM-Utah Planning Coordinator, Bureau of Land Management, Color County District Office, 176 East DL Sargent Drive, Cedar City, UT 847221-9337, (435)865-3063, krigtrup@blm.gov.

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared Draft Resource Management Plans (RMP) to provide management direction for the Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area and the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (NCA), as directed by the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 that established each of the NCAs. Title I, Subtitle O of this legislation (16 U.S.C. 7202, Public Law 111-11, hereinafter OPLMA) concerns public lands managed by BLM in Washington County, Utah.

A Draft Amendment to the St. George Field Office Record of Decision and RMP (SGFO RMP, approved in 1999) has also been prepared to address specific mandates from OPLMA concerning land use allocations on public lands in Washington County, Utah that require the SGFO RMP be amended.

The Draft RMPs for the NCAs and the Draft Amendment to the SGFO RMP were prepared in accordance with legislative direction from OPLMA and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976; with the Code of Federal Regulations at 43 CFR at Subpart 1610; and with guidance from BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook (BLM 2005). Public input from scoping and consultations with Cooperating Agencies also helped to direct the preparation of these plans.

A single Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) is included to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended; the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508; and the requirements of BLM's NEPA Handbook, H-1790-1. The Draft EIS disclose the environmental consequences of implementing the two new land use plans and an amendment to the current SGFO RMP, which each include a preferred alternative, the no action alternative, and two action alternatives.

The two NCAs where established by Congress through the OPLMA, which President Barack Obama signed into law on March 30, 2009. The Beaver Dam Wash NCA is comprised of approximately 63,480 acres of public land, located in the southwestern corner of Washington County, Utah and within the administrative boundaries of BLM's SGFO. In October of 2009, Congress modified the boundaries and reduced the acreage of the Beaver Dam Wash NCA by 5,000 acres, through a "legislative rider" to the 2010 Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill Conference Agreement. The change excluded a designated utility corridor from the NCA, to facilitate management of the corridor for future utility line developments.

The Red Cliffs NCA includes approximately 44,859 acres of public land is located in central Washington County, north of the City of St. George. It is also under the administrative jurisdiction of the SGFO.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this planning process is to satisfy specific mandates from OPLMA that directed the development of comprehensive plans for the long-term management of Beaver Dam Wash NCA and Red Cliffs NCA and make land use allocations on public lands in Washington County that required an amendment to the SGFO RMP.

BEAVER DAM WASH NCA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

At Section 1975 (d) (1) of Title 1, Subtitle O, OPLMA directs the Secretary of the Interior, through BLM, to develop a comprehensive [resource] management plan for the Beaver Dam Wash NCA to achieve the following Congressionally-defined purpose:

> To conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, natural, educational, and scientific resources of the Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area. (OPLMA Section 1975 (a))

Land use planning goals, objectives, and management decisions approved in the RMP for the Beaver Dam Wash NCA must be consistent with the purposes, authorized uses, and other mandates from OPLMA. The mandates of OPLMA emphasize conservation, protection, enhancement, and restoration of public land values as the designation purposes for the NCA.

Regarding authorized uses, OPLMA at Section 1975 (e) (2) specifies that "the Secretary shall only allow uses of the National Conservation Area that the Secretary determines would further the purpose" for which the NCA was designated. OPLMA Section 1975 (g) (1) specifically restricts allowable uses by withdrawing the public lands of this NCA, subject to valid existing rights, from:

- All forms of entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws;
- Location, entry, and patenting under the mining laws; and
- Operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws.

At Section 1975 (e) (3), Congress addressed motorized vehicle access and travel in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA by designating three areas (labeled "Designated Road Areas" on the legislative map of the NCA) where motorized vehicle travel is permitted only on the roads identified on that map. In areas outside of the "Designated Road Areas", motorized vehicle travel is limited to roads designated by BLM through a public Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management planning process. There is an exception from the motorized travel restrictions for cases where motorized vehicles are needed for administrative purposes or to respond to an emergency.

RED CLIFFS NCA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Section 1974 (d) (1) of OPLMA mandates the Secretary, through BLM, to develop a comprehensive (resource) management plan for the Red Cliffs NCA to achieve the following Congressionally-defined purposes:

To conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, natural, educational, and scientific resources of the National Conservation Area; and

> To protect each species that is located in the National Conservation Area; and listed as a threatened or endangered species on the list of threatened species or the list of endangered species published under…the Endangered Species Act of 1973. (OPLMA Section 1974 (a))

Land use planning goals, objectives, and management decisions approved in the RMP for the Red Cliffs NCA must be consistent with the purposes, authorized uses, and other mandates from OPLMA. The mandates of OPLMA emphasize conservation, protection, enhancement, and restoration of public land values as the designation purposes for the NCA.

Regarding authorized uses, the OPLMA Section 1974 (e) (2) specifies that "the Secretary shall only allow uses of the National Conservation Areas that the Secretary determines would further the purpose" for which the NCA was designated. OPLMA Section 1974 (g) (1) specifically restricts allowable uses by withdrawing the public lands of this NCA, subject to valid existing rights, from:

- All forms of entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws;
- Location, entry, and patenting under the mining laws; and
- Operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws.

AMENDMENT TO SGFO RMP

Designation of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Section 1979 (a) (1) and (2) of OPLMA, directs the Secretary, through BLM, to "identify areas located in the County where biological conservation is a priority; and undertake activities to conserve and restore plant and animal species and natural communities within such areas."

Satisfying this legislative mandate from OPLMA could be accomplished through the administrative designation of new areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) on public lands, to direct special management attention to biological resources and natural communities that meet one or more of the following criteria for both relevance and importance (BLM Manual 1613.1):

Relevance: An area meets the "relevance" criteria if it contains one or more of the following:

- A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).
- A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species, rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian or rare geological feature).

Importance: The resource, system, or process described above must have substantial significance and value in order to satisfy the importance criteria. This generally means that the resource, system, or process is characterized by one or more of the following:

- Has more than locally significant qualities that give it worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.
- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened or vulnerable to adverse change.
- Has been recognized as warranting protection in order to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq., PL 94-579, FLPMA) at Section 202 (c) (3), the identification, evaluation, and designation of ACECs must be accomplished through a land use planning process. The SGFO RMP must be amended in order to designate new ACECs for relevant and important biological resources and natural communities.

Management of Priority Biological Conservation Areas

BLM could also amend the SGFO RMP to achieve biological conservation objectives, as directed by OPLMA, by identifying priority biological conservation areas and proposing management decisions for those areas where biological resources are in need of protection, but do not meet one or more of the criteria for both relevance and importance required for ACEC designation. Proposed changes to existing goals, objectives, and management decisions from the SGFO RMP for specific areas of public lands in Washington County necessitate an amendment to the SGFO RMP.

During this planning effort, BLM solicited input from federal agencies, state and local governments, Indian tribes, and the public, to identify public lands in Washington County where biological conservation is a priority and where new ACECs should be designated or other special management applied to conserve and restore plant and animal species and natural communities.

Off-Highway Vehicle Area Designations

Section 1977 (b) (1) of OPLMA, directed the Secretary, through BLM, to "develop a comprehensive travel [and transportation] management plan" (TMP) for public lands in Washington County. Prior to the development of this plan, the SGFO RMP must be amended to modify certain existing off-highway vehicle (OHV) area designations (open, limited or closed), to be in compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 43 CFR 8340.0-5, (f), (g), and (h) respectively and 43 CFR 8342.1 (a-d) and related agency policies. Area designations provide the framework within which individual route designations are made, as BLM prepares the legislatively-mandated travel management plan for public lands in Washington County.

PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC COLLABORATION

In May 2010, the SGFO initiated the planning process through the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare resource management plans for the Beaver Dam Wash NCA and the Red Cliffs NCA and to amend the SGFO RMP in the Federal Register (Federal Register, May 10, 2010, Vol. 75, No. 89, pages 25876-25877). The NOI identified a 60-day scoping period during which the public could assist BLM in the identification of issues or concerns related to the planning process. Public scoping is required by NEPA in the early stages of developing an EIS to determine the scope and significance of issues related to a proposed action, such as the development of RMPs or an RMP Amendment (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1501.7).

The NOI announced the dates, meeting locations, and times for four public scoping open houses for this planning process. It also included instructions for providing written comments by the end date for the scoping period, July 19, 2010. This same information was included in a press release published in newspapers throughout the planning area in May of 2010. Scoping open houses were held in the cities of St. George, Hurricane, and Salt Lake City, Utah ; and in Mesquite, Nevada. Various media were used to publicize the open houses, including on-line postings on BLM-Utah State Office and SGFO websites, and a planning newsletter that was mailed to hundreds of individuals, organizations and agencies and made available at each of the scoping meetings. The newsletter provided information about the scoping process and instructions for submitting comments. It also included information about the NCAs, the

purposes for which Congress had designated them to the National Conservation Lands, and their resource values. The newsletter requested public input related to potential planning issues and requested input on alternatives for long-term management of the public lands within each NCA. The mandates that required amendment of the SGFO RMP were identified in the newsletter and the public invited to submit nominations for ACEC or other information that would assist BLM to identify and direct special management attention to areas of public land where biological conservation should be a priority. The newsletter and other information about the planning process were also posted and updated on the BLM SGFO website (www.blm.gov/sgfo).

The four public open houses were held over a one-week period in June 2010, and were attended by 269 members of the public and representatives from other federal agencies, as well as state and local governments. BLM resource specialists were available to answer questions and provide additional information about specific issues throughout the meeting. Informational posters and maps were on display during the open houses and were designed to stimulate questions from the public and assist the preparation of scoping comments, which were accepted through written comment forms, emails, and postings to the BLM website.

In January of 2011, a second planning newsletter was mailed to all governmental agencies, organizations, and members of the public who had requested to be placed on the mailing list. This newsletter provided an overview of the results of scoping, the availability of the scoping report, and the announcement of an Economic Strategies Workshop that was held in St. George, Utah on February 18, 2011.

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

Using public comments, input from Cooperating Agencies, and issues and concerns identified by BLM staff and management, BLM's Planning Team drafted three new alternatives to address management of the two NCAs and the planning issues identified for the Amendment. One other alternative, Alternative A (No Action), provides the current management goals, objectives, and actions, as stated in the SGFO RMP, for each program or resource value. Implementing regulations for NEPA require the formulation of a reasonable range of alternatives to address identified resource conflicts or concerns. Each action alternative must meet the purpose and need for the plans, be viable and reasonable, be responsive to issues identified in scoping, and consistent with the established planning criteria (Appendix B). For the NCAs, each alternative was evaluated to ensure that it complied with the mandates from OPLMA, as well as FLPMA, other relevant laws, regulations, and policies, and the purpose, significance, and mission statements of each NCA. Similarly, the alternatives for the Amendment to the SGFO RMP were evaluated to ensure that they complied with FLPMA, as well as other relevant federal laws, regulations, and BLM policies.

Public input received during the scoping process was considered in the development of the alternatives and their management options; the public scoping process is described in more detail in Chapter 5. A number of state agencies, including the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR), provided data and input that assisted the development of alternatives. Other federal agencies, including the USFWS and the United States Forest Service (USFS)-Dixie National Forest participated in the planning process. The State of Utah; Washington County, Utah; and Mojave County, Arizona, as formal Cooperating Agencies to this planning process, and the Shivwits Band of the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, were directly involved in the planning process and the development of alternatives. The Cooperating Agencies reviewed and provided comments on the preliminary drafts of the RMPs and RMP Amendment/Draft EIS, Chapter 5 provides additional detail on consultation and coordination related to this planning process.

Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

Alternative A (No Action) is required by NEPA and serves as a baseline against which to compare the environmental consequences that could be associated with implementation of other alternatives. Under this alternative, management for the two NCAs, and the public lands affected by the RMP Amendment, would be derived primarily from management decisions in the 1999 SGFO RMP, as amended. Unless otherwise noted, or if there is no similar action, Alternative A (No Action) directly quotes, rather than paraphrases or updates, the goals, objectives, and management decisions from the SGFO RMP. As written, this alternative may not always clearly convey that it describes how resources values and public land programs have been, and currently are, managed under the RMP. A description of the on-going management provides a baseline against which to compare the three new alternatives and their environmental consequences. However, this alternative also reflects recent mandates for the three planning areas from

OPLMA. As examples, the designation of BLM-managed wilderness in Washington County, through OPLMA, modified decisions from the SGFO RMP. These modifications are reflected in the Alternative A (No Action) for the Red Cliffs NCA, as two designated wilderness units are located entirely or partially within this NCA.

Alternative A (No Action) has also been updated to include the mandates from OPLMA that withdrew the public lands in both NCAs from entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws (OPLMA Section 1974 (g) (1) and 1975 (g) (1). While Alternative A (No Action) continues to provide considerable valid management direction for the two NCAs, and the public lands that could be affected by the Amendment of the SGFO RMP, in many instances, management decisions from the SGFO RMP conflict with the mandates of OPLMA or lack the specificity needed for future management. This alternative does not meet the purpose and need for a comprehensive management plan for either NCA nor does it address the two planning issues identified for the Amendment, but is carried forward for analysis to comply with the requirements of NEPA and to serve as a baseline for the comparison of impacts associated with the three new alternatives.

Alternative B (Preferred Alternative)

Alternative B attempts to balance resource protection and human uses of the public lands in the two NCAs and on public lands affected by the RMP Amendment. For the two NCAs, management would focus on protecting native vegetation communities, wildlife habitats, cultural resources, and the scenic qualities of each area from threats, particularly loss to or damage from wildland fires. The restoration of damaged lands is also emphasized under this alternative. Changes are proposed related to livestock grazing management strategies in Beaver Dam Wash NCA. Sustainable public recreation uses would be managed through zoning of the two NCAs, permitting, and the development of sustainable facilities that enhance visitor experiences. Under Alternative B, in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA, an Old Spanish National Historic Trail Management Corridor is proposed and management actions are identified to conserve, protect, and restore trail resources, associated settings, and primary uses within that corridor. Emphasis would be placed on environmental education, interpretation, and opportunities for citizen stewardship of NCA resources. Alternative B incorporates elements from the other alternatives, as well as unique elements that would further goals and objectives relating to scientific research opportunities in the two NCAs.

This alternative for the Amendment proposes to satisfy OPLMA's mandate related to areas of public land where biological conservation is a priority through two approaches: 1) the administrative designation of new ACECs and the retention of existing ACEC designations; and 2) the implementation of special management for public lands identified by the public during scoping where biological conservation is a priority, but where the species present may not meet both the relevance and importance criteria required for ACEC designation. Three new ACECs would be designated and eight existing ACECs would be carried forward. Management prescriptions are proposed for the new ACECs that would help to ensure the protection of these species through balanced levels of land use allocations and restrictions on public uses.

The biological conservation objectives mandated by OPLMA would also be satisfied through the implementation of special management prescriptions for an approximately 87,031 acre area of public lands, labeled by BLM as the Bull Valley Mountains Multi-Species Management Area, to protect crucial habitat and migration corridors for mule deer, other wildlife species, and diverse predators in northwestern Washington County.

Changes are proposed for existing OHV area designations that would remove the mountain biking area designations and change the acres designated as Open, Limited, and Closed, for cross-country motorized OHV travel, to comply with federal regulations and BLM's Travel and Transportation Management guidance. The acreage identified as Open to cross-country motorized vehicle travel would be reduced from 80,668 acres under Alternative A (No Action) to 22,062 under this alternative.

Alternative C

Alternative C represents an approach to the conservation and protection of resource values that emphasizes higher levels of restrictions on certain land uses and activities, while continuing to allow for compatible public uses. Management of the two NCAs would also focus on protecting the ecological and scenic values of the NCAs from damage or loss to natural and human-caused impacts. Restoration of damaged lands would emphasize the use of

native vegetation species and the least invasive methods to accomplish goals and objectives. Under this alternative, public lands in the NCAs would not be available for livestock grazing in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA. This alternative identifies acres in each NCA that would be managed for wilderness characteristics and as heritage areas focused on the protection of cultural resources. In the Beaver Dam Wash NCA, an Old Spanish National Historic Trail Management Corridor is proposed and management actions identified to conserve, protect, and restore trail resources, associated settings, and primary uses within that corridor. Like Alternative B, this alternative emphasizes environmental education outreach, interpretation, and scientific research.

This alternative for the Amendment proposes to satisfy OPLMA's mandate related to areas of public land where biological conservation is a priority through the two approaches described above under Alternative B. Fourteen new ACECs for threatened, endangered or BLM Sensitive are evaluated for administrative designation and eight existing ACEC designations would be carried forward under this alternative. Management prescriptions proposed for the new ACECs would help to ensure the protection of the relevance and importance values of the ACECs, through higher levels of restrictions on public land allocations and uses.

Like Alternative B, this alternative proposes special management prescriptions for an approximately 87,000 acre area of public lands, informally labeled by BLM as the Bull Valley Mountains Multi-Species Management Area, to protect crucial habitat and migration corridors for mule deer, other wildlife species, and diverse predators in northwestern Washington County.

As under Alternative B, existing mountain biking area designations would be revoked and acres designated as Open for cross-country motorized OHV travel would be reduced to comply with federal regulations and BLM's Travel and Transportation Management guidance. Alternative C would designate the highest amount of acreage, 387,222 acres, of public lands in the SGFO as Limited.

Alternative D

Alternative D emphasizes a broader array and higher levels of public use and access, while still meeting the mandates of "conservation, protection, and enhancement" of resource values in the two NCAs. It emphasizes diverse and sustainable recreation uses of the two NCAs through the development of new, non-motorized trails and visitor facilities. Public lands within the NCAs would continue to be available for livestock grazing. Corridors would be retained or designated to accommodate new utility and/or transportation ROWs. Cultural and paleontological resources are proposed to be allocated to conservation, scientific research, and public uses. In the Beaver Dam Wash NCA, an Old Spanish National Historic Trail Management Corridor is proposed and management actions identified to conserve, protect, and restore trail resources, associated settings, and primary uses within that corridor. Like Alternatives B and C, this alternative emphasizes environmental education outreach, interpretation, and scientific research.

This RMP Amendment would satisfy OPLMA's biological conservation mandate through the retention of eight existing ACEC designations and special management prescriptions for an approximately 87,031acre Bull Valley Mountains Multi-Species Management Area, to protect crucial habitat and migration corridors for mule deer, other wildlife species, and diverse predators in northwestern Washington County.

Existing mountain biking area designations would be revoked and acres designated as Open for cross-country motorized OHV travel would be reduced when compared to Alternative A (No Action), to comply with federal regulations and BLM's Travel and Transportation Management guidance.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Chapter 3 (Affected Environment) describes the environmental resources of the Beaver Dam Wash NCA and the Red Cliffs NCA that could be affected by the implementation of the alternatives presented in Chapter 2. Also included here are descriptions of authorized land uses that provide economic and social benefits to individuals and local communities. Where specific information about resource conditions or uses is not available for the NCAs, the best available county-wide or regional data are used. The RMP Amendment is limited to two issues; the resources and uses described in the Affected Environment reflect the narrow scope of this planning process. For each of the three planning efforts considered in this chapter, the Affected Environment descriptions provide the baseline conditions

for Alternative A (No Action), against which the potential impacts of the other "action alternatives" are compared in Chapter 4 of the Draft EIS.

The level of detail presented in this chapter is sufficient to assess the potential effects discussed in Chapter 4 and is based on the alternative management actions identified in Chapter 2. Acreage figures and other data provided are approximate projections and readers should not infer that they reflect exact measurements or precise calculations. These figures and data were calculated using GIS technology and there may be slight variations in total acres for resource values or uses. The environmental values, resource uses, special designations, and social and economic conditions in this chapter appear in the same order as they do in Chapters 2 and 4.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Chapter 4 (Environmental Consequences) discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the human environment anticipated to occur as a result of implementation of the alternatives developed for the long term management of public lands in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA and the Red Cliffs NCA. Similarly, the environmental consequences that could result from implementation of the alternatives developed to address the two planning issues that comprise the Amendment to the SGFO RMP are presented in this chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide BLM decision-makers and the public with an analysis of the environmental consequences of implementing any of the alternatives proposed in Chapter 2. Each impact analysis identifies the methods used for the analysis, including indicators, assumptions, and types and nature of impacts on that resource or program, from other resources/resource uses. The potential impacts and beneficial effects are described, a summary of impacts is presented, and an analysis of cumulative impacts. A separate section describing unavoidable adverse impacts, irretrievable or irreversible commitment of resources, and the relationship between local short-term uses and long-term productivity is presented at the end of the chapter for each of the NCAs and the Amendment.

NEXT STEPS

The comment period on these Draft RMPs and Draft Plan Amendment/Draft EIS will extend for 90 days following publication of the EPA's Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. All written comments will be evaluated and responses to those comments prepared by BLM. Substantive comments could lead to changes in one or more of the alternatives, or in the analysis of environmental consequences. Proposed RMPs and a Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS will then be completed and released for review. If protests are received on the Proposed RMPs and a Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS, they will be reviewed and addressed by the Director of the BLM before Records of Decision for the RMPs and RMP Amendment are signed and released to the public.

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