

Chapter 1. Purpose & Need for the RMP

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepares resource management plans (RMPs) to guide and manage resources and uses in the National System of Public Lands. These RMPs are the basis of future management of BLM-administered public lands (public lands) and provide a framework for developing subsequent detailed plans for specific resources and uses. The BLM's Phoenix District, Lower Sonoran Field Office (LSFO) is engaged in a planning process to update management direction for public lands in the south central portion of Arizona, which is referred to as the Lower Sonoran Planning Area (Planning Area) throughout this document. While the BLM makes decisions related only to public lands and associated resources, the agency is responsible for collaboratively planning with adjacent jurisdictions and the public to encourage compatible land uses within a regional context.

On January 17, 2001, a portion of the Planning Area was designated as the Sonoran Desert National Monument (SDNM) when President William J. Clinton issued Presidential Proclamation 7397 (Appendix A, *Sonoran Desert National Monument Presidential Proclamation* (p.)). The Monument was created to protect an array of scientific, biological, archaeological, geological, cultural, and historical objects. These objects, both individually and collectively, in the context of the natural environments that support and protect them, are referred to as "Monument objects." The LSFO is responsible for the management of public lands within the SDNM in a manner that is consistent with management guidance outlined in the proclamation. Due to such special management requirements for the Monument, the Lower Sonoran Planning Area is divided into two Decision Areas: the SDNM Decision Area, which includes all public lands in the Monument, and the Lower Sonoran Decision Area, which includes all public lands within the Planning Area outside the Monument. In this planning effort, the LSFO will provide management direction for the Lower Sonoran Decision Area and another for the SDNM Decision Area. The planning process presented in this Draft RMP/EIS will be used to develop two separate RMPs/Records of Decision (RODs): one that will provide management direction for the Lower Sonoran Decision Area and another for the SDNM Decision Area.

This document, the Lower Sonoran and SDNM Draft RMP and Draft EIS (Draft RMP/EIS), was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S. Code [USC] 4321 et seq.) and the U.S. Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementation regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulation [CFR] 1500 et seq.). This document was produced in accordance with all applicable Federal statutes and regulations (Appendix B, *Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Policies* (p. 1003)). The selected planning approach is consistent with the requirements found in the Federal Land Policy & Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 USC 1701). The process is also compliant with the set of instruction memoranda, information bulletins, and other appropriate BLM manuals, handbooks, and strategic plans that embody the most current BLM practices regarding the process and content resulting documents.

Note: New regulations, manuals, policies, and guidance have been issued that affect the management of several resources and resource uses within the Planning Area. Less complex adjustments have been incorporated into this draft; however, changes requiring further analysis or a re-evaluation of proposed allocations and management decisions will be postponed until after this draft is published. Changes will be included in the Proposed RMP/EIS, including changes related to BLM Director's Office Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. DOIM 2011-004, which revises recreation land-use planning guidance; IM No. AZ-2011-005, which updates the BLM plant and animal sensitive-species list; and the addition of the Sonoran desert tortoise to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) candidate species list.

1.1. PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1.1. Purpose for the Lower Sonoran and SDNM RMPs

The purpose of the Lower Sonoran/SDNM Draft RMP is to provide guidance for managing the use of public lands and to provide a framework for future land-management actions within the Planning Area. To accomplish this, the Draft RMP/EIS will consolidate and replace the current management guidance for each Decision Area and respond to changed conditions by identifying and carrying forward previous decisions that are still applicable and, where necessary, modify existing management direction. Management of the decision areas is currently provided by a series of existing land use plans and plan amendments that were implemented at various times from 1983 through 2008. These existing plans, and amendments and the Decision Area to which they apply, are presented in Table 1.1, “Current Land Use Plans and Plan Amendments” (p. 2) and in Map 1–2. The Monument is also guided by Presidential Proclamation No. 7397 and interim Monument guidance.

Table 1.1. Current Land Use Plans and Plan Amendments

Land Use Plans or Land Use Plan Amendment	Lower Sonoran Decision Area	SDNM Decision Area
<i>Land Use Plans</i>		
<i>Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan</i> (BLM 1983)	Yes; Saddle Mountain area only	No
<i>Lower Gila South RMP</i> (BLM 1988)	Yes; excluding Saddle Mountain, East Valley parcels, and Sentinel Plain.	Yes, excluding Sand Tank Mountains
<i>Phoenix Resource Area RMP</i> (BLM 1989)	Yes; East Valley parcels only	No
<i>Land Use Plans Amendments</i>		
<i>Lower Gila South RMP Goldwater Amendment</i> (BLM 1990)	Yes; Sentinel Plain and Ajo parcels only	Yes; Sand Tank Mountains only*
<i>Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration</i> (BLM 1997)	Yes; entire Decision Area	Yes; entire Decision Area
<i>Statewide Amendment for Fire, Fuels, and Air Quality</i> (BLM 2003)	Yes; entire Decision Area	Yes; entire Decision Area
<i>Cameron Allotment Amendment to the Lower Gila South RMP</i> (2004)	Yes; grazing allotments in the Ajo area	No
<i>Amendment to the Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan and the Lower Gila South RMP</i> (2005)	Yes; excludes East Valley parcels	Yes; entire Decision Area
* Some decisions superseded by the Monument proclamation and interim guidance		

1.1.2. Need for the Lower Sonoran and SDNM RMPs

The SDNM RMP is needed to respond to the establishment of the SDNM. The Monument proclamation assigns the BLM with the responsibility to protect objects for which the Monument was established, and requires that an RMP be prepared to ensure that the management actions needed to do so are identified and implemented. In the absence of such a plan, current management for the SDNM falls under interim Monument guidance, the various existing RMPs, and plan amendments. These documents do not address many current management issues.

In addition, there is a need to consolidate the three previous RMPs and five plan amendments (see Table 1.1, “Current Land Use Plans and Plan Amendments” (p. 2)) for both the Lower Sonoran

and SDNM Decision Areas because existing plans contain obsolete planning boundaries and management decisions. Over the nearly 30 years during which these plans have been in effect, significant and ongoing changes have occurred that have dramatically altered the natural and social environments in the Planning Area. Existing management decisions in these plans have not kept pace with changing circumstances, demographics, resource conditions, and policies. New RMPs are needed to address changing conditions, which include:

- Unprecedented regional population growth and urban expansion into surrounding public lands is increasing demand for access to and use of public lands and resources. Growth increases demand for commodities, utilities, renewable energy, communication facilities, transportation, and infrastructure on public lands;
- Emerging recreational activities, some of which are based on recent technologies, have yielded new recreational equipment;
- New legal and BLM policy requirements have resulted in additional or revised management responsibilities; and
- New information and understandings of ecological relationships has lead to changes in management direction.

1.2. PLANNING AREA AND SETTING

1.2.1. Planning Area

The Planning Area, identified on Map 1–1, covers nearly 8.9 million acres of south-central Arizona and includes much of Maricopa County, as well as sections of Gila, Pima, Pinal, and Yuma counties. Population centers within or adjacent to the Planning Area include metropolitan Phoenix and the communities of Goodyear, Buckeye, Gila Bend, Ajo, Globe-Miami, Tonopah, Mobile, Maricopa, Casa Grande, and Sells. The Planning Area encompasses Federal and State-administered, private, and tribal lands. As identified in Table 1.2, “Surface Management Responsibility/Ownership in the Lower Sonoran Planning Area” (p. 4), the BLM manages 1,416,600 surface acres of public lands in the Planning Area, which include 1,338,300 acres of mineral estate also managed by the BLM. The State manages the remaining acres. The BLM manages another 210,000 acres of mineral estate where the surface acres are managed by other non-Federal landowners, which are referred to as split estate lands. More information regarding mineral estate management may be found in Chapter 3, *Affected Environment* (p. 251). Unless otherwise identified, this Draft RMP/EIS focuses on surface acres of public lands. The BLM is responsible only for the management of public lands within the Planning Area. These lands are divided into the two Decision Areas (Lower Sonoran and SDNM), which are discussed in detail in the following section.

Note: Due to BLM efforts to review, research, and correct parcels and GIS data shape files, information regarding surface-management responsibility and other acreage/mile figures used for allocations and analysis calculations may be adjusted between this draft and the proposed final RMP. Notes are made throughout the document and on maps where this may occur.

Table 1.2. Surface Management Responsibility/Ownership in the Lower Sonoran Planning Area

Surface Management Responsibility/Ownership	Planning Area Surface Acres	% of Area	Planning Area Surface Acres (Excluding SDNM)	% of Area	SDNM Surface Acres	% of Area
BLM	1,416,600	16.0	930,200	11.1	486,400	97.9
Other Federal Agencies	2,374,300	26.8	2,368,800	28.3	--	--
American Indian Tribes	3,237,100	36.5	3,236,100	38.7	--	--
State Lands	366,300	4.1	371,500	4.4	3,900	0.8
Private Lands	1,402,000	15.8	1,386,100	16.6	6,100	1.2
Other Non-Federal Lands	71,700	0.8	--	--	--	--
Total Surface Acres/Total Percent of Area	8,868,000	100.0	8,371,400	100.0	496,600	100.0

SOURCE: BLM 2010

While the majority of public lands in the Planning Area are consolidated, some small tracts are interspersed with other Federal, State, and private lands. Other Federal land managers include the U.S. Air Force, National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Some of the large landowners and managers include Arizona State Land Department for State Trust Land; county parks; and various tribes including the Tohono O’odham Nation, Gila River Indian Community, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and Ak-Chin Indian Community. In addition, other agencies may have specialized management responsibilities, such as the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) responsibility for managing wildlife for the State.

1.2.2. Decision Areas

As mentioned above, the BLM is responsible only for management of public lands the Planning Area, which is divided into the Lower Sonoran and SDNM Decision Areas (see Map 1–1). The acres of public lands reported in Table 1.2, “Surface Management Responsibility/Ownership in the Lower Sonoran Planning Area” (p. 4) Responsibility/Ownership in the Lower Sonoran Planning Area are subject to change if the BLM acquires or disposes of such lands. Newly acquired lands would be managed according to the decisions in the applicable RMP, negating the need for a plan amendment.

1.2.2.1. Lower Sonoran Decision Area

The Lower Sonoran Decision Area covers a wide geographic region. Specific geographic areas are used for reference in subsequent discussions throughout the plan. These geographic areas are shown on Map 1–3 and are summarized below:

- Saddle Mountain (Area 1 on map): Public lands in the north portion of the Planning Area near Tonopah and Interstate 10 (I-10)
- Buckeye Hills, and Rainbow and Vekol valleys (Area 2 on map): Tracts of public lands east of State Route 85 but outside the SDNM
- Gila Bend and Painted Rock mountains (Area 3 on map): Public lands in the portion of the Planning Area west of the SDNM and between Interstate 8 (I-8) and I–10

- Sentinel Plain (Area 4 on map): Public lands west of Gila Bend and south of I-8
- South Gila Bend (Area 5 on map): The small but consolidated block of public lands southeast of Gila Bend and west of the SDNM
- Ajo Block (Area 6 on map): The tract of public lands in the vicinity of Ajo, Arizona
- East Valley and Globe/Miami (Area 7 on map): The scattered tracts east of the Phoenix metropolitan area

1.2.2.2. SDNM Decision Area

As stated in Presidential Proclamation 7397, the SDNM was designated to protect “a magnificent example of untrammeled Sonoran desert landscape” with an “extraordinary array of biological, scientific, and historic resources” (see Appendix A, *Sonoran Desert National Monument Presidential Proclamation* (p.)). The Monument is considered a geographic area (area 8 on Map 1-3), which contains one sub-area, the Sand Tank Mountains, formerly known as “Area A”, (area 9 on map), which is located in the southwest corner of the Monument.

1.2.2.3. The Barry M. Goldwater Range Relinquished Parcels

In addition to the above, specific geographic parcels also referred to throughout the plan are the “BGR relinquished parcels.” These lands were withdrawn and reserved for military use in the 1940s by the Secretary of the Air Force to be managed as part of the BGR and were relinquished to the BLM in 2001 per Public Law 106-65 (1999). These parcels include 78,000 acres in the southern portion of the SDNM (formerly known as “Area A”), 21,400 acres in Sentinel Plain (portions of the geographic area noted above), and 2,900 acres near the Ajo Airport referred to as the “Ajo Airport parcels.”

1.3. Planning Process and Issues

1.3.1. Planning Process

An RMP is the master land-use plan that guides the management of public lands in a particular area or administrative unit. They are usually prepared to cover the lands administered by a certain field office. An approved RMP establishes the following items in a written document:

- Resource condition goals and objectives,
- Allowable resource uses and related levels of production or use to be maintained,
- Land areas to be managed for limited, restricted, or exclusive resource uses or for transfer from BLM administration,
- Program constraints and general management practices and protocols,
- General implementation schedule or sequences, and
- Intervals and standards for monitoring the plan.

In accordance with 43 CFR 1610.4, preparation of an RMP involves interrelated steps as described in Table 1.3, “Land Use Planning Process” (p. 6). This table identifies where this Draft RMP/EIS fit in the overall planning process.

Table 1.3. Land Use Planning Process

Planning Steps	Description
Identify Issues	Issues or land use problems that need to be resolved are identified. This ongoing process ties to the NEPA scoping process.
Develop Planning Criteria	Planning criteria establish constraints and guides for the planning process; streamline the process; establish standards, rules, and measures; set the scope of inventory and data collection; identify the range of alternatives; and estimate the extent of analysis. Preliminary planning criteria developed by the BLM can be modified through public comment.
Issue Notice of Intent (NOI)/ Scoping	The NOI is published in the Federal Register, local media, mailings, etc. The NOI identifies the preliminary issues and planning criteria and provides for a 30-day public review and comment period. This is also the start of the formal NEPA scoping process inviting the public to identify issues or land use problems that need to be resolved. In addition to the Federal Register notice, ideas are solicited through mailings, newspaper articles, public meetings, and workshops. Ideas from public, private, and internal sources are gathered, screened, and evaluated. The issues to guide the planning process are also summarized.
Collect Inventory Data	Inventory data is collected based on the planning criteria. Data is generally collected from existing sources. New data collection is limited to what is needed to resolve the planning issues identified.
Write Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS)	Information is gathered on the current management situation, pertinent physical and biological characteristics are described, and the capability and condition of the resources are evaluated. This analysis provides a reference for developing and evaluating alternatives.
Formulate Alternatives	A range of reasonable combinations of resource uses and management practices is identified. Reasonable alternatives are developed that address issues identified during scoping and that offer a distinct choice among potential management strategies. This includes a “No Action” Alternative, which is representative of the current management situation.
Estimate Effects of Alternatives	The impacts of each alternative on the environment and management situation are estimated.
Select the Preferred Alternative	The Field Manager recommends to the State Director a preferred alternative that best resolves planning issues and promotes balanced multiple use objectives. The State Director approves the selection of the preferred alternative along with the other alternatives under consideration.
Issue Draft RMP/EIS	The Notice of Availability (NOA) is published in the Federal Register, media, mailings, etc. The NOA notifies the public of the availability of the Draft RMP/EIS and provides for a 90-day public review and comment period.

Planning Steps	Description
Issue Proposed RMP/ Final EIS (PRMP/FEIS)	Public comments are evaluated and any needed modifications are made. A second NOA is published and a copy of the PRMP/FEIS is filed with the Environmental Protection Agency. This initiates the 30-day protest period under 43 CFR 1610.5-2.
Governor's Consistency Review	A 60-day Governor's review to identify inconsistencies with State or local plans is initiated simultaneously with the protest period on the PRMP/FEIS.
Protests	Protests are resolved by the Director by dismissing, denying, remanding, or granting the protests in whole or in part. Planning decisions that are not under protest, or that are denied or dismissed, may be implemented.
Plan Approval	Once protests have been resolved and the Governor's consistency review has been completed, the State Director may approve the RMPs by signing the Records of Decision (RODs). An NOA is issued indicating that the Approved Plans/RODs are available.
Monitor and Evaluate the RMPs	The BLM ensures that the RMPs are continually monitored and evaluated until they are replaced.

1.3.2. Public Scoping

The first step of preparing a draft RMP is identifying land use problems or issues that need be addressed. These planning issues focus the direction and character of future public land management so that existing resource conflicts may be resolved, goals and objectives may be achieved, and future demands for resource use may be met.

Public scoping for the Draft RMP/EIS was announced in a Federal Register notice on April 24, 2002 for the SDNM Decision Area and in a second notice on December 9, 2002 for the Lower Sonoran Decision Area. The opportunity to comment was also publicized through news releases, mail notification, flyers, and other methods. Eleven public scoping meetings were held and the public was invited to submit written comments. Overall, more than 6,000 comments were received during the scoping period.

Since scoping, the BLM has held additional public workshops throughout the Planning Area to collaborate on (1) planning criteria, (2) RMP goals and objectives, (3) the range of alternatives, and (4) preliminary alternatives.

1.3.3. Collaboration

Consultation with American Indian tribes and coordination with numerous agencies and governments at the Federal, State, and local levels has been an ongoing aspect of the planning process. Periodic interdisciplinary team meetings have been held at key points in the process. Early in the process, the BLM invited all agencies and tribes in Arizona to attend a workshop discussing the cooperating agency process. As a result, cooperating agencies for preparation of the Draft RMP/EIS include the Tohono O'odham Nation, Ak-Chin Indian Community, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps, Department of Homeland Security (Border Patrol), Federal

Highway Administration, AGFD, and Arizona Department of Transportation. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is also in place between the BLM and USFWS pursuant to both agencies' responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act. An agreement also is in place between the BLM and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) pursuant to responsibilities for cultural resources.

1.3.4. Planning Issues Addressed in the RMP Process

One of the most important outcomes of the scoping process was the identification of significant issues to be addressed in this Draft RMP/EIS. For planning purposes, an "issue" is defined as a matter of controversy or dispute over potential land and resource allocations, levels of resource use, production, and related management practices. Issues help determine what decisions will be made in the RMP and what the Draft EIS must address as required by NEPA.

Based on the more than 6,000 scoping comments received and subsequent analysis and evaluation, six major planning issues were identified within the scope of this Draft RMP/EIS. All six issues center on larger issue of balancing resource use and human activity with the mandated level of resource protection.

The issues presented here are broadly stated. Nested within each of these issues are many resource questions that are addressed in this document. The variety of ways these questions can be answered, within BLM legal mandates and current management direction constraints, helped to formulate the action alternatives considered in this Draft RMP/EIS.

1.3.4.1. Issue 1: Travel Management

How will the BLM manage travel and public access?

Travel management is an important issues for the public and presents a management challenge for the BLM. Many who commented during the public scoping process felt that existing roads and trails should be kept open for public use and, where necessary, maintained, upgraded, or improved to provide safe and efficient public access. Others were opposed to the creation of new roads and/or believed that unnecessary roads should be closed for the protection of resources, particularly those roads that might fragment wildlife habitat or damage archaeological sites or riparian areas.

Additionally, members of the public expressed concern with the type of motor vehicle use that should be allowed to gain access to the Decision Areas, with viewpoints falling into two general categories: 1) those that valued off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and favored no or minimal further limitations on such use and 2) those that expressed concern for the adverse effects from unregulated or increased OHV activities.

The SDNM proclamation specifically states that all off-road motorized and mechanized vehicle use will be prohibited except for emergency or authorized administrative purposes. Such use, however, is considered for the Lower Sonoran Decision Area under the action alternatives described in Chapter 2, *Alternatives* (p. 27).

1.3.4.2. Issue 2: Wilderness Characteristics

How will the BLM manage wilderness characteristics in the Decision Areas?

A number of individuals and groups voiced their concern for protecting areas with wilderness characteristics in the Decision Areas, specifically in the SDNM. A number of citizen groups and individuals suggested additional wilderness designations during the public scoping period, including the establishment of 16 new wilderness study areas (WSAs) totaling 250,000 acres. Other commenters felt that there is an abundance of existing wilderness, national monuments, wildlife refuges, and other restricted access lands in the region and were opposed to the additional wilderness-related allocations.

The discussion concerning recommending the designation of additional wilderness areas is outside the scope of this Draft RMP/EIS. Only Congress can designate wilderness areas and there is no BLM policy for establishment of WSAs. However, areas that contain wilderness characteristics can be managed by the BLM to protect those characteristics. Various alternatives are presented in Chapter 2, *Alternatives* (p. 27) of this document.

1.3.4.3. Issue 3: Wildlife

How will the BLM address wildlife management, including special status species and wildlife water developments in the Decision Areas?

Various wildlife-water development programs, initiated in the 1940s and 1950s throughout the western United States, have provided sources of freestanding water under the assumption that this is a key limiting factor on wildlife populations in arid habitats. Critics have suggested that wildlife water developments have not yielded expected benefits and may negatively influence wildlife by increasing predation, competition, and disease transmission. The scientific community in Arizona, led by the efforts of AGFD, is studying whether water developments are necessary for wildlife, what effect developments might have on populations of non-target animals (e.g., predators), and the development of additional wildlife waters. Scoping comments received regarding wildlife water developments represent both sides of the debate. Some individuals advocated that no new wildlife waters be developed while others stressed the importance of allowing the continued access, maintenance, redevelopment, and/or construction of wildlife waters.

Wildlife corridors have also arisen as an important issue related to wildlife. Due to growth, existing rights-of-way (ROWs), and the preponderance of wildlife corridors lying outside of BLM jurisdiction in the Planning Area, there is concern about maintenance of sufficient wildlife movement corridors within the Decision Areas. Several alternatives to addressing this issue are discussed in Chapter 2, *Alternatives* (p. 27) of this document.

1.3.4.4. Issue 4: Livestock Grazing

How will livestock grazing be addressed in the Decision Areas, particularly in the SDNM?

The scoping process identified livestock grazing as an important issue for a number of people. Many comments pertained to better management of livestock grazing or were in favor of ending

livestock grazing on public lands. There were some who advocated prohibiting certain kinds of grazing (e.g., year-round, domestic animals, stock grazing) and those who advocated prohibiting grazing in certain areas (e.g., Sonoran pronghorn and/or desert tortoise habitat, riparian areas), or under certain conditions (e.g., drought, when not sustainable).

The SDNM proclamation mandates that grazing permits on public lands within the Monument south of I-8 will not be renewed at the end of their current term. All of these permits expired in 2008 and 2009. The proclamation also states that grazing on public lands north of I-8 will be allowed to continue only to the extent that the BLM determines that grazing is compatible with the paramount purpose of protecting the Monument objects identified in the proclamation. These constraints are included in the grazing alternatives in Chapter 2, *Alternatives* (p. 27).

1.3.4.5. Issue 5: Energy Development

How will renewable and traditional energy facilities and transmission corridors be managed?

Given the growth in renewable energy interest in the Sonoran Desert, much concern was expressed regarding utility corridors and some concern was expressed regarding renewable energy, particularly solar sites. The energy-generating and transmission industries urged the BLM to consider the importance of providing additional utility corridors to meet growing demands for electrical energy requirements in Arizona. Others urged the BLM to consolidate requests for new transmission lines within existing utility corridors and to refrain from granting ROWs for new corridors. One exception to the opposition to new corridors was a proposal that new transmission lines be accommodated within corridors established within 400 feet of each side of highways.

Given public concern and increased demand for energy, several alternatives for mineral and transmission use, along with land use authorizations, are discussed in Chapter 2, *Alternatives* (p. 27).

1.3.4.6. Issue 6: Recreation

How will public recreation activities be managed?

During public scoping, people reported that they enjoy a wide variety of activities in the Decision Areas, including hiking, hunting, sightseeing, camping, observing wildlife, and OHV use. They expressed desires for continued opportunities for such activities. Many of the comments overlapped with the travel management issues, particularly with regard to OHV use. Some disagreed with the types of recreational activities that should be allowed in the Decision Areas, or specifically on the Monument. Many expressed concern for the management of certain types of recreation to minimize environmental impacts. Some commenters advocated for dispersed recreation, while others advocated for the development of various types of recreational services (e.g., interpretive sites, restrooms, recreational vehicles areas, equestrian facilities, etc.). Some individuals advocated the development of non-motorized recreational opportunities while others preferred motorized forms of recreation. There were comments in support of dispersed, primitive-type camping as well as comments in support of having more developed camping with services and facilities.

While some people indicated that they enjoy recreational shooting within the Decision Areas, others expressed their opposition to recreational shooting due to its resource impacts as well as noise and public safety concerns. The BLM also is concerned with the public safety implications of recreational target shooting and the damage it may cause to resources in the Decision Areas, particularly to Monument objects.

Given the proximity of the Decision Areas to the Phoenix metro area and the increased participation of people in recreation pursuits on public lands over time, ineffective management of visitor activities is recognized as potentially having profound environmental effects on both Decision Areas. These possible effects, along with potential user conflicts, make appropriate management of recreational activities crucial to protecting public resources. Decisions such as where and what kind of recreational facilities to provide, how to minimize potential user conflicts, and what types of recreation settings should be maintained in specific areas, are important elements addressed in Chapter 2, *Alternatives* (p. 27) of this document.

1.3.5. Planning Issues Considered But Not Further Analyzed in this RMP Process

The issues identified during public scoping (discussed above) shape the alternatives carried forward in this RMP process. Other issues identified during public scoping were also considered but are not analyzed further in this planning process because they fall outside of BLM jurisdiction or are beyond the scope of this RMP effort. A list of these issues and the rationale for not analyzing them further in this planning process is provided below.

1.3.5.1. Issue Considered 1: Water Control

Restore water to the rivers

- Rationale: The BLM does not control water rights on any of the rivers in the Planning Area, and it is unlikely that any management action proposed by the BLM could restore water flow.

Local aquifers are being depleted and mineral-laden water is being pumped to the surface, polluting waterways and killing vegetation

- Rationale: The BLM does not have the authority to permit or deny pumping of groundwater in Arizona. Such authority lies with the Arizona Department of Water Resources.

1.3.5.2. Issue Considered 2: Biological Resources

Protect and restore native fish populations impacted by dams and non-native species

- Rationale: The BLM does not manage any suitable perennial aquatic habitat for native fish species in the Planning Area. Streams within the Decision Areas are typically dry and flow only in response to storm events.

Protect and manage Sonoran pronghorn and Sonoran pronghorn habitat within the SDNM

- Rationale: The SDNM is outside the current range of Sonoran pronghorn. The BLM will, however, coordinate with the Sonoran pronghorn recovery team during the RMP process and

take any necessary measures for protection of historic habitat, as well as consider possible reintroduction of Sonoran pronghorn into the Monument.

1.3.5.3. Issue Considered 3: Livestock Grazing

Increase grazing fees and use the money to hire more staff to study and protect the land

- Rationale: The BLM has no authority to adjust or change the grazing fee. It is set by a formula contained in law, as is the disposition of the fees collected.

1.3.5.4. Issue Considered 4: Wild Horse & Burro Management

Do not implement wild horse and burro management in the SDNM

- Rationale: There are no wild, free-roaming horses or burros within the Monument, and no herd areas have been designated or recognized, making it unnecessary to address their management. There are feral burros on the adjacent Barry M. Goldwater Range and they may extend into the southeastern part of the Monument; however, these feral burros are managed outside of The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971.

1.3.5.5. Issue Considered 5: Minerals Management

Allow mining in the Monument; do not grant new mineral leases; ensure any new mining claims are valid and limit to small-scale operation; study/regulate coal-bed methane wells; limit or prohibit resource use in the Monument except for strategic and low impact mineral extraction

- Rationale: Lands within the SDNM are closed to mineral development (subject to valid existing rights) by Monument proclamation. There is no coal in either of the Decision Areas.

It is inappropriate that hardrock mining on public lands is governed by outdated laws such as the General Mining Law of 1872

- Rationale: The BLM does not have discretionary authority to disregard existing laws. Rather, a course of action that complies with existing laws, such as the General Mining Law of 1872, must be pursued.

1.3.5.6. Issue Considered 6: Land Tenure Adjustment & Withdrawals

Within the SDNM, sell BLM holdings only as an absolute last resort

- Rationale: According to the Monument proclamation, the BLM does not have the authority to sell public lands in the SDNM and can only exchange such lands when it furthers the purposes of the Monument.

Use zoning laws to establish a balance between property rights and conservation of natural resources

- Rationale: The BLM does not have jurisdiction over zoning laws. Rather, local and county governments are responsible for establishing zoning laws and controlling land use through

zoning. On the other hand, the potential for acquisition, disposal, and exchange of public lands could indirectly affect zoning and development and is considered further in the RMP.

Allow renewal of the lease for public lands bound by Mountain View Road on the east, Goldfield Road on the west, and U.S. 60 on the north near Apache Junction

- **Rationale:** The land specified in this comment is under a variety of withdrawals, leases, and permits, including a recreation and public purposes (R&PP) lease to the City of Apache Junction for equestrian and other recreational activities. The R&PP lease will remain in effect for the duration as identified in the lease and will not be affected by the RMP.

1.3.5.7. Issue Considered 7: Corridors, Communications Sites & Renewable Energy Sites

In the Lower Sonoran Decision Area, do not use the Palo Verde-Devers route as a utility corridor if it would result in building additional power lines or pipelines through the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge

- **Rationale:** The Kofa National Wildlife Refuge is located outside of the Lower Sonoran Planning Area and is administered by the USFWS. It is thus not addressed in this RMP.

1.3.5.8. Issue Considered 8: Special Area Designations

Designate 140,506 acres in the Sand Tank Mountains, Margie's Peak, and Butterfield Pass units as WSAs as outlined in the Arizona Wilderness Coalition proposal

In the Lower Sonoran Planning Area, designate the Sentinel Plain and Gila Bend Mountains region, Saddle Mountain and Palo Verde Hills, and 16 other areas as WSAs, totaling 250,000 acres

Do not designate any additional wildernesses or WSAs; these misguided preservation designations have detrimental impacts on wildlife populations because of unwarranted burdens

- **Rationale:** Only Congress has the authority to designate wilderness and the current DOI and BLM policy does not provide for designation of additional WSAs. However, areas that contain wilderness characteristics can be actively managed by the BLM to protect those characteristics and various alternatives for this management are presented in Chapter 2, *Alternatives* (p. 27) of this document.

Designate segments of the Gila River as a wild and scenic river to protect the river itself and the surrounding riparian areas

- **Rationale:** The Gila River's eligibility for the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS) was assessed in a series of field surveys from 1992 to 2005. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 authorizes the protection of free-flowing rivers with "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." None of the segments of the lower Gila River that run through the Planning Area was found to be eligible for the NWSRS. See Appendix D, *Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Assessment* (p. 1027) for more information.

1.3.5.9. Issue Considered 9: Visual Resources

Protect the viewsheds through zoning and other mechanisms

- Rationale: Local and county governments control land use through zoning; however, the BLM can address the protection of viewsheds through other means. The BLM considers viewshed protection through the visual resource management program. Various degrees of such protection have been incorporated into the alternatives proposed in Chapter 2, *Alternatives* (p. 27).

1.3.5.10. Issue Considered 10: Travel Management

Provide additional motorized public access in wilderness areas for people who are unable to walk long distances

- Rationale: Wilderness areas are designated by Congress and must be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964, which expressly prohibits motorized vehicle use by the public for recreational purposes. The BLM thus has no authority to develop new or open old motorized vehicle routes within designated wilderness.

Within the SDNM, designate OHV use areas in locations with low wildlife-habitat values or where OHV use is already popular; keep each OHV use area to about 30 acres with twisting and interlaced trails

- Rationale: Presidential Proclamation 7397 prohibits off-road use in the SDNM; consequently, OHV areas cannot be designated within the Monument.

Provide or re-open cherry stem access of existing roads in some areas, such as the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge

- Rationale: The BLM has no authority to address management of the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge due to the lack of public lands in the refuge; however, the BLM will address vehicle access and route designation in the Decision Areas.

1.3.5.11. Issue Considered 11: Airspace

Consider how wilderness designations could adversely affect military overflights

- Rationale: As identified under Issue Considered 8, the BLM does not have the authority designate new WSAs or wilderness areas. There would thus be no potential for conflicts to emerge between military airspace use and new WSA/wilderness designations. In terms of conflicts with existing wilderness areas in the SDNM, the Monument proclamation establishing the SDNM provides for continued military use of airspace over the SDNM, including over existing wilderness areas

Work closely with nearby military bases and airports to schedule flights and design flight paths that are the least intrusive to wildlife populations and the Monument

- **Rationale:** The Monument proclamation does not address the need for the BLM to dictate flight paths, and the many and varied uses by the military of the airspace over the Monument preclude establishing specific flight paths. The military already has specific high altitude flight paths, but they are very wide and have little impact on Monument resources.

1.3.5.12. Issue Considered 12: Socioeconomics

Include a full identification of the social and economic impacts on all of the approved regional extra-high-voltage electric system components

- **Rationale:** This document evaluates economic impacts of the alternatives, including those regarding corridors and ROWs, as needed at a programmatic level to assess the potential environmental impacts. Cumulative economic impacts (i.e., the impacts of the alternatives when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions) are also addressed. A full social and economic impact analysis of the regional extra-high-voltage electric system components, however, is beyond the scope of this EIS.

1.3.5.13. Considered 13: Border Activity – Undocumented Immigrants and Drug Smuggling

Manage illegal immigration and drug smuggling

- **Rationale:** BLM does not manage specifically for illicit immigration or drug smuggling. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has the mission and responsibility for securing the U.S. Border and enforcing federal immigration and drug laws. While the BLM can respond to crime and resource impacts from border activity, jurisdiction of illegal immigration and international drug smuggling lies with the CBP and DHS. BLM law enforcement is predominantly responsible for visitor safety and resource protection. In coordination with CBP, DHS, and state and local law enforcement agencies, BLM:
 - Develops integrated resource and law enforcement goals and priorities on NLCS units and other Borderlands locales;
 - coordinates resource rehabilitation and mitigation with deployment of law enforcement resources to maximize effectiveness of both within the Borderlands;
 - monitors smuggling activity levels, resource impacts and mitigation efforts through existing and developing technologies;
 - communicates and coordinates effectively with agency partners and public, including sharing of funding and intelligence;
 - works with partners to identify key areas for increased enforcement, closure, restoration, protection efforts and visitor safety;
 - actively deploys and collaborates on enhanced communication technologies;
 - implements coordinated safety measures for agency staff, fire and law enforcement personnel, and public visitors.

1.3.6. Other Elements not Addressed in this Plan

Various laws, regulations, policies, and executive orders require specific resource elements be considered during the NEPA process. Based on an evaluation of these elements by the BLM, the following was determined to be not present within or otherwise relevant to the Decision Areas and is dismissed from further consideration in this analysis:

- **Prime and Unique Farmlands:** In accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act, the BLM determined that no prime or unique farmlands or farmlands of statewide or local importance are present on public lands in the Planning Area.

1.4. Planning Area Guidance

The BLM developed a significance statement for the Lower Sonoran Decision Area based on management principals identified by FLPMA. For the SDNM Decision Area, the BLM developed “purpose” and “significance” statements to clarify the intent of the Monument proclamation and to help shape the development of this Draft RMP/Draft EIS. Purpose statements clarify why the Monument was set aside as units for special management, while significance statements address what makes the area unique.

The BLM also developed a vision and goals for both Decision Areas. A vision, as used in this context, is an ideal to strive for which is not quantifiable or set to a specific period. It reflects the goals that are common to all alternatives that are presented in Chapter 2, *Alternatives* (p. 27) and helps integrate the various resource management programs (i.e., resources, resource uses, special designations, and social and economic conditions).

1.4.1. Lower Sonoran Decision Area Planning Guidance

1.4.1.1. Significance of the Lower Sonoran Decision Area

The Lower Sonoran Decision Area provides a wide diversity of resources and opportunities and includes wide-open expanses of Sonoran Desert landscapes, including some of the largest open areas near Phoenix and Tucson. Public lands also provide important habitat to support the robust diversity of wildlife found in the Sonoran Desert. In concert with other large landowners and managers in southwestern Arizona, these lands provide large landscapes that help sustain healthy populations of wildlife for the long term. Public lands also contain a history and evidence of human use spanning more than 10,000 years, including villages, farms, rock art, ranches, and travel corridors.

These public lands provide some of the last opportunities for undeveloped and dispersed recreation in the area. These opportunities are particularly important because of the rapid urban growth in Phoenix and Tucson and the increasing number of people living near and recreating on public lands. Public lands also attract visitors from all over the United States and many other countries.

Public lands provide important resources to the growing communities in southern Arizona. These include providing corridors for transmission of utilities to new and growing communities and providing access to mineral and renewable energy development.

1.4.1.2. Management Vision

The Lower Sonoran Decision Area will retain its wide-open spaces and healthy functioning Sonoran Desert ecosystems while providing opportunities for a multitude of public uses and benefits.

1.4.1.3. Overarching Goals

- Manage natural and cultural resources to ensure that these resources are conserved, enhanced, restored, or preserved in a healthy condition for use by current and future generations consistent with the concepts of multiple use and sustained yield.
- Manage commercial and industrial uses of public lands to meet community needs, benefit the public, and obtain economic return consistent with other resource management responsibilities.
- Sustain a diverse array of recreation settings in order to produce a variety of benefits, opportunities, and experiences to meet the needs of public land users consistent with resource protection goals.
- Sustain a diverse array of recreation settings in order to produce a variety of benefits, opportunities, and experiences to meet the needs of public land users consistent with resource protection goals.
- Promote compatibility between the management of public and adjacent lands.
- Encourage interagency and community partnerships to enhance effective management of public lands.
- Develop outreach and educational programs that build constituencies, expand understanding and appreciation of public lands and resources, and enable an enjoyable experience on the public lands.
- Manage public lands in a manner that considers public health and safety.

1.4.2. Sonoran Desert National Monument Decision Area Planning Guidance

1.4.2.1. Monument Purpose

The purpose of the SDNM designation is to protect and manage the Monument's natural, geologic, and cultural resources (i.e., Monument objects) for long-term conservation, and to further our knowledge and understanding of such resources through scientific research and interpretation. The Monument was specifically designated to protect certain resources, including:

- A large Sonoran Desert landscape that connects to other large natural areas;
- The ecological diversity of the Sonoran Desert, including a diversity of flora and fauna associated with rare woodlands assemblages, palo verde-mixed cacti, creosote-bursage, desert washes, and rare desert grasslands vegetation communities;

- A cultural landscape that appears largely unchanged, with a rich history that spans at least 10,000 years, from the Archaic to modern day.

Resources mentioned above summarize the Monument objects that are to be the focus of protection in the SDNM RMP. The Monument objects are described in the text of Presidential Proclamation 7397. Table 1.4, “SDNM Objects” (p. 18) further clarifies the objects and identified specific protection criteria for each object or set of objects. Specific discussion regarding proposed uses and potential affects and impacts regarding these Monument objects may be found in the relevant resource sections in Chapter 4, *Environmental Consequences* (p. 371) or the appendices of this plan.

Table 1.4. SDNM Objects

Paragraph from Presidential Proclamation 7397	Monument Object	Characteristics	Protection Criteria
1. “The Sonoran Desert National Monument is a magnificent example of untrammeled Sonoran desert landscape. The area encompasses a functioning desert ecosystem with an extraordinary array of biological, scientific, and historic resources. The most biologically diverse of the North American deserts, the Monument consists of distinct mountain ranges separated by wide valleys, and includes large saguaro cactus forest communities that provide excellent habitat for a wide range of wildlife species.”	Functioning Desert Ecosystem	<p>Physical: Distinct mountain ranges separated by wide valleys</p> <p>Ecological: Sonoran Desert landscape with properly functioning desert ecosystem, large saguaro cactus forest communities, habitat for a wide range of wildlife species</p>	<p>Prevent avoidable soil loss.</p> <p>Maintain properly functioning plant communities defined by structure, cover, diversity, composition, and presence or absence of invasive species.</p>
2. “The Monument's biological resources include a spectacular diversity of plant and animal species. The higher peaks include unique woodland assemblages, while the lower elevation lands offer one of the most structurally complex examples of palo verde/mixed cacti association in the Sonoran Desert. The dense stands of leguminous trees and cacti are dominated by saguaros, palo verde trees, ironwood, prickly pear, and cholla. Important natural water holes, known as tinajas, exist throughout the Monument. The endangered acuña pineapple cactus is also found in the Monument.”	Diversity of Plant and Animal Species	<p>Biological: Saguaros, palo verde trees, ironwood, prickly pear, cholla, acuña pineapple cactus</p> <p>Physical: Tinajas</p> <p>Ecological: Woodland assemblages, structurally complex palo verde-mixed cacti association, dense stands of leguminous trees and cacti</p>	<p>Maintain normal variation in plant composition, diversity, and abundance of native species, diversity of niches, and landscape-level structural complexity.</p>

Paragraph from Presidential Proclamation 7397	Monument Object	Characteristics	Protection Criteria
<p>3. “The most striking aspect of the plant communities within the Monument are [sic] the abundant saguaro cactus forests. The saguaro is a signature plant of the Sonoran Desert. Individual saguaro plants are indeed magnificent, but a forest of these plants, together with the wide variety of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants that make up the forest community, is an impressive site [sic] to behold. The saguaro cactus forests within the Monument are a national treasure, rivaling those within the Saguaro National Park.”</p>	<p>Saguaro Cactus Forests</p>	<p>Biological: Saguaro</p> <p>Ecological: Plant communities; saguaro cactus forests; wide variety of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants</p>	<p>Maintain age class and stand structure and density. Ensure suitable nurse plants are present and saguaro recruitment is adequate for cactus forest sustainability.</p>
<p>4. “The rich diversity, density, and distribution of plants in the Sand Tank Mountains area of the Monument is especially striking and can be attributed to the management regime in place since the area was withdrawn for military purposes in 1941. In particular, while some public access to the area is allowed, no livestock grazing has occurred for nearly 50 years. To extend the extraordinary diversity and overall ecological health of the Sand Tanks [sic] Mountains area, land adjacent and with biological resources similar to the area withdrawn for military purposes should be subject to a similar management regime to the fullest extent possible.”</p>	<p>Sand Tank Mountains</p>	<p>Physical: Sand Tank Mountains</p> <p>Ecological: Diversity, density, and distribution of plants</p>	<p>Maintain normal variation in diversity, density, and distribution of plants.</p>
<p>5. “The Monument contains an abundance of packrat middens, allowing for scientific analysis of plant species and climates in past eras. Scientific analysis of the midden [sic] shows that the area received far more precipitation 20,000 years ago, and slowly became more arid. Vegetation for the area changed from juniper-oak-pine woodland to the vegetation found today in the Sonoran Desert, although a few plants from the more mesic period, including the Kofa Mountain barberry, Arizona rosewood, and junipers, remain on higher elevations of north-facing slopes.”</p>	<p>Scientific Analysis of Plant Species and Climates</p>	<p>Biological: Packrat middens, mesic period, Kofa Mountain barberry, Arizona rosewood, junipers</p>	<p>Protect packrat middens, dry caves or rock shelters, and relic species. Within establish guidelines, make middens available for scientific study and analysis.</p>
<p>6. “The lower elevations and flatter areas of the Monument contain the creosote-bursage plant community. This plant community thrives in the open expanses between the mountain ranges, and connects the other plant communities together. Rare patches of desert grassland can also be found throughout the Monument, especially in the Sand Tank Mountains area. The washes in the area support a much denser vegetation community than the surrounding desert, including mesquite, ironwood, palo verde, desert honeysuckle, chuperosa, and desert willow, as well as a variety of herbaceous plants. This vegetation offers the dense cover bird species need for successful</p>	<p>Vegetation Communities: Creosote Bush-Bursage, Desert Grassland, and Washes</p>	<p>Biological: Mesquite, ironwood, palo verde, desert honeysuckle, chuperosa, desert willow, herbaceous plants</p> <p>Physical: Sand Tank Mountains</p> <p>Ecological: Creosote-bursage plant community,</p>	<p>Prevent avoidable soil loss.</p> <p>Maintain properly functioning plant communities as defined by structure, cover, diversity, composition, invasive species, desert washes-bank stability,</p>

Paragraph from Presidential Proclamation 7397	Monument Object	Characteristics	Protection Criteria
nesting, foraging, and escape, and birds heavily use the washes during migration.”		desert grassland, densely vegetated wash communities	woody over story, and continuity of vertical structure.
7. “The diverse plant communities present in the Monument support a wide variety of wildlife, including the endangered Sonoran pronghorn, a robust population of desert bighorn sheep, especially in the Maricopa Mountains area, and other mammalian species such as mule deer, javelina, mountain lion, gray fox, and bobcat. Bat species within the Monument include the endangered lesser long-nosed bat, the California leaf-nosed bat, and the cave myotis. Over 200 species of [song] birds are found in the Monument, including 59 species known to nest in the Vekol Valley area. Numerous species of raptors and owls inhabit the Monument, including the elf owl and the western screech owl. The Monument also supports a diverse array of reptiles and amphibians, including the Sonoran desert tortoise and the red-backed whiptail. The BLM has designated approximately 25,000 acres of land in the Maricopa Mountains area as critical habitat for the desert tortoise. The Vekol Valley and Sand Tank Mountain areas contain especially diverse and robust populations of amphibians. During summer rainfall events, thousands of Sonoran green toads in the Vekol Valley can be heard moving around and calling out.”	Wildlife	<p>Biological: Sonoran pronghorn, desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, javelina, mountain lion, gray fox, bobcat, bat species (including lesser long-nosed bat, California leaf-nosed bat, and cave myotis), 200 species of songbirds, raptors, owls (including elf owl and western screech owl), red-backed whiptail, Sonoran green toads, critical habitat for Sonoran desert tortoise</p> <p>Physical: Maricopa Mountains, Vekol Valley, Sand Tank Mountains</p> <p>Ecological: Diverse plant communities</p>	Maintain viable populations of wildlife species, focusing, as appropriate, on foraging habitat, hiding cover, nesting/roosting habitat, escape cover, and thermal cover. Prevent avoidable loss of special status species.
8. “The Monument also contains many significant archaeological and historic sites, including rock art sites, lithic quarries, and scattered artifacts. Vekol Wash is believed to have been an important prehistoric travel and trade corridor between the Hohokam and tribes located in what is now Mexico. Signs of large villages and permanent habitat sites occur throughout the area, and particularly along the bajadas of the Table Top Mountains. Occupants of these villages were the ancestors of today's O'odham, Quechan, Cocopah, Maricopa, and other tribes. The Monument also contains a much used trail corridor 23 miles long in which are found remnants of several important historic trails, including the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, the Mormon Battalion Trail, and the Butterfield Overland Stage Route.”	Archaeological and Historic Sites	<p>Cultural: Archaeological and historic sites, rock art sites, lithic quarries, scattered artifacts, large villages, permanent habitat sites, Anza National Historic Trail corridor, Mormon Battalion Trail, Butterfield Overland Stage Route</p> <p>Physical: Vekol Wash, bajadas, Table Top Mountains</p>	Reduce threats and resolve conflicts from natural and human-caused degradation affecting integrity of sites and settlement clusters, site condition context, setting, stability, and capacity to yield scientific information. For the Anza Trail, reduce threats related to the historic trail corridor, its setting, and loss of interpretative opportunities.

1.4.2.2. Significance of the SDNM

The SDNM includes natural resources that represent the biological diversity of the Sonoran Desert, including ecological communities found in both the Arizona uplands subdivision and the Lower Colorado River subdivision of the Sonoran Desert biome. The ecological communities include large, high-quality examples of common Sonoran Desert communities such as creosote bursage and palo verde-mixed cacti, which contain expansive saguaro cactus forests and provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, including cactus ferruginous pygmy-owls, Sonoran desert tortoise, lesser long-nosed bat, Sonoran pronghorn, and desert bighorn sheep. Less common communities include rare woodland assemblages typically found in wetter climates, desert grasslands, and other habitats that are important for foraging and nesting birds and amphibians. Cutting through these communities are desert washes that provide important wildlife cover, movement corridors, and forage, especially in hot summer months. This ecological diversity provides habitat for animals and plants to complete their life cycles and survive drought. There are also excellent opportunities for scientific research on many aspects of the Sonoran Desert.

The Monument includes a diverse cultural landscape that appears little changed from prehistoric to modern times and provides a rare opportunity to protect, in one area, a wide diversity of sites, both in time and in place. It contains sites representative of the time periods from the Archaic through the modern day, including villages, camps, Ak-Chin farming sites, rock art, lithic scatters, homesteads, and historic ranches, as well as economically important trade and travel routes. These and other sites are an important connection for contemporary tribal peoples and descendants of those who have traveled through and settled here. The Monument provides significant opportunities to expand our knowledge and understanding of aboriginal peoples, Spanish explorers, and Euro-Americans within a landscape that encompassed all aspects of their daily lives.

The Monument is a large area of Sonoran Desert that supports large-scale ecological processes. This largely undeveloped area provides important open space, wilderness opportunities, and a valuable visual landscape in the midst of a rapidly urbanizing area.

1.4.2.3. Management Vision

The SDNM shelters and will continue to shelter a healthy and functioning ecosystem that includes the diversity of biological, cultural, geologic, and scientific resources found in the Sonoran Desert while providing compatible recreation and other public use opportunities.

1.4.2.4. Overarching Goals

Public land management goals are derived from the overriding purpose and vision for an area and provide refined guidance for the RMP. The overarching plan-level goals of the SDNM RMP are as follows:

1. Assign the highest planning and management priority to the protection of the cultural, biological, physical, and scientific resources for which the Monument was created.
2. Protect, restore, maintain, and manage the native biological diversity and associated values of the Monument within their broader ecosystem context, with particular attention to retaining connectivity with other natural areas and conserving habitats for viable populations of a full range of native species.

3. Protect and manage the cultural resources of the Monument, paying particular attention to the cultural landscape and the relationship of individual sites to the larger landscape.
4. Encourage scientific research that aims to expand understanding and improve management of Sonoran Desert resources.
5. Manage natural, recreational, and social settings to protect the undeveloped and natural character of the Monument while providing opportunities for compatible, sustainable public use and enjoyment.
6. Develop outreach and educational programs and materials that build constituencies, expand understanding and appreciation of the Monument and its resources, and provide for enjoyable experiences at the Monument.
7. Manage the Monument in a manner that considers public health and safety.

1.5. PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and guidelines that help to guide the RMP planning process. The LSFO has developed planning criteria to help guide the development of this Draft RMP/EIS. The planning criteria were derived principally from FLPMA and other applicable laws and, in the case of the SDNM, from Presidential Proclamation 7397, as well as collaboration with partner agencies, American Indian tribes, and the public during the RMP planning process. The planning criteria were provided to the public for review during the scoping process and were included in the scoping report. General planning criteria are presented below.

1.5.1. General Planning Criteria Common to Both Decision Areas

- The planning process will include an EIS that will comply with NEPA standards. Two records of decision will be issued: one for the Lower Sonoran Decision Area and one for the SDNM Decision Area.
- The RMP will be completed in compliance with FLPMA, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 USC 1531 et seq.), NEPA, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and all other relevant Federal laws and executive orders, as well as the management policies of the BLM.
- Where planning decisions have previously been made that still apply, those decisions will be carried forward into the RMP. The BLM will also use information developed and management alternatives proposed in previous studies of the Planning Area, including the proposed Amendment and Environmental Assessment to the Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan and the Lower Gila South RMP (BLM 2000).
- Planning decisions will be made in the context of the best-available data, including information specific to public lands. Regional contextual data may also be used to identify the regional importance of public lands for resource use and protection.
- The planning team will work collaboratively with the State of Arizona; Maricopa, Pinal, Pima, Gila, and Yuma counties; tribal governments; municipal governments; other Federal agencies; the Resource Advisory Council; and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals. Decisions in the plans will strive to be compatible with existing plans and

policies of adjacent local, State, tribal, and Federal agencies, consistent with Federal law and regulations. Opportunities to coordinate management with adjoining landowners for resource protection and public uses will be considered.

- The RMP will be developed to be flexible and adaptable to new and emerging issues and opportunities. During implementation of the RMP, the BLM will continue to work in partnership with the public and local, State, and tribal governments and agencies to identify priority implementation projects and to identify and resolve emerging issues.
- Native American tribal consultations will be conducted in accordance with policy, and tribal concerns will be given due consideration. The planning process will include the consideration of any impacts on Indian trust assets.
- Consultation with the USFWS will take place throughout the planning process in accordance with Section 7 of the ESA and the National Memorandum of Agreement (August 30, 2000) to identify conservation actions and measures for inclusion in the plans.
- Coordination with the Arizona SHPO will be conducted throughout the planning process.
- The plans will recognize the State's authority to manage wildlife populations, including hunting and fishing, within the Planning Area. Coordination with AGFD will occur in accordance with the statewide MOU (March 1987).
- The plans will set forth a framework for managing recreational and commercial activities in order to maintain existing natural landscapes and to provide for the enjoyment and safety of the visiting public.
- The lifestyles of area residents, including the wide variety of uses of the public lands, will be considered in the RMP.
- Any lands, or interests therein, acquired by the BLM within the Planning Area boundary will be managed consistently with the RMP, subject to any constraints associated with the acquisition.
- The RMP will address travel management for the public lands. Areas will be identified as open to vehicles, closed to vehicles, or limited to designated roads. Within the Monument and in other areas identified in the RMP, motorized and mechanized routes will be designated.
- The RMP will recognize valid, existing rights.
- Federal Geographic Data Committee standards and other applicable BLM standards will be followed in the development and management of data.
- Management of existing wilderness will continue. The RMP will not address reduction or elimination of existing wilderness, changes in boundaries of existing wilderness, or opening of roads or mechanized or motorized access into existing wilderness.

1.5.2. Lower Sonoran Decision Area Planning Criteria

- The Lower Sonoran RMP will establish management guidance for public lands outside of the SDNM. The Lower Sonoran RMP will replace and supersede all other BLM RMPs for the lands covered by the Lower Sonoran RMP.

1.5.3. SDNM Decision Area Planning Criteria

Planning criteria for the SDNM is derived from Presidential Proclamation 7397 that established the SDNM “for the purpose of protecting the objects” for which the Monument was designated. The proclamation also states that the BLM will manage the Monument “pursuant to applicable legal authorities, to implement the purposes of the proclamation.” Thus, any BLM planning criteria developed for the SDNM is inextricably tied to protecting the objects identified in the proclamation.

- The SDNM RMP will establish guidance upon which the BLM will manage the SDNM, and will replace and supersede all other BLM RMPs for the lands covered by the SDNM RMP.
- The SDNM RMP will meet the requirements of the Presidential Proclamation 7397, dated January 17, 2001, to protect the objects of geological, archaeological, historical, and biological value within the Monument.
- In accordance with the proclamation, acquired lands and interests within the Monument’s boundary will be added to the Monument and will be managed consistently with the SDNM RMP.
- To maintain the existing natural and cultural landscapes of the SDNM to the maximum extent possible, facilities will be located outside the Monument’s boundary or in neighboring communities. Facilities that must be located within the Monument’s boundaries will be placed in such a way that they are unobtrusive, to the extent practicable.
- The SDNM RMP will not address Monument boundary adjustments or proposals to change the Proclamation.

1.6. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

1.6.1. Relationship to Other BLM Plans, Plan Amendments & Programmatic EISs

In addition to the management plans and amendments being revised in this document, a number of existing management plans, programmatic documents, and standards and guidelines were considered in the preparation of this Draft RMP/EIS. These documents include the following:

- “Eastern Arizona Grazing EIS and Rangeland Program Summary” (BLM 1985): applicable to part of the Lower Sonoran Decision Area (East Valley parcels only),
- “Lower Gila North Grazing EIS and Rangeland Program Summary” (BLM 1983): applicable to part of the Lower Sonoran Decision Area (Saddle Mountain only),
- “Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic EIS” (BLM 2007): applicable to the Lower Sonoran and SDNM Decision Areas,
- “Vegetation Treatments on BLM Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Report” (BLM 2007): applicable to the Lower Sonoran and SDNM Decision Areas,

- “Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the 11 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement” (DOE 2007): applicable to the Lower Sonoran and SDNM Decision Areas,
- “Draft Programmatic EIS for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States” (DOE-BLM 2010).

Management of public lands within the SDNM is directed by Presidential Proclamation 7397, issued on January 17, 2001. The proclamation is the legal instrument that establishes the boundaries and purposes of the SDNM. The priority for management of the SDNM is protection of the natural and cultural resource values for which the area was designated, subject to withdrawals, leases, and valid existing rights. The proclamation supersedes some of the guidance provided by existing RMPs for the area.

1.6.2. Relationship to State, Local, Tribal, and other Federal Plans, Laws, Policies & Programs

Bureau of Land Management land use planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.3), FLPMA (43 USC 1712), and regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1501.5 and 1501.6) guide the BLM in coordinating and cooperating with other Federal and State agencies, local governments and American Indian tribes during the land use planning process. This collective guidance instructs the BLM to:

- Stay informed of Federal, State, local, and tribal plans,
- Ensure that it considers these plans in its own planning,
- Help resolve inconsistencies between such plans and BLM planning,
- Cooperate with other agencies and tribal governments in the development of RMPs and NEPA analysis.

In accordance with these provisions, the BLM initially informed other Federal, State, local, and tribal officials of its intent to prepare new RMPs, as detailed in the Scoping Report. Collaboration with these agencies has continued throughout the planning and EIS process.

Agency coordination efforts have included reviewing numerous plans that provide the policies and guide the activities of these agencies and governments. Plans consulted in the preparation of this Draft RMP/EIS can be found in Appendix C, *State, County, Local and Other Related Agency Plans* (p. 1023).

1.6.2.1. Specific Agreements

The BLM and AGFD have agreed to work cooperatively to manage wildlife resources on public lands throughout Arizona. The master MOU (AZ-930-0703) between the BLM’s Arizona State Office and the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, which sets policy for the management, preservation, and harvest of wildlife and fish resources, establishes the BLM’s responsibility for managing wildlife habitat on public lands and the AGFD’s public trust responsibility to manage fish and wildlife populations through the authority of the Commission. As stated in the MOU, the BLM and the AGFD “consider the management of fish and wildlife resources as a high

priority and agree to work cooperatively to achieve a shared goal to actively manage, sustain, and enhance those resources.”

The BLM, Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), and Arizona Division of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have agreed to establish and improve cooperative working relationships (MOU No. AZ-931-0309 Amendment 2). This MOU provides for a coordinated approach to accomplish land and resource management along with transportation development and operation management. The MOU is designed to reduce/eliminate duplication of work, establish procedures for streamlining work processes, ensure that each agency is provided with sufficient lead-time, share available resources, and develop and execute action programs that maximize responsiveness to public needs and concerns. Per the MOU, BLM will coordinate with responsible agencies to develop design features that minimize the fragmenting effect of the planned roadway and evaluate/incorporate safe and effective wildlife crossings. Where planned roadways potentially fragment other resources, BLM will work with the responsible agency to provide continued connectivity for those purposes. BLM will also work with the agency to provide continued safe access to public lands from any developed roadway for recreation and other public land users.