

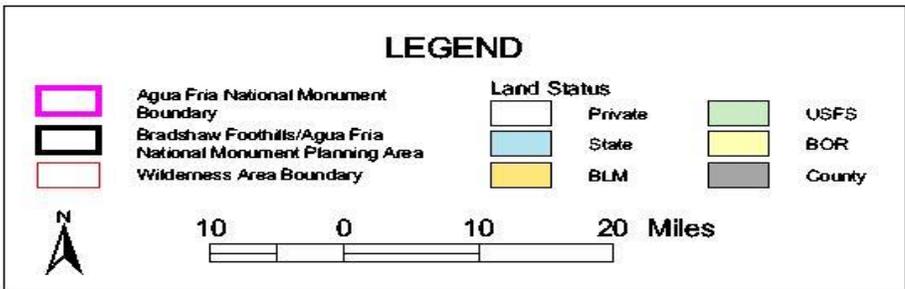
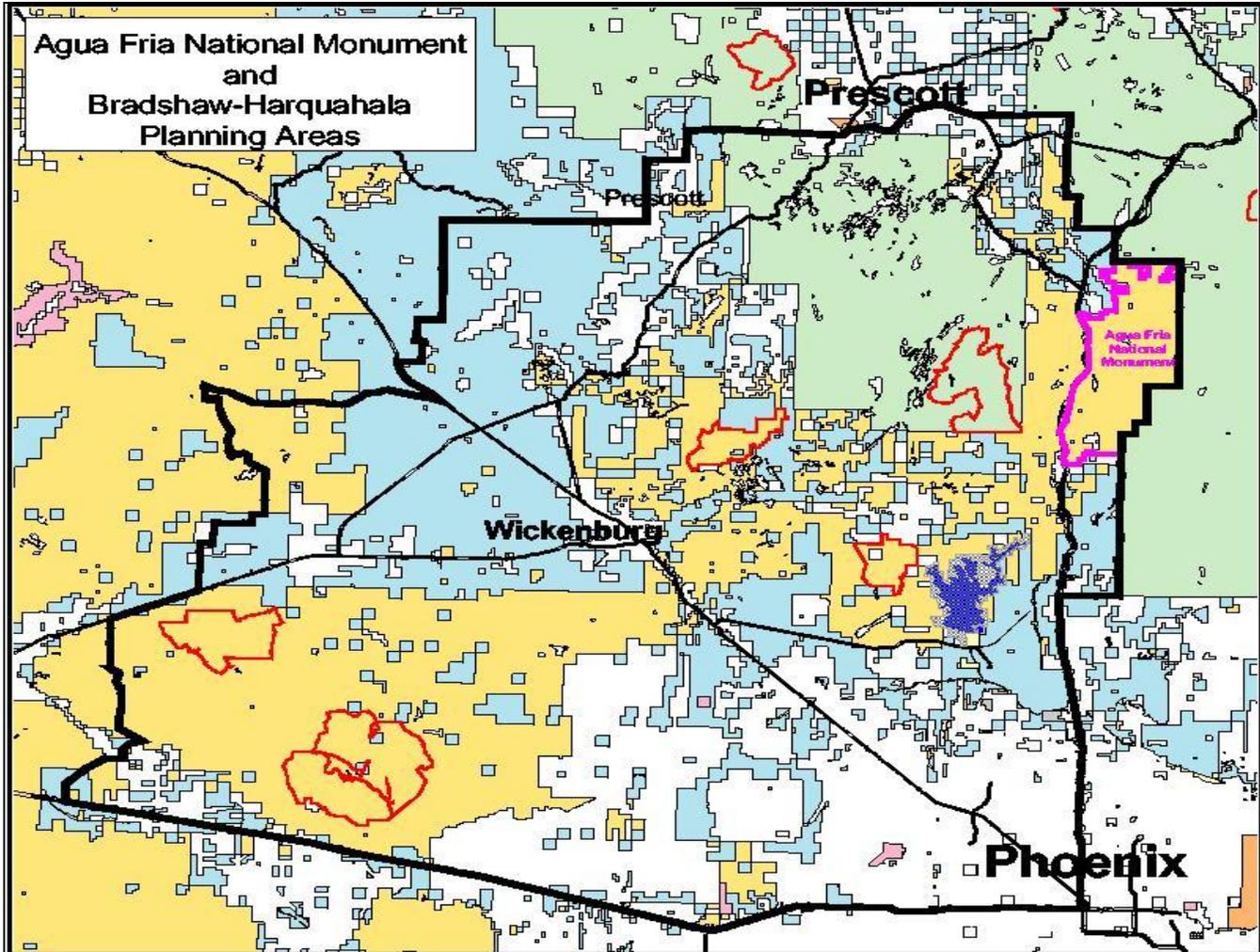
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The *Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala Resource Management Plans and Environmental Impact Statement* (PRMP/FEIS) have been prepared to provide guidance on current and future management decisions for the Hassayampa Field Office, a unit within the Phoenix District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These plans represent the culmination of many months of concerted planning efforts on the part of Phoenix District staff, Arizona State Office staff, representatives of communities located within the planning areas, cooperating and collaborating government agencies, special interest and user groups, and many hundreds of concerned citizens. The proposed Resource Management Plans will enable the BLM to manage both the Agua Fria National Monument (AFNM) areas surrounding Phoenix metropolitan area through a comprehensive plan that will guide BLM management actions for years to come.

Combined, the Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Areas encompass more than 3,000,000 acres in a complex mosaic of land ownerships and jurisdictions. BLM manages the resources on approximately 967,000 surface acres within these planning boundaries, including the entire 70,900 acres of the Agua Fria National Monument, and retains subsurface (mineral) rights to an additional 725,100 acres. The Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala RMPs/EIS are vital to creating a framework for future planning and decision-making efforts within the context of such complex ownership. These lands are unique. Located within these planning boundaries are archaeological sites and artifacts found nowhere else on earth, providing researchers with critical insights into the lifestyles of the peoples who first settled this region of the southwest. The lands are home to pronghorn antelope, mule deer, white-tailed deer, bighorn sheep, mountain lion, black bear, javelina, countless native songbirds, migratory waterfowl, and endangered and special-status species such as bald eagle, southwestern willow flycatcher, Sonoran desert tortoise, and native fish species such as Gila chub and desert pupfish. Vegetation throughout the area ranges from creosotebush in the desert flats to ponderosa pine at higher elevations. The varied panorama of mountains, mesas, grasslands, and high and low desert vistas provides many thousands of residents and visitors each year with unparalleled recreational opportunities, and many thousands more rely on these lands for their livelihood through mining, grazing, and tourism. As the population of the Phoenix metropolitan area continues to grow, the BLM-administered lands located within the Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Areas will undoubtedly receive increasing pressure. After considerable deliberation on the part of the BLM, its partners, and local communities, we believe a broad consensus to wisely guide management of these very valuable resources.

This Proposed Plan/FEIS was prepared under the authorities of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, in accordance with BLM planning regulations, 43 code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1610.2(f)(3) and National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) regulations, 40 CFR 1502.9(a).



Purpose and Need

The purpose of preparing the Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala RMPs is to provide plans that will guide future land management actions within the planning areas. These documents must provide not only adequate guidance for management actions but also show that actions taken were supported by the appropriate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) processes.

The need for the preparation of the RMPs has been established by three principal factors: the Presidential Proclamation creating the monument as a discrete management unit, the degree of urban expansion and population growth in the planning areas and vicinity, and the time that has elapsed (approximately 15 years) since the last major planning efforts that encompassed the Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area.

Planning Issues and Management Concerns Identified During Scoping

The most important step in developing a RMP is to identify relevant issues and concerns. An issue is defined as an opportunity, conflict, or problem regarding the use or management of public lands. All comments received during the public scoping process were assigned, based on content, to one of 12 designated issue categories. Comments were further divided into various sub-issues within each category. All comments were read, evaluated, and manually entered into an analytic database. Figures 1 and 2 depict the most frequently mentioned issues for each planning area, which reflected a wide range of public concerns.

Agua Fria National Monument

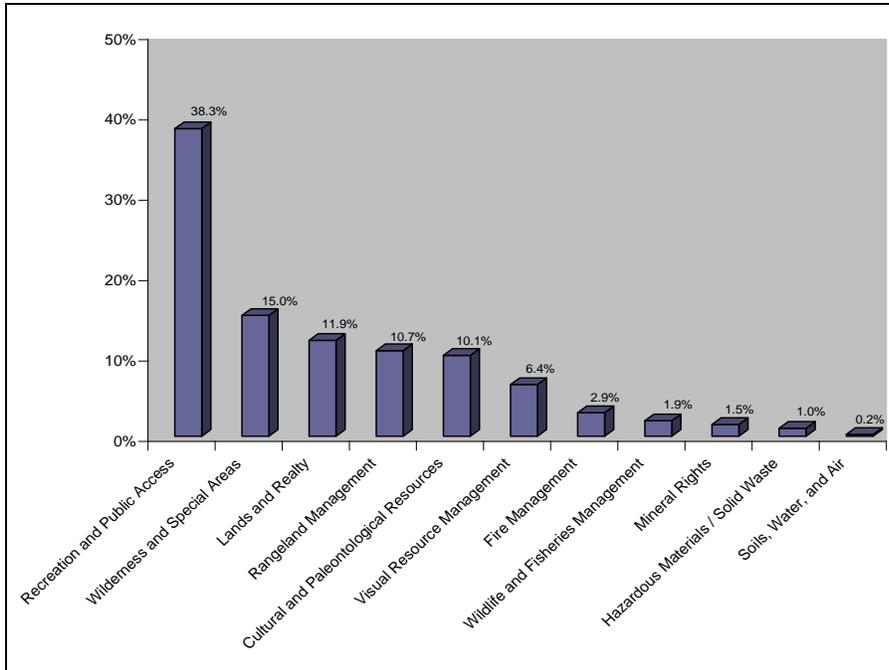


Figure 1. Public Response by Issue – Agua Fria National Monument Planning Area

Recreation and Public Access

Management of, and continued access for recreation use of the monument, while protecting the resources it was created to protect, is a major issue in the plan. The RMP explores options to allow and manage recreation uses.

Special Area Designations

The EIS discusses the possibility of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and the segments of the Agua Fria River previously recommended suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation.

Wilderness Characteristics

A citizen based wilderness study area proposal was submitted. Much of the monument was not previously inventoried for resource values associated with wilderness characteristics because the lands were not under BLM jurisdiction when the last round of inventories was done. BLM conducted an inventory as directed by Section 201 of FLPMA and found some areas to have wilderness character. The EIS explores alternative ways to manage these areas.

Lands and Realty

Lands within the monument must be retained, but private lands within the boundary could be acquired. In addition, alternative options for management of a utility corridor along the western boundary of the monument are discussed in the EIS.

Rangeland Management

Grazing within sensitive riparian habitat is a concern within the monument. In addition, fences used to manage livestock are a potential barrier to pronghorn movement.

Use of native species in mitigation and restoration, and diligence in preventing infestations of invasive species was an issue among some citizen groups.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources

The Agua Fria National Monument was created to preserve the outstanding cultural resources within its boundaries, both historic and prehistoric. The educational and scientific use of the resources, along with the preservation of the sites is of major interest. Alternatives in the EIS explore varying scenarios for achieving this balance.

Visual Resource Management

Preservation of the natural appearance of the landscape is of concern within the monument. In addition, maintaining the existing natural views in some areas is also of interest.

Fire Management

Most of the monument is within a fire dependent ecosystem. Prescribed fire is currently used to maintain the high desert grasslands. There is an interest in re-establishing natural fire cycles, but the monument is also adjacent to a couple of small communities that could be vulnerable to wildfires.

Wildlife and Fisheries Management

The monument contains habitat for several listed or candidate species, including the Gila Topminnow. In addition, several sensitive wildlife species are on the monument, including a small isolated population of pronghorn that are dependent on the central Arizona grassland ecosystem, including the monument, for their survival.

Minerals

Though the monument is withdrawn from mining laws, two active mining claims continue to exist. These claims are held by prospecting clubs.

Hazardous Materials and Solid Waste

Though there is one abandoned mine within the monument known to have hazardous material problems, it is on a patented mining claim and currently poses minimal hazard to BLM-managed lands or users due to limited public access. The greater issue is with trash dumping on and around the monument. Besides the unsightliness of the dumping, the potential exists for risks to public health and safety from household or other hazardous waste.

Water

The proclamation awarded BLM a Federal reserved water right within the Agua Fria National Monument. Water, and the riparian vegetation it supports, contributes considerably to the values described in the proclamation. The question of how we will quantify and protect the water right is of concern.

Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area

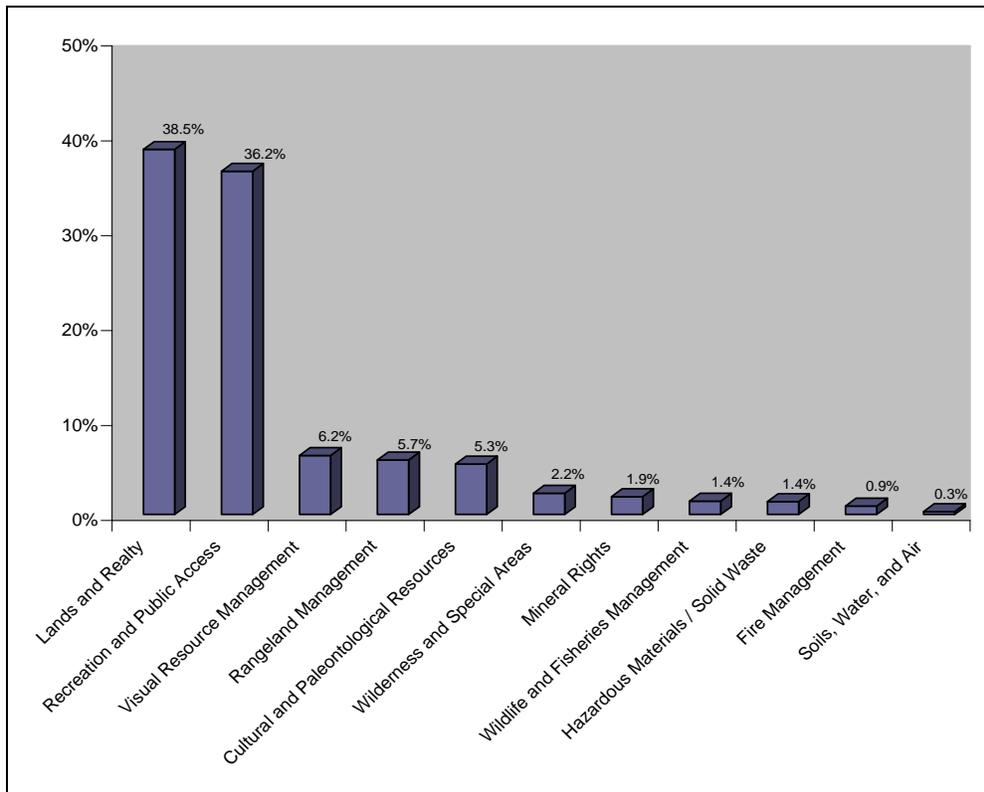


Figure 2. Public Response by Issue – Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area

Lands and Realty

The most common comment received regarding the Lands and Realty category was pertaining to land tenure. In general, the public wants the public lands to remain public. Transfer of land title to private land owners was generally considered undesirable.

Recreation and Public Access

In general, public sentiment expressed was in favor of maintaining public access to public lands, and to manage for diverse recreation experiences. Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use is increasing, and owners of these vehicles want continued access to BLM administered land and some assurance they will have a place to enjoy their recreation pursuits in the future.

Visual Resources

Rapid urban growth in central Arizona has increased the public's awareness of open space and scenic quality. Citizens have expressed an intense interest in keeping the landscapes on land as natural appearing as possible.

Rangeland Management

Public sentiment generally supports continuation of grazing in this region. Concern was expressed about the health of riparian areas and the spread of invasive species infestations.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources

Comments concerning this issue generally centered on increasing protection for sites and halting site vandalism. The potential for livestock damage to sites was also an item of comment.

Special Designations

Comments were received concerning the protection of sensitive resources and habitats within existing or new special management areas, such as Areas of Critical Environment Concern.

Minerals

Locatable mineral extraction within the planning areas is localized and influenced by fluctuating prices for metals. However, there is intense interest in the recreational pursuit of gold as evidenced in the large participation in clubs such as the Gold Prospectors Association of America and the Roadrunners Gold Prospectors Club.

In addition, the rapid growth in the urban area is increasing demand for sand, gravel, and decorative rock. These saleable materials can often be found on non-Federal lands, but interest in extraction from Federal

lands is increasing. It is estimated that between 60 and 70% of the decorative rock produced in the Phoenix Metro Area come from Public Lands (Donaldson 2006).

There is widespread abuse and/or misunderstanding of the 1872 Mining Laws, as it is concerned with mining claims and occupancy. Occupancy is governed by the 43 CFR 3715 regulations and approval for occupancy must be obtained from BLM prior to occupying the public lands.

Wildlife and Fisheries Management

The preservation of land for both game and non-game wildlife is increasing. As the urban area expands, habitat is lost for many wildlife species. Development is also fragmenting habitat, reducing the viability of what remains. Many species in the Sonoran Desert require large land areas. Long term preservation of species, especially Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered species, will require preservation of large areas of unfragmented habitat and focused management of sensitive and uncommon habitats such as riparian.

Hazardous Materials and Solid Waste

Illegal dumping of household waste is an increasing problem within both planning areas. Besides being unsightly, there is a potential for hazardous materials to be dumped as well. In addition, there are many abandoned mines within the Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area that pose the potential for containing hazardous materials.

Fire Management

Allowing natural fire cycles to reestablish on appropriate lands is a public concern. At the same time, the wildland-urban interface (WUI) is expanding as population increases in central Arizona bring residences closer to areas vulnerable to wildfires. Identifying and conducting the appropriate fire management for specific locations are concerns.

Water and Air

Protecting surface water from declining quality and quantity is an issue. Also, since a large part of central Arizona is within a PM₁₀ nonattainment area, managing BLM-managed lands to maintain air quality standards is also of concern.

Wild Burros

Management of a wild burro herd in the Harquahala and Bighorn Mountains area was of concern to the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD).

Alternatives

NEPA regulations and BLM planning regulations require the formulation of a reasonable range of Alternatives that seek to address the identified issues and management concerns. The BLM developed five Alternatives, including the “No Action” and “Preferred” Alternatives. The Preferred Alternative, modified in response to public comment, is now the Proposed Plan. Each of the five Alternatives varies in both context and intensity of management actions and comprises a set of Desired Resource of Future Conditions, special designations, land use allocations, and the management actions needed to implement the alternative. Alternatives must meet the purpose and need for the EIS and the purpose and significant statement for the monument; must be reasonable; must provide a mix of resource protection, use, and development; must be responsive to the issues; and must meet the established planning criteria. Each Alternative is a complete land use plan that provides a framework for multiple use management of the full spectrum of resources, resource uses, and programs present in the planning area. Under all Alternatives the BLM will manage the public lands in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, and BLM policy and guidance.

Alternative A (No Action) is the current management situation for both the monument and the Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area. *Alternative A* serves as a baseline for comparison with the other Alternatives.

Alternative B entails increased public use and more recreation-related development, consistent with protection of monument resources. It also allows visitation and development within the Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area while ensuring resource protection is not compromised.

Alternative C provides visitors with opportunities to experience the natural landscapes and cultural resource setting of the monument with more restrictive decisions than *Alternative B*. In the Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area, there is greater emphasis under *Alternative C* on identifying and protecting undeveloped landscapes than in *Alternative B*.

Alternative D emphasizes the preservation of undeveloped, primitive landscapes on the monument, resulting in limited public use and the withdrawal of authorized grazing. The Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area emphasizes natural landscapes and non-motorized recreation, with more management dedicated to maintaining primitive recreation opportunities than under the other Alternatives.

Alternative E (Proposed Plan) combines elements selected from the other Alternatives that have subsequently been studied and further refined. This Alternative is designed to respond in the most comprehensive manner possible to each of the issues and management concerns identified throughout the planning process. BLM has determined that the management actions presented in *Alternative E* will provide the optimal balance between authorized resource use and the protection and long-term sustainability of sensitive resources within each of the planning areas.

Table E-1 Comparison of Key Alternative Components

	Alternative A Acres	Alternative B Acres	Alternative C Acres	Alternative D Acres	Alternative E Acres
Land Tenure	15,274 acres for Sale, 39,100 acres for Exchange, 54,370 acres total.	58,400 acres for Sale or Exchange	49,100 acres for Sale or Exchange	None	29,870 acres for Sale, 9,525 for Exchange, 39,395 acres total
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)	Two for 9,660 acres	One for 640 acres	Ten areas for 56,520 acres	Nine areas for 205,870 acres	Four areas for 89,970 acres
Congressionally Designated Wilderness	Five Areas for 96,820 acres				
Lands allocated to maintain wilderness characteristics	None	One area for 56,040 acres	Eight areas for 107,843 acres	Eighteen areas for 140,235 acres	Nine areas for 88,179 acres
Special Recreation Management Areas and Recreation Management Zones (SRMA and RMZ)	None	Nine areas for 149,760 acres	Nine areas for 182,800 acres	Seven areas for 56,240 acres	Fifteen areas for 678,835 acres
Mineral Withdrawal or Closure	Closed to: Location – 171,680 acres Lease – 171,680 acres Sale – 172,510 acres	Closed to: Location – 171,680 acres Lease – 171,680 acres Sale – 268,260 acres	Closed to: Location – 188,450 acres Lease – 188,190 acres Sale – 325,970 acres	Closed to: Location – 457,664 acres Lease – 464,734 acres Sale – 480,864 acres	Closed to: Location – 171,940 acres Lease – 171,680 acres Sale – 172,780 acres

Public Involvement

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) decision-making process is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, U.S. Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, and Department of the Interior (DOI) and BLM policies and procedures implementing NEPA. NEPA and the associated regulatory and policy framework requires that all Federal agencies involve interested groups of the public in their decision-making, consider reasonable alternatives to proposed actions, and prepare environmental documents that disclose the potential impacts of proposed actions and alternatives.

The Phoenix District holds as a priority, collaborative management that engages local communities, organizations, and citizens. Public involvement, consultation, and coordination have been at the heart of the planning process leading to these Proposed Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This was accomplished through public meetings, informal meetings, individual contacts, news releases, planning bulletins, a planning Web site, and *Federal Register* notices.

Very early in the planning process, the BLM contracted with James Kent Associates (JKA) to work with residents and community groups in the planning areas regarding their issues and concerns. JKA's staff and BLM employees visited the communities of Wickenburg, Yarnell, Buckeye, Tonopah, Castle Hot Springs, New River, Black Canyon City, Cordes Junction, Mayer, Dewey, Humboldt, and Prescott Valley. They visited Phoenix, Flagstaff, and Prescott, talking with environmental and recreation groups. Citizens discussed their concerns with land use management and suggested ideas for improving current management practices. Residents in some areas even conducted their own community surveys in order to provide input and guidance to BLM in the planning process.

Ten scoping meetings were held in central Arizona communities. The meetings were structured to have an open house period, followed by a meeting/presentation where speakers could voice their concerns. BLM resource specialists were available to provide information and respond to questions. During the scoping meetings, 564 people registered their attendance with 169 offering to speak. Comments from the public were collected during the scoping meetings and throughout the scoping period through a variety of methods including mail, fax, and email.

BLM continued collaboration efforts by including communities in the formulation of Alternatives. Workshops were held throughout the planning area to give citizens the opportunity to refine issues, discuss visions for the public lands, and begin exploring alternative ways to manage the lands and resources. Citizens also submitted formulated Alternatives, as well as vision statements, for specific community areas or resources. These were also considered in the range of Alternatives and analyzed in the EIS.

When the Preliminary Draft Alternatives had been developed, BLM distributed Alternatives to the public and held four additional public meetings. The public responded with nearly 2,000 comments concerning the measures developed in those alternatives. Public comments were taken into consideration as the planning team prepared the Alternatives later published in Draft RMPs/EIS.

After publication of the Draft RMP/EIS on January 6, 2006, the public and cooperating agencies had a total of 90 days to comment on the Preliminary Draft. The document was distributed throughout the planning area and was also available through e-planning (an interactive online database). Prior to the formal public comment meetings, BLM held a total of six e-Planning workshops throughout the planning

area to help the general public get acquainted with this new medium of reading and commenting on the Draft RMPs/EIS.

BLM held a total of eight formal public meetings throughout the planning area during the 90 day comment period. The primary objective of these meetings was to receive comments from the public. Similar to the scoping meetings, BLM specialists were available to provide information and responses to questions. Meeting attendees had the option of either verbally speaking to the BLM staff at the meeting, or they could write and hand in comment sheets at the meeting. The meetings had as few as six attendees in Buckeye to over 85 attendees in the Dewey-Humboldt community.

The 90 day public comment period ended on April 6, 2006. A total of 431 individual comment letters and 1,046 form letters (consisting of six separate form letters) were received by the Phoenix District. In order to properly analyze all of the comments received, the BLM followed the USDA Forest Service Content Analysis Team (CAT) process for comment analysis. After all of the comment letters were parsed, separated, and grouped according to the concern and rationale, they were responded to by the resource specialist at the Phoenix District. For a more detailed analysis of this process, please refer to Section 5.3.3 Comment Analysis Process.

Affected Environment

This section provides an overview of existing conditions in the affected environment of the Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala planning areas.

Special Designations

Within the entire planning area there are five designated wilderness areas totaling 96,820 acres, one Back Country Byway, two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (totaling 9,060 acres), and three segments of the Agua Fria River determined to be suitable for Wild (12.1 miles) or Scenic (10.3 miles) designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Lands and Realty

Eight utility corridors criss-cross the planning area, providing available locations for current and future energy delivery to the urbanizing Phoenix Metropolitan area. Meetings with the public and energy utilities indicated the existing corridor system was sufficient to meet future demands.

Though central Arizona is one of the fastest growing population centers in the United States, adequate lands to support community growth exist in both Arizona State Trust and private ownership.

Soil Resources

Soils in the planning areas tend to be shallow and of various textures. Many of the soil types are vulnerable to disturbance from such activities as driving off-highway vehicles away from existing roads. Surface disturbances are slow to recover in the desert environments, leaving exposed soil vulnerable to accelerated wind and water erosion.

Air Quality

EPA has designated three nonattainment areas in central Arizona, one for particulate matter up to 10 microns (PM_{10}), one for ozone, and one for carbon-monoxide (CO). The primary sources of particulates in urban areas are construction and dust from vehicle travel. On public lands, tailpipe emissions from various types of motorized vehicles contribute to overall levels of particulates and carbon monoxide. Though any surface disturbance can increase production of dust from BLM-administered lands, motorized vehicles on unpaved roads are the primary source. The nonattainment areas generally encompass the urbanized zone with only a few thousand acres of public land within them. Maricopa County has developed standards for implementing the Arizona State Implementation Plan (SIP) for achieving attainment and BLM must comply with county standards on lands within the nonattainment areas.

Water Resources

The planning areas lie within the drainages of two major river systems, the Hassayampa River in the west and the Agua Fria River in the east. In the Sonoran Desert, surface water— especially reliable perennial surface water— is a rare and particularly valuable resource. Most of the historical locations of reliable surface water have been lost to urbanization and the remaining locations serve as the most important wildlife habitats in the region. Groundwater pumping in the region may be affecting surface water availability by lowering water tables that support spring production and aquifers that occasionally emerge in river bottoms. Surface water quality, where it remains, has been determined by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) in most cases to be “limited”, containing pollutants above Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards. The most common pollutants contributing to these “limited” streams are fecal coliforms, arsenic, and turbidity.

Biological Resources

The planning areas contain primarily Sonoran Desert, Desert Grassland, and Interior Chaparral vegetation communities and animals associated with them. Of all habitats within the planning areas, the 140 miles of riparian corridors are most important, supporting a variety of rare plants, vertebrates, invertebrates, and native fishes; including listed and candidate threatened and endangered species. The list of known species includes the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), desert pupfish (*Cyprinodon macularius*), Gila topminnow (*Poeciliopsis occidentalis*), and Gila chub (*Gila intermedia*).

Upland areas contain some of the finest examples of Sonoran Desert vegetation communities, including paloverde-saguaro cactus, easily accessible to residents of central Arizona. The most sensitive wildlife species dependent on these uplands is desert tortoise. The planning areas contain 93,616 acres of desert tortoise habitat classified as Category I; 419,529 acres classified as Category II; and 136,671 acres classified as Category III.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources

The Agua Fria National Monument was created primarily to preserve the outstanding cultural resources within its boundary. Over 400 sites, including prehistoric pueblo ruins and spectacular rock art, are known within the monument. Thousands of undiscovered sites may also be there. Outside the monument, there is an abundance of both prehistoric and historic cultural resources including archaic hunter-gatherer sites up to 6,000 years old, and mining and ranching sites from the late 1800's. Sites both on and off the monument are recognized on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHR), including the Perry Mesa Archaeological District and the Harquahala Peak Smithsonian Observatory. The planning area contains no known significant sites for vertebrate or invertebrate fossils.

Recreation

The planning areas are on the northern and western fringes of the rapidly urbanizing Phoenix metropolitan area. Population growth from 1990 to 2000 exceeded 40 percent in the region. As the population grows, recreation demand grows as well. Studies indicate the rate of growth in recreation demand exceeds the rate of population growth. As the planning effort began, demand for motorized

recreation in the forms of four-wheel-drive vehicles (like jeeps and Humvees), ATVs, and motorcycles had been increasing rapidly. These recreation uses are expected to continue to increase disproportionate to population growth. As urban development gets closer and closer to public lands, unmanaged indiscriminate recreation use, such as unsafe practices of target shooting, creates conflict with natural resources and traditional public land users.

Visual Resources

Visual Resource Management (VRM) provides a basic tool for BLM to manage a major component of open space. VRM inventory has discovered that, as natural landscapes are converted to rural and urban development, the public sensitivity to visual change on public lands increases. The public desires open and natural appearing landscapes on BLM-managed lands. Poorly designed activities that create large visual intrusions could diminish the quality of life that has attracted new residents to central Arizona.

Rangeland Management

There are 101 grazing allotments in the planning areas, where leases or permits allow the annual grazing of 83,060 animal unit months (AUMs), or approximately 11,690 animals (cattle, horses, and sheep). During seasons with extraordinary production of forage from annual grasses and forbs, additional AUMs are authorized for ephemeral use.

Mineral and Energy Resources

Mineral development of gold, copper, and other metals has been limited within the planning area for the last 15 to 20 years. Some areas of moderate mineral potential exist, but development beyond casual use has not occurred. The primary locatable mineral development has been by individuals or small operations conducting small-scale prospecting activities. No leases for oil or gas drilling have been issued in over 15 years. As population growth and development continues, demand for building material also grows, which has increased the number of requests for sales of mineral materials such as sand, gravel, and decorative rock from public lands.

Energy resources include electric transmission lines and natural gas pipelines. Several major transmission lines and pipelines pass through the planning area to provide energy resources to Phoenix and other urban areas in Arizona and California. A major hub of transmission lines, the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, is located just south of the planning area boundary along Interstate Highway 10 west of Phoenix. As urban areas continue to grow, it is expected that the BLM will receive more applications for new utility lines within utility corridors.

Fire and Fuel Resources

The Sonoran Desert biome presents few opportunities for fire use. The ecosystem is sensitive to fire and suppression of fires is generally considered desirable. Vegetation communities at higher elevations, interior chaparral and desert grasslands, do have some fire use potential and prescribed burning is currently conducted in some of these areas. Population growth and urban expansion is increasing the

extent of Wildland Urban Interface, (WUI) which presents increased challenge in the protection of private property and public safety.

Wild Horses and Burros

The Lake Pleasant burro herd is managed in accordance with provisions in the Lake Pleasant Herd Management Plan. That plan established an appropriate management level (AML) of 208 burros within the Lake Pleasant Herd Management Area. Burros are gathered as needed to maintain the AML or to remove nuisance animals. The Harquahala Herd Area, though large in extent, has few burros as determined by aerial count. These animals spend much of their time on private agricultural lands near BLM-administered lands. Previous management plans have prescribed complete removal of these animals. A manageability analysis of the herd determined the small number and frequent use of private land renders this herd not manageable as a sustained herd over the long term.

Travel Management

Route inventory has been undertaken in both planning areas to identify existing travel routes. Inventory is complete in the national monument and 171 miles of motorized route have been detected and mapped. In the Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area, inventory is still underway. Based on the current inventory and other route sources, estimated motorized route mileage for the Bradshaw-Harquahala planning area is 2,240 miles.

Wilderness Characteristics

Inventories of BLM-administered land to determine areas containing wilderness characteristics were conducted by BLM in 1980 and 2002. The Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990 set aside 96,820 acres within the Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area in five wilderness areas. For this planning effort, the inventories of 1980 for areas not added to the National Wilderness Preservation System were reexamined to determine their current relevance. In addition, BLM received inventories conducted by private citizens and a proposal for protection of areas containing wilderness characteristics.

Social and Economic Conditions

Social and economic data suggest the region has seen a shift from rural communities relying on public lands for economic products, to urban communities with more diverse economies. In the urban areas, public lands are an increasingly important source of recreation opportunities, as well as a place of traditional uses, such as ranching and mining. Many rural communities within the planning area cling to their rural identities and continue to be dependent on public lands for economic stimulus. Many of these are shifting from mining and ranching towns to service providers for the recreation seeking urban dwellers. On a regional basis, the economic contribution from rural communities is only a small proportion of money generated. However, the economic contribution of public land use may be a large proportion of dollars flowing in many rural communities.

Environmental Justice

The planning area has several communities with minority populations exceeding county averages. In addition, several communities have above average numbers of households below the poverty level.

Summary of Proposed Decisions and Environmental Consequences

Chapter 4 analyzes the consequences of proposed allocations and management actions for the five management Alternatives, on the natural and social environments of the planning areas. Table 2-8 includes a summary comparison of impacts by Alternative. The Proposed RMP for each planning area consists of *Alternative E*, with some changes made in response to public and agency comments. Section 2.1.1 provides a summary of changes from the Draft to the Proposed RMPs/EIS.

Special Designations

In the Agua Fria National Monument, the proposed plan eliminates two existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and provides for evaluations of the suitability of eight eligible tributaries of the Agua Fria River for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The current ACECs in the Agua Fria NM would receive equal or higher levels of management and protection under the Monument Proclamation and management plan. In the Bradshaw-Harquahala area, the plan creates four new ACECs to protect important natural and cultural resources: Tule Creek ACEC (640 acres); Vulture Mountain ACEC (6,120 acres); Black Butte ACEC (8,260 acres); and Harquahala Mountains ACEC (74,950 acres). Limiting motorized use to designated routes and recreation allocations focused on managing rapidly increasing recreation demand will generally benefit resources within Special Designations.

Lands and Realty

The Bradshaw-Harquahala area includes 39,395 acres identified as potentially suitable for disposal, while the remaining lands in both planning areas would be retained in public ownership. The lands identified for potential disposal consist of scattered small parcels, including many in urban interface zones. Though scattered parcels would be made available for potential disposal through sales, leases or exchanges, ample lands for future development are available from sources other than disposal of public land.

Proposed utility and transportation corridors would meet increasing energy demands for urban expansion in central Arizona. The proposed plans maintain existing corridors, while creating a wider corridor in the Black Canyon area to accommodate new facilities while avoiding any new construction in the national monument. Existing state and federal highways could be maintained and widened. The proposed plan also establishes the Wickenburg Bypass and Canamex transportation corridors west of Phoenix.

Soil Resources

Management proposed in all Alternatives provides measures to reduce soil erosion and maintain or enhance soil productivity.

Air Quality

The proposed plans support actions to monitor air quality and mitigate impacts from vehicle travel and other sources of dust. Management practices generally would improve air quality throughout the planning areas. Although the BLM's contribution to air pollution in the region is negligible, proposals to limit motorized vehicles to designated routes and allocations, or special designations that limit expansion of route networks, will result in production of target pollutants at or reduced from current levels.

Water Resources

Management practices proposed in all Alternatives are designed to promote or improve water production and water quality. Most water related issues in Arizona are a result of rapid population growth, compounded by long periods of drought in the past few decades. Although the BLM's management actions have only limited effects, proposals to manage motorized vehicles, management actions designed to improve vegetation cover, and actions to protect or enhance riparian vegetation communities are expected to improve or maintain water production and quality.

Biological Resources

Management of riparian areas is a priority in all Alternatives. Various management alternatives are explored to balance the demands on riparian habitats with maintaining or enhancing their productivity. In all alternatives, limitations to motorized vehicles, implementation of Arizona Land Health Standards (ALHS), and management of recreation resources are designed to reduce disturbance to riparian areas and improve their functioning condition.

Management of desert tortoise habitat is a priority and most management actions are common to all Alternatives. Actions designed to maintain or improve conditions for desert tortoise should help their populations and avoid their listing as threatened or endangered.

Cultural Resources

Management of both planning areas places a priority on identification and protection of cultural resources. Selected sites or areas could be allocated to public use for interpretive development. Approximately 86% of the Agua Fria National Monument would be excluded from interpretive development. Sites could be developed for interpretive uses in six zones of the Bradshaw-Harquahala planning area. Proposed management actions provide protection for cultural resources and mitigation of impacts to sites developed for public use.

Paleontological Resources

There are no known significant resources in the planning areas. Management actions are designed to inventory and protect fossil sites if they are discovered in the course of normal management activities.

Recreation

In the National Monument, the Proposed RMPs emphasizes resource protection and non-motorized activities, while accommodating recreational activities and facilities within the Front Country zone that are consistent with resource protection. The Front Country zone includes 11,900 acres that receive higher visitation levels due to proximity to major highways and roads. The Back Country zone of 57,650 acres would be the focus of undeveloped and self-directed visitor experiences in primitive landscape settings. The plan proposes to prohibit recreational target shooting in order to protect monument resources and public safety. Hunting would continue to be allowed in accordance with Arizona laws and regulations.

In the Bradshaw-Harquahala area, the proposed plan offers a mix of recreational opportunities that attempts to meet the wide variety of recreation demands, while reducing conflict with other natural resources and traditional public land uses. The plan establishes management zones that encompass a range of landscapes and opportunities. It allocates 15 areas, totaling 678,835 acres, as Special Recreation Management Areas and Recreation Management Zones, each with specific Desired Future Conditions, benefits, and management actions. The remaining areas will be managed as Extensive Recreation Management Areas, where activities will be monitored but facilities would be limited. The plan emphasizes community partnerships to develop recreational opportunities in support of resource protection and public education.

Visual Resources

Visual Resource Management (VRM) classifications range from Class I, which involves minimal change to the existing landscape, to Class IV which allows for more changes associated with development. The proposed plan allocates 59,000 acres to VRM Class II in the Agua Fria NM, including the Back Country zone and areas managed for wilderness characteristics. The Front Country zone is allocated to VRM Class III. The Bradshaw-Harquahala area includes 96,820 acres within five existing wilderness areas, which are allocated to VRM Class I. Other proposed allocations include 488,250 acres to VRM Class II, 278,540 acres to VRM Class III, and 103,390 acres to VRM Class IV. These allocations minimize visual impacts while protecting scenic landscapes and meeting demands for public land resources.

Rangeland Management

The proposed plan limits livestock grazing in riparian areas to the winter season in the Agua Fria NM. In both planning areas, management changes will be implemented as needed to meet standards and bring riparian areas toward proper functioning condition. Changes in livestock grazing will primarily result from implementation of the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and the Guidelines for Grazing Management. These changes would result from individual allotment evaluations to determine if the standards are being met and adjustments designed to meet the standards. In certain areas, some reduction in AUMs might be required to achieve riparian management goals.

Mineral and Energy Resources

There are 171,940 acres proposed to be closed to mineral location; 171,690 acres closed to mineral leasing; and 172,780 acres closed to mineral materials sales. These closures incorporate the combined area of 167,720 acres within the Agua Fria NM and five designated wilderness areas. Therefore, there

would be little effect on existing mining operations. Sales of such mineral materials as sand and gravel, boulders and decorative rock could be limited by management for desert tortoise and varying allocations for primitive recreation use, but it is expected that in any case, regional demand will have to be met from non-BLM-managed lands.

Fire and Fuel Resources

The plan proposes to implement fuels management and suppression tactics that limit disturbance to the landscape. It would implement a range of appropriate vegetation treatments to maintain and restore habitats and to reduce and control wildfires. The plan supports actions and partnerships to protect communities in wildland-urban interface areas. Although the plan includes allocations for large undeveloped areas, few impacts to management of fire suppression or fire use are anticipated.

Wild Horses and Burros

Management within the two areas containing wild burros is not expected to change from current management. Burros in the Lake Pleasant Herd Management Area would continue at current numbers with occasional removal of animals to maintain herd numbers and remove nuisance animals. Burros in the Harquahala Herd Area would eventually be removed from public lands.

Travel Management

The proposed plan for the Agua Fria NM includes a network of designated travel routes, designed to protect monument values and resources while allowing for compatible uses and resource management activities. Of the 171 miles of existing inventoried routes, 52 miles would be closed to use by motorized and mechanized vehicles. There would be 25 miles limited to administrative use only, and 94 miles would remain open to travel. The plan proposes no new routes or scenic byway designations in the monument.

In the Bradshaw-Harquahala area, all motorized and mechanized vehicles (with the exception of wheeled game carriers) would be limited to designated open routes. Travel is currently limited to inventoried routes, pending the development and implementation of travel management plans with public comment and review. Designated travel routes, clearly marked and reinforced by public education and law enforcement, will protect natural and cultural resources while allowing for public enjoyment of recreational opportunities, authorized land uses, and access to state and private property.

Wilderness Characteristics

The proposed plan allocates 20,900 acres to be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics (outstanding opportunities for naturalness and solitude) in the Agua Fria NM. These areas include much of the Back Country zone on Perry Mesa and in the Agua Fria River Canyon and its tributary canyons. In the Bradshaw-Harquahala area, the plan allocates 13,490 acres to be managed for wilderness characteristics in the Black Canyon Management Unit and 53,789 acres to be managed as such in the Harquahala Management Unit within the Big Horn and Belmont mountain ranges.

Social and Economic Conditions

Impacts to social and economic conditions from BLM management actions on a regional basis are expected to be small. Changes in mineral closures would not result in loss of current jobs or reduction in current economic development, but may result in opportunity costs for future mining possibilities.

Environmental Justice

Implementation of the proposed plans would not result in a disproportionate impact to any minority or low income group.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are discussed for Population Growth and Development, Recreation/Visitation, Air Quality, Soils, Water Resources, and Wild Horse and Burro Management. Generally, the cumulative affect of BLM management activities in addition to the rapid population growth and urban expansion of central Arizona indicates the contribution of public land management to change in the region is very small. It was determined that BLM management activities are not expected to result in a cumulatively significant impact to the environment.