



San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area Draft Resource Management Plan Frequently Asked Questions

Why is a new Resource Management Plan needed for the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area?

Current planning guidance for the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) is more than 25 years old. A new RMP is needed to address changing circumstances, including increased population growth, increased demand for access and use, and increased demand for water that could impact the riparian values of the SPRNCA. The establishment of clearly articulated, scientifically based goals and objectives that meet the legislative requirements will improve the public's understanding of how the BLM intends to manage the SPRNCA.

How did the BLM develop the alternatives and identify the Preferred Alternative in the Draft SPRNCA RMP/EIS?

The BLM developed four alternatives based on public comments received during scoping and input from cooperating agencies, tribes, and partners, and ensured that they met requirements for an adequate range of alternatives. The alternatives seek to meet the purpose and need, fulfill the legislative obligations, to meet the multiple-use mandates of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and to address issues identified during scoping. The Preferred Alternative represents a balance between resource protection and public use. It increases livestock grazing on suitable upland areas where compatible with the conservation values for which the SPRNCA was established. It provides for the most diverse mix of recreation opportunities to address the wide-spectrum of public needs. It will provide for additional opportunities for habitat restoration and water recharge projects.

Why does the Draft RMP/EIS consider continued grazing on the SPRNCA?

A 15-year moratorium was placed on livestock grazing in the SPRNCA in the 1989 San Pedro River Riparian Management Plan (1989), except for 6,521 acres that were acquired after the original designation. The San Pedro River Riparian Management Plan (1989) also committed the BLM to analyze the compatibility of grazing with the conservation values of the SPRNCA at the end of the 15-year period. To finally meet that commitment, the Draft RMP/EIS evaluates livestock grazing.

What level of grazing does the preferred alternative propose?

The Draft RMP/EIS Preferred Alternative proposes to open 26,450 acres to livestock grazing. It increases livestock grazing on suitable upland areas where compatible with the established conservation values. It is focused in the upland areas and excludes sensitive cultural sites, recreation areas and the San Pedro River riparian area. Grazing would not occur on the remaining 47 percent of the SPRNCA to reduce conflicts with other uses and ensure protection of the conservation values.

Under the preferred alternative, how would the BLM manage grazing on the SPRNCA in the future?

The Draft RMP would allocate forage in certain areas to livestock grazing and sets the framework for future collaborative adaptive management to include interested stakeholders. The analysis of impacts includes what would be reasonably foreseeable infrastructure such as fences and water developments. Subsequent livestock grazing decisions would determine the exact number and type of livestock authorized, seasons of use, terms and conditions on that use, and the related monitoring and infrastructure necessary to manage such use.

Under the preferred alternative, how would the BLM manage groundwater and the river?

The Draft RMP sets goals and objectives for vegetation and water resources and would allow the BLM to undertake restoration and groundwater recharge projects determined necessary to meet those objectives. It does not determine how much water the BLM needs to protect the conservation values, which are being determined separately as part of the Gila River adjudication process.

Under the preferred alternative, what types of recreation and access would be allowed in the SPRNCA?

The Preferred Alternative would provide for the most diverse recreation opportunities, including an increase in areas open to hunting, and allows for the development of associated infrastructure to increase access. Designated motorized and non-motorized routes will be determined in a subsequent travel management plan, in which the BLM will also evaluate the development of new trails and motorized routes. Due to the configuration of the SPRNCA and surrounding private lands, some areas have limited public access, which the BLM and partners will seek to address with willing landowners.

What are the next steps after the 90 day public comment period?

The BLM will review the comments and make needed adjustments to the Draft based on comments that:

- question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in the Draft EIS;
- question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis;
- present valid new information relevant to the analysis;
- present reasonable alternatives other than those analyzed in the Draft EIS; or
- would cause changes or revisions in one or more of the alternatives.

How can I be involved?

The public is invited to provide input on the Draft Alternatives. You can provide input at the project website <https://go.usa.gov/xnTuM> or on the provided comment form. Join the mailing list for this process to receive periodic updates. Please indicate your interest on the meeting sign-in sheet, or send an email with your contact details to Amy Markstein (amarkstein@blm.gov).