

**SPRNCA Resource Management Planning
Public Strategy Meeting**
June 18, 2013 – 6:00 to 8:30 PM
Benson Fire Station, 375 E 7th St, Benson, AZ 85602

Goals for the meeting

- Present basic information and share current plans related to the Resource Management Planning process
- Elicit public comments and suggestions on how the initial plans can be improved to encourage more effective public engagement

Meeting Format: A brief presentation on the Resource Management Plan (RMP) process was shared, followed by Q&A and group discussion.

This meeting was attended by approximately thirty participants.

See website for [meeting agenda](#)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The purpose of this meeting was to gather input on what the public engagement could look like for the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) Resource Management Plan (RMP). A similar meeting was held in Sierra Vista on May 15, 2013 and one will be held in Tucson on June 20, 2013.

Larry Fisher introduced himself as a professor at the University of Arizona who is a neutral facilitator to assist the BLM with the SPRNCA planning process. His fellow Facilitation Team members are Colleen Whitaker, Jenny Winkler, and Julia Sittig.

Karen Simms, Acting Tucson Field Office Manager, introduced the BLM planning team:

- Jim Mahoney, Outdoor Recreation Planner
- Ben Lomeli, Hydrologist
- Linda Dunlavey, Realty Specialist
- Amy Markstein, Assistant Planner
- Chris Horyza, Arizona State Office Planning Lead
- Amy Sobiech, Archaeologist
- Jeff Simms, Fisheries Biologist
- Eric Baker, Rangeland Specialist (not present)
- Marcia Radke, Wildlife Biologist (not present)
- Leslie Uhr, GIS Specialist (not present)

Two new managers, Tim Shannon, District Manager and Dennis Sylvania, Associate District Manager, started working with the Gila District in May 2013.

Introduction to the Resource Management Plan (RMP) Process

Amy Markstein introduced the process for the SPRNCA RMP. The PowerPoint of her introduction is available on the [website](#).

The RMP will establish goals and objectives for resource management in the SPRNCA as well as measures needed to achieve the goals and objectives. The SPRNCA is currently managed under the Safford District Resource Management Plan written in 1992 and the implementation level San Pedro River Riparian Management Plan written in 1989.

The process for writing the RMP/EIS will include the following phases: Public Comment Scoping, Draft RMP/Draft EIS, Public Comment Period, Proposed RMP/Final EIS, and Record of Decision and Approved RMP.

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will analyze and disclose the impacts of achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the RMP. The BLM is responsible for writing the RMP/EIS.

The planning area for the SPRNCA RMP will be focused on the 56,431 acres that make up the Riparian National Conservation Area, but may include some of the scattered parcels of BLM land adjacent to the SPRNCA. The planning area is an issue that will be considered during scoping.

The BLM is currently in the scoping phase of the planning process. The Public Engagement Planning meetings are being held for the BLM to hear and solicit input on ways in which the public would like to be involved in the planning process. Education and scoping forums are scheduled for late July and August. These meetings will provide information by subject matter experts on specific issues and serve as an opportunity for the public to submit scoping comments. Additional scoping meetings are scheduled for mid-August and will provide a chance to discuss resource management issues that may not have been covered in the education and scoping forums.

Submitting Scoping Comments

BLM is now accepting scoping comments for the SPRNCA RMP. In order for comments to be analyzed in the official scoping report, comments must be submitted by the end of the 150-day public comment period which is September 27, 2013. Comments submitted after the official scoping period will still be considered by the BLM, but will not be part of the official scoping report. BLM may not be able to incorporate comments submitted after the official scoping period into the plan analysis.

The extent to which the agency considers each comment can depend on the clarity and informed nature of the comment. **Substantive scoping comments** include comments that provide input that would affect the National Environmental Protection Act process, impacts analysis, or the range of alternatives analyzed in the RMP. **Non-substantive comments** express opinions, emotions, or provide input or request analysis on subjects outside of the scope of the RMP.

BLM must consider all substantive scoping comments submitted during the official scoping period. Non-substantive comments submitted during the scoping period will be included in the scoping report with a rationale for why the comments were not substantive. The scoping report will summarize all of the meetings held during the scoping period as well as other outreach activities conducted during scoping. The scoping report will summarize the issues identified during the scoping period. These issues will be carried forward and will be addressed in the range of alternatives. Each fully-developed alternative represents a different land use plan that addresses and/or resolves the identified planning issues in different ways.

One way in which the public may hold the BLM accountable is to attend public meetings, become well-informed about the issues, and to submit comments.

2. What the planning team has heard so far from the public, and how they are responding

- a. Slow down—agency is not allowing enough time for public comments to be considered
 - i. The BLM extended the Scoping period from 90 to 150 days, in order to be able to hear a greater number of comments. The Public Engagement Planning Meetings and the Education and Scoping Forums have been added as a mechanism to gain a better understanding of the resources before the official comment period ends on September 27, 2013.
- b. Educational forum meeting format would provide important information that would result in more informed public comments
 - i. A series of educational forums has been scheduled for pertinent subjects (see handout for schedule). They are both educational sessions and opportunities to provide scoping comments.
- c. Increased access to reports, analyses, and planning documents that BLM uses
 - i. Documents relevant to the SPRNCA planning process have been posted online, and any suggestions on posting additional information are welcome.
- d. Reach out to youth to involve them in planning
 - i. A Facebook page is being made to make the SPRNCA planning more accessible to youth. The Planning Team encourages community members and organizations to suggest further actions for youth involvement.
- e. Make information accessible through a website, understandable language, and readable documents
 - i. A SPRNCA planning website has been published (link is at the bottom of handout). The Safford RMP, San Pedro River Riparian Management Plan, notes from public meetings, and legislative documents pertinent to the SPRNCA planning process are available online.
 - ii. BLM will post information and videos from the educational forums on YouTube, or on a disc upon request

- iii. A Facebook page is in progress for the SPRNCA planning process
- f. Meeting schedule should be varied; some people can come on weekdays and others can attend on weekends
 - i. Meetings have been scheduled for different venues and times of the week

3. Input and Clarifications From Tonight's Meeting

RMP Planning Process

- An acknowledgement by BLM that the comment has been received would be very helpful.
- Ramifications of changing laws that are outside of BLM's jurisdiction may affect the management of the SPRNCA, so it is a goal of BLM to create a flexible, dynamic plan that will be able to adjust to changes in external circumstances.
- The Stakeholders in this planning process is any person or entity with an interest (local, regional, national), who use, benefit from, and care about the landscape and resources. The goal is to hear different perspectives and ideas about managing the resources.
- The Las Cienegas planning process was very collaborative, and it would be useful for members of the public to have an opportunity to share their knowledge and opinions in a safe environment.
 - BLM is willing to come to meetings of community groups to provide information or listen to feedback on the management of the SPRNCA.
- The SPRNCA RMP offers an opportunity for excellent management of valuable resources. Members of the community would appreciate BLM staff utilizing information from residents in this process.
 - BLM encourages communication from all stakeholders and desires a strong collaborative process for this RMP.
- Part of this planning process is about efficiently synthesizing the extensive amount of available information. BLM is required to write a background document called the Analysis of the Management Situation report which summarizes the current management direction, the resource inventories, the baseline conditions of the resources, and management opportunities.
 - BLM is currently synthesizing the available information for the Analysis of the Management Situation.
- Maps, inventories, and data (specifically what BLM has been using for resource inventories) are requested for public review at the next meeting in Benson.

Information Desired on the SPRNCA Planning Effort Website

- An explanation of how analysis of public comments works
- Information that the BLM is utilizing in its resource inventory efforts, in visual format.
- GPS points of landmarks on the SPRNCA

- Map of San Pedro River watershed

Suggestions for Public Forums

- Information on the subjects presented at educational forums would be useful to the public prior to the forums. If specific information is desired, contact the Amy Markstein, the BLM Assistant Planner.
- If individuals are concerned with the material presented at educational forums, they may contact BLM about considering additional material. Comments may also be made at the Discussion section at the end of each Educational Forum.
 - A concerted effort has been made to choose credible experts to present at the educational forums who are not biased to certain government policies.
- Suggestion to create focus groups for drilling into complex/salient issues after the education forums have been held.

Additional Subjects Suggested for Educational Forums

- Fire management (currently will be addressed during Watershed forum)
- Law enforcement
 - Illegal recreation (especially route proliferation)
 - Vandalism of archaeological resources
- Dumping
- Illegal human activities/ border issues
- Vandalism/dumping

Ideas for Involving Youth

- Work with the Gray Hawk Nature Center (Sandy Anderson, Manager)—may be a good place to start with youth engagement.
- Create an interactive aspect on the Facebook page that is targeted to youth.
- Parents and grandparents are encouraged to bring youth to public meetings.
- Community clean-ups may spur enthusiasm of youth for caring about nature.
- Invite schoolteachers to attend public meetings and education forums.

Potential Issues for Scoping

- Dumping
- Shooting
- Animal habitat
- OHV routes/ Travel Management
- Special Designations
 - Resource Natural Areas and reports from the National Riparian Areas Service Team

4. Ways to Stay Engaged

- Invite youth and teachers to meetings
- Request information to be put on the web-site (Contact Amy Markestein)
- Request information to be made available prior to educational forums

- Generate ideas for engaging youth
- Submit substantive comments during the scoping phase; the earlier comments are submitted, the more useful they will be