

## **SPRNCA RMP Preliminary Issue Areas**

*This set of preliminary issue areas have been developed by the BLM. "Issues" are the key resource challenges that will guide the planning process. Later in the process, alternatives will be designed to address each of the planning issues. The number and range of alternatives will be determined by the final set of issues.*

*These preliminary issues can be commented on, added to, or changed through the scoping process. Additional issues will be identified during [education forums and scoping meetings](#). The scoping phase will culminate with a written summary of the final set of issues. Within each issue area, goals and objectives and the resource allocations and management actions for achieving those conditions will be identified.*

### **Issue 1: Water Resources (Surface and Groundwater)**

The San Pedro River is one of the last undammed rivers in the southwest, where water is an increasingly scarce resource. Adequate water quality and quantity—as well as properly functioning watershed, riparian, and aquatic habitat conditions—are required by law to support the riparian values within the SPRNCA. In the RMP BLM will need to identify desired future conditions for water resources.

### **Issue 2: Land Health (Uplands and Watershed Function)**

Proper watershed function in the uplands is imperative to the proper functioning condition of the San Pedro River. A healthy cover of vegetation stabilizes the soil, increases infiltration of precipitation, slows surface runoff, prevents erosion, provides clean water to adjacent streams, increases natural groundwater recharge and enhances the visual quality of public land. In addition, diverse plant communities provide habitat for wildlife as well as forage for livestock. In the RMP, BLM will need to: identify priority species and desired habitat conditions, identify areas for reintroduction of native animal species, and limited habitats for special status species.

### **Issue 3: Riparian Areas, Floodplains, Wetlands, Aquatic Habitats**

The scarcity and importance of riparian/aquatic habitat in the desert southwest make them a priority management area for the SPRNCA. The BLM is mandated to manage the SPRNCA for the protection of these habitats. Healthy riparian areas and wetlands stabilize soil, store and gradually release water throughout the year, prevent erosion, and improve water quality. In the RMP, BLM will need to: identify priority riparian/aquatic species and desired habitat, identify areas for reintroduction of native animal species, and limited habitats for special status species.

### **Issue 4: Fish, Wildlife, and Special Status Species (Plants and Wildlife)**

The San Pedro watershed supports approximately 400 species of birds, approximately 80 mammal species, more than 60 species of reptiles and amphibians and 4 native fish. All four native fish species in the planning area are special status species. Each wildlife species contributes to biological diversity and ecosystem function. The San Pedro watershed is home to approximately 50 special status species including federally listed, candidate, state listed, and BLM sensitive species. In the RMP, the BLM will have to identify and designate priority species and habitats, as well as identify desired future conditions for habitat conditions for habitat types that support a wide variety of game, non-game, and migratory bird species.

### **Issue 5: Cultural/Paleontological Resources**

The cultural resources in the SPRNCA represent an internationally significant array of site types, cultures, and time periods. In the RMP, BLM will need to allocate cultural properties to specific uses. The RMP will provide background and detail regarding traditional cultural uses or values, and the development of appropriate management tools to consult with tribal groups and protect, preserve and enhance those values. Paleontological resources will be addressed in accordance with the current policy issued in Washington Office Instruction Memoranda on the Potential Fossil Yield Classification system. The BLM's objectives are to manage paleontological and cultural resources for scientific, conservation, traditional, public, and experimental use.

### **Issue 6: Special Designations**

There are currently three Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in the SPRNCA totaling close to 5,420 acres. Some of these are also considered Research Natural Areas (San Rafael, San Pedro River and St. David Cienega). Current and potential areas for ACEC designation need to be inventoried and incorporated into the RMP.

### **Issue 7: Livestock Grazing**

The compatibility of grazing on the SPRNCA with the area's conservation values will be analyzed and evaluated in this RMP. The majority of the SPRNCA has been closed to grazing since 1989. The BLM acquired the SPRNCA in order to protect and enhance the riparian ecosystem along the Upper San Pedro River. Subsequently a decision was made to prohibit livestock grazing for the 15 year lifespan of the San Pedro River Riparian Management Plan (1989) with the exception of 6,521 acres that were acquired after the original designation. This decision will be revisited in the upcoming RMP.

### **Issue 8: Recreation**

The SPRNCA attracts over 100,000 visitors annually who engage in a variety of recreational activities, especially birding. The SPRNCA draws birders from all over the world. It is a premiere birding destination with an abundance of neotropical migrants in the spring and fall. Other recreation activities in the SPRNCA include camping, wildlife viewing, viewing of cultural sites, hiking, mountain biking, hunting, horseback riding, kayaking, and geocaching. The RMP will evaluate and analyze recreation designations.

### **Issue 9: Visual Resources**

Visual resource values in the SPRNCA, including the overall scenic quality of the area, will be considered during the RMP. The potential effects of energy projects such as transmission lines, road development, and test ranges for UAS/drone development may impact the visual values of the SPRNCA. Visual Resource Management (VRM) classifications will be designated as part of the RMP.

### **Issue 10: Lands and Realty**

Land exchanges and easement purchases have allowed BLM to acquire land with special resource values and to consolidate holdings in the SPRNCA. There is one existing right-of-way corridor in the SPRNCA by Charleston. The RMP will identify, evaluate, and analyze right-of-way avoidance (limited) and exclusion (no access) areas.