

San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area

Scoping Report Newsletter



Bureau of Land Management Tucson Field Office

January 2014

Project Update

The BLM has completed the scoping report for the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA), which documents the process it used to solicit input on the issues, impacts, and potential alternatives to address in the Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). The scoping report is available on the project website at <http://on.doi.gov/11YKfGO>.

The SPRNCA is located in Cochise County, Arizona, and encompasses 40 miles of the upper San Pedro River flowing north from the U.S.-Mexico border near Palominas to St. David near Benson. The SPRNCA was designated by Congress as the first riparian national

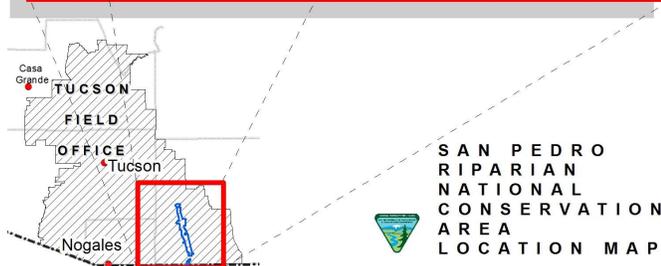
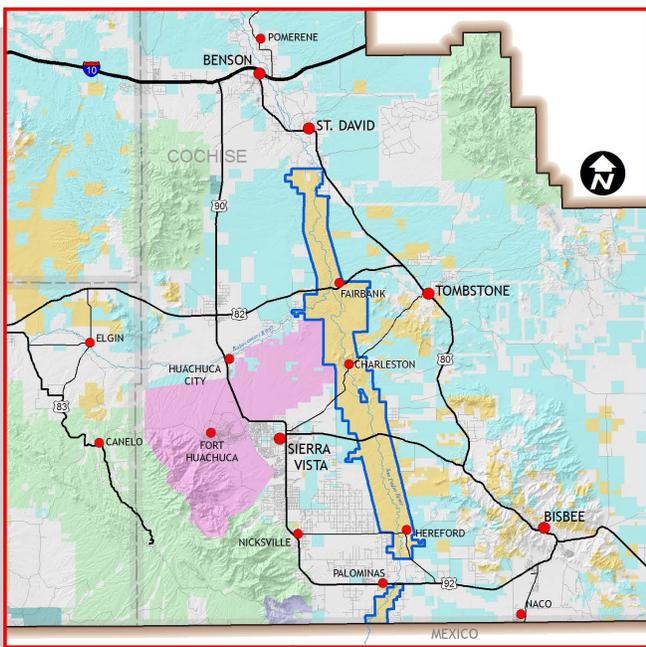
conservation area on November 18, 1988, "to conserve, protect and enhance the riparian area and the aquatic, wildlife, archaeological, paleontological, scientific, cultural, educational, and recreational resources of the conservation area." The SPRNCA is part of the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System, or National Conservation Lands.

Key Issues

The BLM identified a total of 499 comments from the 133 unique comment letters received. Although the comments covered a range of issues across various topics, most centered on the topics of water availability, recreational access and use, motorized vehicle use, and livestock grazing. These topics are summarized below; for more detail about the full range of identified issues, see the scoping report on the project website.

"Thank you for participating in the scoping forums and submitting comments. Public input is an important part of the Resource Management Planning process."

—Vi Hillman,
Tucson Field Manager



The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area located in Cochise County, Arizona, east of Sierra Vista along the San Pedro River.

Water

Commenters expressed concern about the availability of water to sustain the San Pedro River, riparian habitats, and land health—citing regional growth as a major contributor to decreases in water quantity. Some commenters suggested measures to slow and retain stormwater runoff and to recharge the aquifer, while others suggested purchasing water rights or conservation easements outside the SPRNCA, groundwater infiltration areas, and Central Arizona Project water.

Recreation

Commenters noted the need to expand recreational access and use in the SPRNCA. Commenters requested improving access and use in the St. David Cienega and SPRNCA to meet visitor needs, such as improving designated trails to accommodate access

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for people with disabilities; adding recreation facilities, such as picnic sites, benches, and campgrounds; establishing off-leash dog areas; and installing wildlife blinds. Other commenters suggested restricting fishing, bicycling, and equestrian use and limiting high-use trails to hiking. Additional comments recommended limiting or prohibiting activities that interfere with the calm, quiet appreciation of nature.

Motorized Vehicles

Commenters varied regarding motorized vehicle use in the SPRNCA. Comments ranged from prohibiting all motorized vehicle use to prohibiting only off-highway vehicle (OHV) use to allowing some limited OHV use. Many comments noted that OHV use could disturb wildlife, disrupt the recreation experience, and impact the environment.

Livestock Grazing

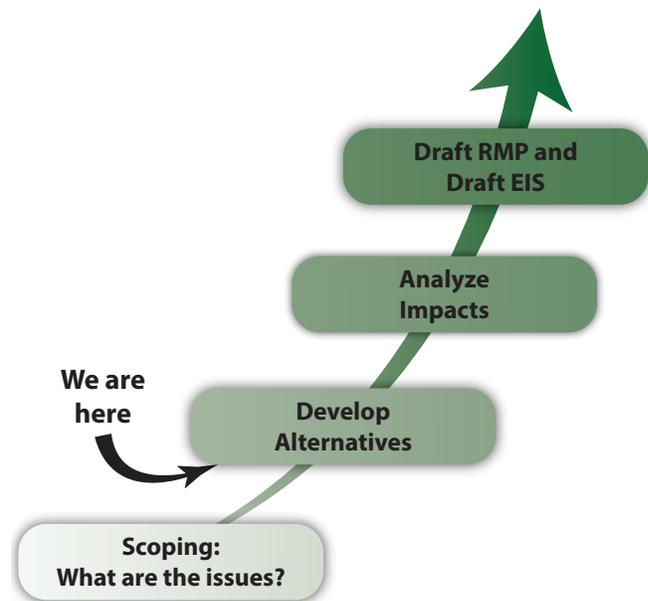
Commenters varied regarding livestock grazing in the SPRNCA. Some commenters recommended prohibiting livestock grazing to protect sensitive riparian resources, while others recommended allowing active and productive livestock grazing practices to benefit riparian habitat and native grasslands and reduce fuel loads. For existing grazing and potential grazing, commenters suggested seasonal limitations, modifying rotations and stocking rates, monitoring grazing practices, and monitoring available forage.

Opportunities for Public Involvement

Although public input is accepted throughout the planning process, the next official public comment period begins when the Draft RMP/EIS is available for public review. The availability of the Draft RMP/EIS will be announced in the *Federal Register* and on the project website.

Next Steps

The scoping comments and issues will help in developing a range of alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the project and the goals and objectives developed by the BLM. A detailed analysis of the alternatives will be completed and documented in the Draft RMP/EIS.



Contact Information

For information about this project, visit the project website or ePlanning site or contact the BLM project manager:

Project website:

www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/planning/san_pedro.html

BLM ePlanning site—SPRNCA webpage:

<http://on.doi.gov/11YKfGO>

Project email:

blm_az_tfo_sprnca_rmp@blm.gov

BLM project manager:

David McIntyre
3201 East Universal Way
Tucson, AZ 85756

(520) 258-7259
dmcintyre@blm.gov