



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# From Peaks to Plains

The Newsletter of the Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan

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## From the Field Manager



Thanks again for your interest in the Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (ECRMP). Please note that the ECRMP newsletter has been renamed and reformatted to reflect the diverse landscapes managed by this field office. We hope you like the new look.

As I think about the past year, what comes immediately to mind is how much the BLM relies on and appreciates the participation of its cooperators, stakeholders and the general public. This is particularly true when developing an RMP or RMP revision, and even more so since this RMP is one of the first to incorporate some of the principles of the BLM's new planning initiative called "Planning 2.0."

In spring 2015, we held a series of public meetings to hear how people from different communities envision

the best use of their public lands. Once we published the notice of intent to begin an RMP in the *Federal Register* in June 2015, we initiated a 60-day public comment period and hosted eight scoping meetings. The article "Participation Is Key" on page 2 describes two reports the BLM released about the outcomes of those meetings.

Currently, we are working on developing the preliminary alternatives for the draft RMP, incorporating many ideas we heard during envisioning and scoping. These alternatives will lay out in detail several possible ways the BLM could manage the public lands under its stewardship. We'll be incorporating additional input from our cooperating agencies in the near future to further develop these alternatives.

We are also formulating how the BLM will analyze the impacts that these different alternatives could have on resources, resource uses and local communities. These efforts are the topics for two reports that will soon be released for public review; more information about them can be found on page 2, "Coming Soon: Preliminary Alternatives and Basis for Analysis."

Writing or revising an RMP is a complicated, multi-year process. A couple of tools the BLM uses to keep track of its progress that you may also find helpful for understanding how we manage this very important task are on page 3, "Diagram of the ECRMP Planning

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Process" and on page 4, "The ECRMP ePlanning Website."

Finally, on page 4, "The South Park Master Leasing Plan and the ECRMP" describes how the South Park MLP is being incorporated in the ECRMP.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *From Peaks to Plains* and look forward to hearing from you or talking with you at our next public meeting.

—Keith Berger, Field Manager  
BLM Royal Gorge Field Office

# Participation Is Key

Public involvement is a critical aspect of the BLM's RMP process. The BLM solicits public advice and opinion frequently during plan development, not only because the agency is mandated to do so by law ([43 CFR 1500 and 40 CFR 1600](#)) and policy ([BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1](#)), but also because public input helps the BLM manage public lands in a way that is responsive to people's needs and desires. *Envisioning* and *scoping* are two activities done early in the RMP development process to find out how people think the BLM should manage public lands.

## Envisioning

For the ECRMP, Colorado Mesa University, under an assistance agreement with the BLM, conducted nine envisioning focus groups with 181 participants in spring 2015. The university held focus groups in several communities within the Royal Gorge Field Office as well as two online webinars. For more information about the results of these envisioning meetings, see the [Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan Envisioning Report](#) on the BLM's

National Land Use Planning Register (ePlanning) ECRMP website:

<http://on.doi.gov/1HVULcA>.

## Scoping

The purpose of public scoping is to determine which issues pertaining to the management of public lands are most important to people and how people think the BLM should address those issues. Public scoping is conducted by actively soliciting comments from the public during a formal 60-day period starting with the day the notice of intent to begin an RMP is published in the *Federal Register*. For the ECRMP, the official public scoping period was June 1–July 31, 2015. In addition to many other outreach efforts, the BLM hosted eight scoping meetings during this time period, attended by a total of 226 people. More information about the scoping period including the public comments collected by the BLM can be found in the [Scoping Summary Report for the Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan](#) on the ECRMP ePlanning website.



## HELP DETERMINE HOW YOUR PUBLIC LANDS ARE USED!

- Check the ECRMP website regularly for new document postings and upcoming meetings: <http://on.doi.gov/1HVULcA>.
- Send your comments to the BLM:
  - ◇ E-mail: [ecrmp.comments@blm.gov](mailto:ecrmp.comments@blm.gov)
  - ◇ Mail: ECRMP, BLM Royal Gorge Field Office, 3028 E Main St., Cañon City, CO 81212

## Coming Soon: Preliminary Alternatives & Basis for Analysis

The BLM is working on two reports in advance of the draft ECRMP: a preliminary description of alternatives and a preliminary basis for analysis. The purpose of these reports is to give the public a chance to review the RMP's alternatives and methods of analyzing impacts before they are incorporated into the draft plan.

The alternatives report will be completed with additional input from our cooperating agencies over the next few of months and will include three different preliminary action alternatives that specify how the Royal Gorge Field Office could manage the public land it administers. Each alternative emphasizes a different landscape management approach and includes factors identified during public envisioning and scoping conducted in 2015 (see "Participation Is Key" on page 2).

The BLM would like to hear from the public whether all of the issues identified during public scoping have been included in the alternatives in this report. Did we miss anything?

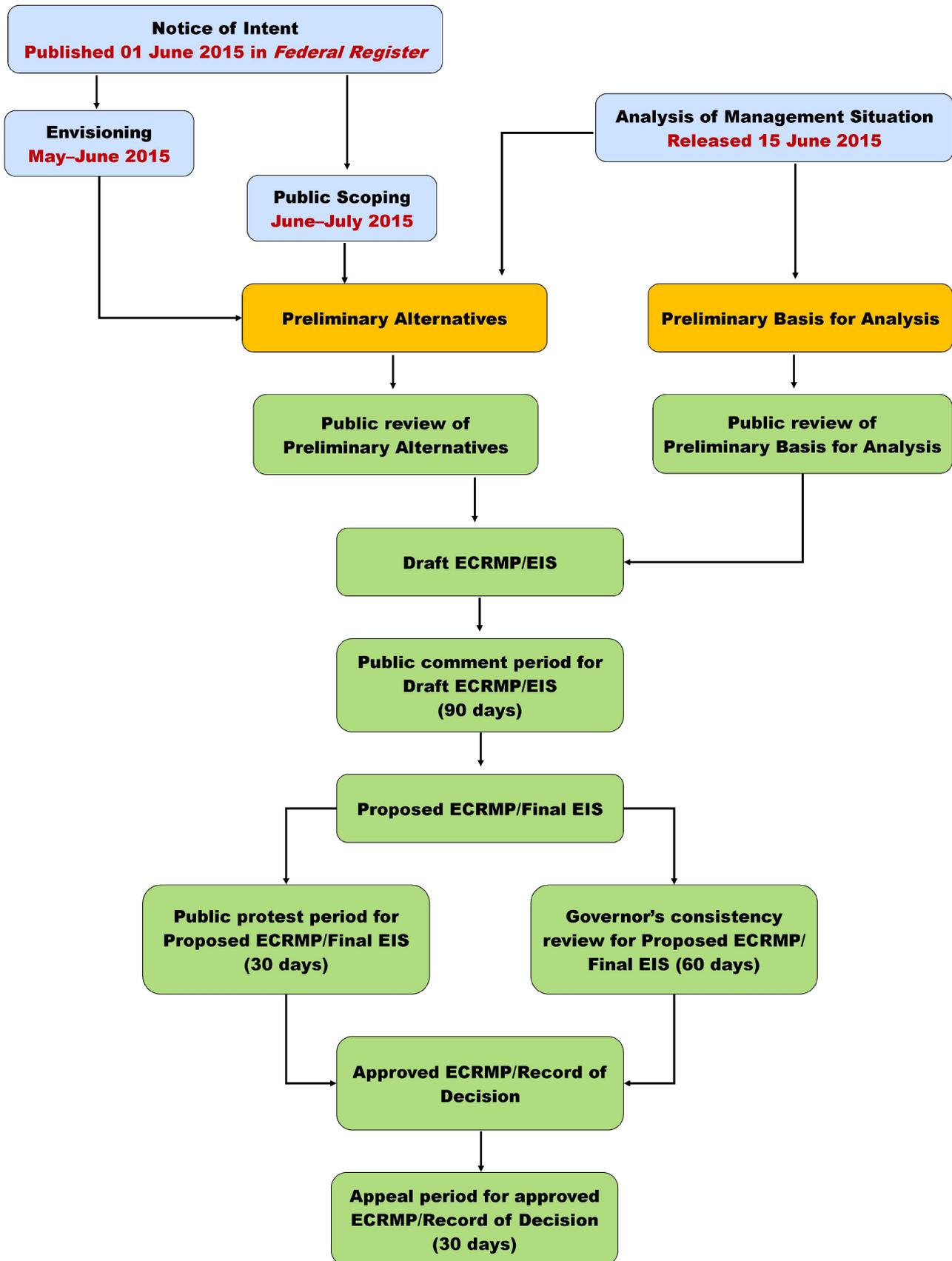
Comments that address these and other substantive issues are more helpful for developing alternatives that truly reflect public concerns than comments that simply state a preference, such as "This is the one I like."

Once the public has reviewed the preliminary alternatives, the BLM will make revisions and develop a "preferred" alternative that takes public comments into account.

The preliminary basis for analysis report will specify which analytical methods the BLM proposes using to assess the impacts the various alternatives will have on the resources, resource uses and communities in the area covered by the RMP (the "planning area"). The public will have a chance to suggest changes to the proposed methodology or new methods the BLM could use to analyze impacts prior to the BLM incorporating these methods in its analysis of impacts in the draft RMP.

Both reports as well as information on how to submit comments will be posted on the ECRMP ePlanning website.

# Diagram of the ECRMP Planning Process



Blue boxes are steps already completed, orange boxes are steps in progress, and green boxes are future steps.

# The ECRMP ePlanning Website

Members of the planning team for the ECRMP rely heavily on electronic media to communicate with each other and with the public. The main source for information about the RMP is the ECRMP section of the BLM's National Land Use Planning Register (also called "ePlanning") website, which is an online repository for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

documents and information about NEPA-related projects throughout the United States. All of the ECRMP documents ready for release are posted on this website. Let us know what you think of it and if there is anything else you would like to see on the site:

<http://on.doi.gov/1HVULcA>



## The South Park Master Leasing Plan and the ECRMP

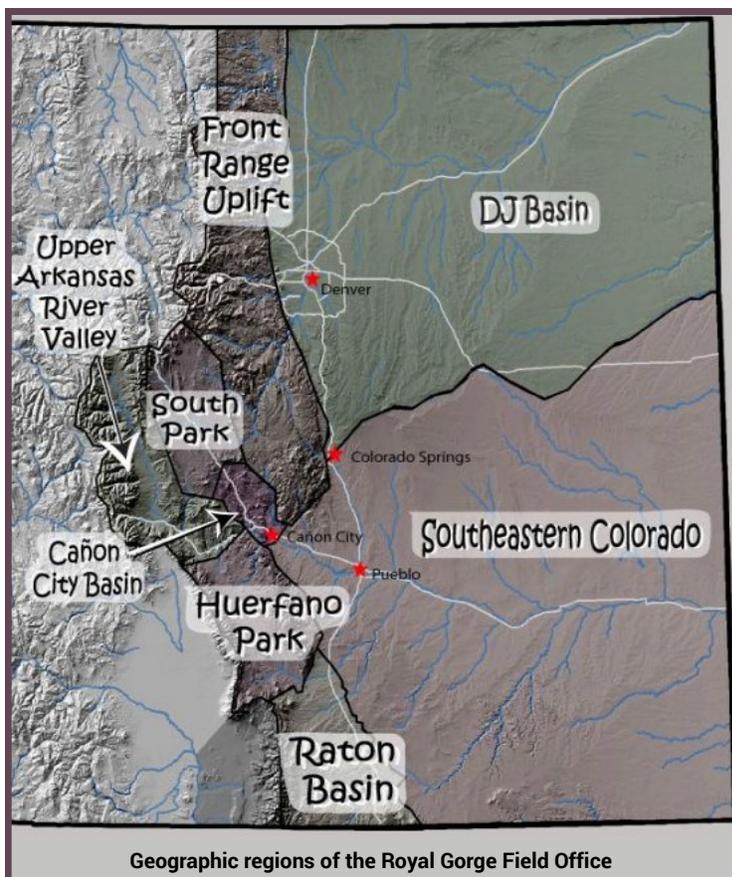
In 2010, the Bureau of Land Management introduced leasing reform to manage for oil and gas development on public lands. Leasing reform allows the BLM to conduct a more in-depth review for areas that are or may be opened to leasing at the planning level through master leasing plans (MLPs). The purpose of an MLP is to plan for oil and gas development at the land use plan level in a defined area containing a high level of potential resource concerns.

There are two main components of an MLP:

- Develop goals for maintaining or improving the condition of natural resource values in the area.
- Identify resource protection measures and best management practices that may be adopted as lease stipulations in an RMP.

Concerned stakeholders requested that the BLM include the South Park MLP in the ECRMP to help determine how oil and gas development will proceed on BLM-managed lands and minerals in the South Park area. The plan will identify parcels available for leasing and may contain additional requirements for fluid mineral development in the area above and beyond what is required in the rest of the field office. Examples of additional requirements are phased development, increased setbacks, timing limitations and specific best management practices.

The South Park MLP is being treated as a resource use in the draft ECRMP currently under development, which means the MLP will go through the identical process of alternative formulation and impact analysis review as other resource uses such as livestock grazing or recreation. As mandated by NEPA, the details in the MLP will vary under the different



alternatives in the draft RMP, so the public and the BLM will have a variety of options to choose from in determining the best course for managing mineral leasing in the South Park area.

More details about the South Park MLP will be available in the ECRMP preliminary alternatives report.