



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

**Proposed Resource Management Plans
Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area
Red Cliffs National Conservation Area
Proposed Amendment to the
St. George Field Office Resource Management Plan
Final Environmental Impact Statement**





**Proposed Resource Management Plans
Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area
Red Cliffs National Conservation Area**



**Proposed Amendment to the St. George Field Office
Resource Management Plan**



**Final Environmental Impact Statement
DOI-BLM-UT-C030-2015-1-EIS**

Prepared by the
U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
St. George Field Office
September 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenna Whitlock".

Jenna Whitlock
Acting Utah State Director
Bureau of Land Management



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Utah State Office

P.O. Box 45155

Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0155

<http://www.blm.gov>

In reply to:
1610 (UTC03000)
DOI-BLM-UT-C030-2015-1-EIS

Dear Reader:

Enclosed are the Proposed Resource Management Plans (PRMPs) for the Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area (NCA) and Red Cliffs NCA, a Proposed Plan Amendment (PPA) to the St. George Field Office's Record of Decision and RMP (approved in 1999, amended in 2001), and a supporting Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared the PRMPs/PPA/FEIS, in consultation with cooperating agencies, taking into account public comments received during this planning effort. The PRMPs provide a framework for the future management direction and appropriate use of the Beaver Dam Wash NCA and the Red Cliffs NCA, located in Washington County, Utah. The documents contain land use planning decisions and implementation decisions to guide the BLM's management of the Beaver Dam Wash NCA and the Red Cliffs NCA.

The PRMPs/PPA and FEIS have been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, and the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009. The PRMPs/PPA are largely based on Alternative B, the preferred alternative in the Draft Resource Management Plans/Draft Plan Amendment/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DRMPs/DPA/DEIS), which were released on July 17, 2015 for public review. The PRMPs/PPA/FEIS have been prepared in an abbreviated format (in accordance with 40 CFR 1503.4(c)), and contain the Proposed Plans and Proposed Plan Amendment, a summary of changes made between the DRMPs/DPA/DEIS and PRMPs/PPA/FEIS, and a summary of the written comments received during the public review period for the DRMPs/DPA/DEIS, and responses to the comments.

Pursuant to the BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the planning decisions may protest approval of the planning decisions within 30 days from date the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. For further information on filing a protest, please see the accompanying protest regulations in the pages that follow (labeled as Attachment # 1). The regulations specify the required elements of your protest. Take care to document all relevant facts. As much as possible, reference or cite the planning documents or available planning records (e.g. meeting minutes or summaries, correspondence, etc.).

Emailed protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular mail or overnight delivery postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, the BLM will consider the emailed protest as an advance copy and will afford it full consideration. If you wish to provide the BLM with such advance notification, please direct emailed protests to: protest@blm.gov.

All protests must be in writing and mailed to one of the following addresses:

Regular Mail:
Director (210)
Attn: Protest Coordinator
P.O. Box 71383
Washington, D.C. 20024-1383

Overnight Delivery:
Director (210)
Attn: Protest Coordinator
20 M Street SE, Room 2134LM
Washington, D.C. 20003

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your protest, be advised that your entire protest – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your protest to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The BLM Director will make every attempt to promptly render a decision on each protest. The decision will be in writing and will be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the BLM Director shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior on each protest. Responses to protest issues will be compiled and formalized in a Director's Protest Resolution Report made available following issuance of the decisions.

Upon resolution of all planning protests, the BLM will issue the Approved RMPs, the Approved Plan Amendment, and three Records of Decision (RODs). The Approved RMPs, Approved Plan Amendment, and RODs will be mailed or made available electronically to all who participated in the planning process and will be available on the BLM website at <http://bit.ly/2av3Q1i>.

Unlike land use planning decisions, implementation decisions included in these PRMPs/FEIS are not subject to protest under the BLM planning regulations, but are subject to an administrative review process, through appeals to the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA), Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) pursuant to 43 CFR, Part 4 Subpart E. Implementation decisions generally constitute the BLM's final approval allowing on-the-ground actions to proceed. Where implementation decisions are made as part of the land use planning process, they are still subject to the appeals process or other administrative review as prescribed by specific resource program regulations once the BLM resolves the protests to land use planning decisions and issues an Approved RMP and ROD. The Approved RMPs and RODs will therefore identify the implementation decisions made in the plan that may be appealed to the Office of Hearing and Appeals.

Sincerely,



Jenna Whitlock
Acting Utah State Director
Bureau of Land Management

Attachment #1

TITLE 43--PUBLIC LANDS: INTERIOR CHAPTER II--BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR PART 1600--PLANNING, PROGRAMMING, BUDGETING--Table of Contents Subpart 1610--Resource Management Planning Sec. 1610.5-2 Protest procedures.

(a) Any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the approval or amendment of a resource management plan may protest such approval or amendment. A protest may raise only those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process.

(1) The protest shall be in writing and shall be filed with the Director. The protest shall be filed within 30 days of the date the Environmental Protection Agency published the notice of receipt of the final environmental impact statement containing the plan or amendment in the Federal Register. For an amendment not requiring the preparation of an environmental impact statement, the protest shall be filed within 30 days of the publication of the notice of its effective date.

(2) The protest shall contain:

- (i) The name, mailing address, telephone number and interest of the person filing the protest;
- (ii) A statement of the issue or issues being protested;
- (iii) A statement of the part or parts of the plan or amendment being protested;
- (iv) A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party or an indication of the date the issue or issues were discussed for the record; and
- (v) A concise statement explaining why the State Director's decision is believed to be wrong.

(3) The Director shall promptly render a decision on the protest.

(b) The decision shall be in writing and shall set forth the reasons for the decision. The decision shall be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the Director shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior.

**Propose Resource Management Plans for
Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area and Red Cliffs National Conservation Area
and Proposed Amendment to the St. George Field Office Resource Management Plan
Washington County, Utah
Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

Lead Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Type of Action: Draft () Final (X) Administrative () Legislative ()

Jurisdiction: Color Country District, St. George Field Office, Utah

Abstract: The purpose of this planning process is to satisfy specific mandates from the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 that directed the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management to develop comprehensive plans for the long-term management of Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area (NCA) and the Red Cliffs NCA. The legislation also required BLM to take actions and make land use allocations on public lands in Washington County that require the *St. George Field Office Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (approved in 1999, amended in 2001) be amended to address two planning issues. The three planning efforts were initiated concurrently, to facilitate the preparation of a single Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental consequences of implementing the two new land use plans and amending the current St. George Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP).

The Draft RMPs for the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs NCAs and Draft Plan Amendment to the St. George Field Office RMP were presented in the Draft EIS released on July 17, 2015. The public comment period ran for 120 days, closing on November 16, 2015. The four alternatives proposed in the Draft RMPs and Draft Plan Amendment included Alternative A, the No Action alternative that represents the continuation of current management practices under the St. George Field Office RMP; Alternative B, the agency's Preferred Alternative; and two other alternatives, Alternative C and Alternative D.

In developing the Proposed RMPs and Proposed Plan Amendment and Final EIS, the BLM has the discretion to combine components of the four alternatives presented in the Draft RMPs and Draft Plan Amendment/Draft EIS. The Proposed RMPs and Proposed Plan Amendment include many of the management goals, objectives, and actions identified in BLM's Preferred Alternative, Alternative B. In response to public comments and input from the Cooperating Agencies, other Federal and State agencies, Tribal and local governmental entities, the proposed plans also include components of the other alternatives that were analyzed in the Draft EIS. The resulting Proposed RMPs and Proposed Plan Amendment address the widest range of public and agency concerns over resource management and land uses, while still meeting the legislative purposes of these comprehensive management plans.

Protest Period: Protests must be postmarked or received no later than 30 days after publication of the Environmental Protection Agency Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. Refer to the instructions in the Dear Reader letter for additional information on how to protest. For more information about or to view the document, visit the BLM ePlanning website <http://bit.ly/2av3Q1i> or contact: Keith Rigrtrup, BLM-Utah Planning Coordinator, Bureau of Land Management, Color County District Office, 176 East DL Sargent Drive, Cedar City, UT 84721-9337, (435) 865-3063, krigrtrup@blm.gov.

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management has prepared Proposed Resource Management Plans (Proposed RMPs) for the Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area (NCA) and the Red Cliffs NCA, and a supporting Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS). The two NCAs were established by Congress, through the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (Title 1, Subtitle O, 16 U.S.C. 7202, Public Law 111-11, hereinafter OPLMA), which President Barack Obama signed into law on March 30, 2009.

The Beaver Dam Wash NCA is comprised of approximately 63,480 acres of public land, located in the southwestern corner of Washington County, Utah and within the administrative boundaries of BLM's St. George Field Office. In October of 2009, Congress modified the boundaries and reduced the acreage of the Beaver Dam Wash NCA by 5,000 acres, through a "legislative rider" to the 2010 Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill Conference Agreement. The change excluded a designated utility corridor from the NCA, to facilitate management of the corridor for future utility line developments.

The Red Cliffs NCA includes approximately 44,859 acres of public land is located in central Washington County, north of the City of St. George. It is also under the administrative jurisdiction of the St. George Field Office.

Also included in this document is a Proposed Amendment to the St. George Field Office's Record of Decision and RMP (approved in 1999, amended in 2001). The need to amend the current St. George Field Office RMP was driven by legislative direction from OPLMA that required BLM to take actions and make land use allocations on public lands in Washington County, Utah related to two planning issues. The three planning efforts were initiated concurrently to facilitate the preparation of a single EIS to disclose the environmental consequences of implementing the two new NCA RMPs and amending the current St. George Field Office RMP.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PLANNING PROCESS

The purpose of and need for this planning process is to satisfy specific mandates from OPLMA that directed the development of comprehensive plans for the long-term management of the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs NCAs and land use allocations on public lands in Washington County that required an amendment to the St. George Field Office RMP.

BEAVER DAM WASH NCA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

At Section 1975 (d) (1) of Title 1, Subtitle O, OPLMA directs the Secretary of the Interior, through BLM, to develop a comprehensive [resource] management plan for the Beaver Dam Wash NCA to achieve the following Congressionally-defined purpose:

- ▶ To conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, natural, educational, and scientific resources of the Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area. (OPLMA Section 1975 (a)).

Land use planning goals, objectives, and management decisions approved in the RMP for the Beaver Dam Wash NCA must be consistent with the purposes, authorized uses, and other mandates from OPLMA. The mandates of OPLMA emphasize conservation, protection, enhancement, and restoration of public land values as the designation purposes for the NCA.

Regarding authorized uses, OPLMA at Section 1975 (e) (2) specifies that "the Secretary shall only allow uses of the National Conservation Area that the Secretary determines would further the purpose" for which the NCA was designated. OPLMA Section 1975 (g) (1) specifically restricts allowable uses by withdrawing the public lands of this NCA, subject to valid existing rights, from:

- ▶ All forms of entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws;
- ▶ Location, entry, and patenting under the mining laws; and
- ▶ Operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws.

At Section 1975 (e) (3), Congress addressed motorized vehicle access and travel in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA by designating three areas (labeled "Designated Road Areas" on the legislative map of the NCA) where motorized vehicle travel is permitted only on the roads identified on that map. In areas outside of the "Designated Road Areas", motorized vehicle travel is limited to roads designated by BLM through a public Comprehensive Travel and Transportation

Management planning process. There is an exception from the motorized travel restrictions for cases where motorized vehicles are needed for administrative purposes or to respond to an emergency.

RED CLIFFS NCA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Section 1974 (d) (1) of OPLMA mandates the Secretary, through BLM, to develop a comprehensive (resource) management plan for the Red Cliffs NCA to achieve the following Congressionally-defined purposes:

- ▶ To conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, natural, educational, and scientific resources of the National Conservation Area; and
- ▶ To protect each species that is located in the National Conservation Area; and listed as a threatened or endangered species on the list of threatened species or the list of endangered species published under...the Endangered Species Act of 1973. (OPLMA Section 1974 (a)).

Land use planning goals, objectives, and management decisions approved in the RMP for the Red Cliffs NCA must be consistent with the purposes, authorized uses, and other mandates from OPLMA. The mandates of OPLMA emphasize conservation, protection, enhancement, and restoration of public land values as the designation purposes for the NCA.

Regarding authorized uses, the OPLMA Section 1974 (e) (2) specifies that “the Secretary shall only allow uses of the National Conservation Areas that the Secretary determines would further the purpose” for which the NCA was designated. OPLMA Section 1974 (g) (1) specifically restricts allowable uses by withdrawing the public lands of this NCA, subject to valid existing rights, from:

- ▶ All forms of entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws;
- ▶ Location, entry, and patenting under the mining laws; and
- ▶ Operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws.

AMENDMENT TO THE ST. GEORGE FIELD OFFICE RMP

Designation of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Section 1979 (a) (1) and (2) of OPLMA, directs the Secretary, through BLM, to “identify areas located in the County where biological conservation is a priority; and undertake activities to conserve and restore plant and animal species and natural communities within such areas.”

Satisfying this legislative mandate from OPLMA could be accomplished through the administrative designation of new areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) on public lands, to direct special management attention to biological resources and natural communities that meet one or more of the following criteria for both relevance and importance (BLM Manual 1613.1):

Relevance: An area meets the “relevance” criteria if it contains one or more of the following:

- ▶ A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).
- ▶ A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species, rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian or rare geological feature).

Importance: The resource, system, or process described above must have substantial significance and value in order to satisfy the importance criteria. This generally means that the resource, system, or process is characterized by one or more of the following:

- ▶ Has more than locally significant qualities that give it worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.
- ▶ Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened or vulnerable to adverse change.
- ▶ Has been recognized as warranting protection in order to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq., Pub. L. 94-579, FLPMA) at Section 202 (c) (3), the identification, evaluation, and designation of ACECs must be accomplished through a land use planning process. The St. George Field Office RMP must be amended in order to designate new ACECs for relevant and important biological resources and natural communities.

Management of Priority Biological Conservation Areas

Through the Amendment to the St. George Field Office RMP, the BLM could also achieve biological conservation objectives, as directed by OPLMA, by identifying priority biological conservation areas and proposing management decisions for those areas where biological resources are in need of protection, but do not meet one or more of the criteria for both relevance and importance required for ACEC designation. Changes to existing goals, objectives, and management decisions from the current RMP for specific areas of public lands in Washington County can only be made through a land use planning process.

During this planning effort, BLM solicited input from federal agencies, state and local governments, Indian tribes, and the public, to identify public lands in Washington County where biological conservation is a priority and where new ACECs should be designated or other special management applied to conserve and restore plant and animal species and natural communities.

Off-Highway Vehicle Area Designations

Section 1977 (b) (1) of OPLMA directed the Secretary, through BLM, to “develop a comprehensive travel [and transportation] management plan” for public lands in Washington County. Prior to the development of this plan, the S St. George Field Office RMP must be amended to modify certain existing off-highway vehicle (OHV) area designations (open, limited or closed), to be in compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 43 CFR 8340.0-5, (f), (g), and (h) respectively and 43 CFR 8342.1 (a-d) and related agency policies. Area designations provide the framework within which individual route designations are made, as BLM prepares the legislatively-mandated travel management plan for public lands in Washington County.

PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC COLLABORATION

In May 2010, the St. George Field Office initiated the planning process through the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare resource management plans for the Beaver Dam Wash NCA and the Red Cliffs NCA and to amend the St. George Field Office RMP in the Federal Register (Federal Register, May 10, 2010, Vol. 75, No. 89, pages 25876-25877). The NOI identified a 60-day scoping period during which the public could assist BLM in the identification of issues or concerns related to the planning process. Public scoping is required by National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) in the early stages of developing an EIS to determine the scope and significance of issues related to a proposed action, such as the development of RMPs or an RMP Amendment (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1501.7).

The NOI announced the dates, meeting locations, and times for four public scoping open houses for this planning process. It also included instructions for providing written comments by the end date for the scoping period, July 19, 2010. This same information was included in a press release published in newspapers throughout the planning area in May of 2010. Scoping open houses were held in the cities of St. George, Hurricane, and Salt Lake City, in Utah; and in Mesquite, Nevada. Various media were used to publicize the open houses, including on-line postings on BLM-Utah State Office and the St. George Field Office websites, and a planning newsletter that was mailed to hundreds of individuals, organizations and agencies and made available at each of the scoping meetings. The newsletter provided information about the scoping process and instructions for submitting comments. It also included information about the NCAs, the purposes for which Congress had designated them to the National Conservation Lands System, and their resource values. The newsletter requested public input related to potential planning issues and requested input on alternatives for long-term management of the public lands within each NCA.

The mandates that required amendment of the St. George Field Office RMP were identified in the newsletter and the public invited to submit nominations for ACEC or other information that would assist BLM to identify and direct special management attention to areas of public land where biological conservation should be a priority. The newsletter and other information about the planning process were also posted and updated on the BLM website.

The four public open houses were held over a one-week period in June 2010, and were attended by 269 members of the public and representatives from other federal agencies, as well as state and local governments. BLM resource specialists were available to answer questions and provide additional information about specific issues throughout the meeting. Informational posters and maps were on display during the open houses and were designed to stimulate questions from the public and assist the preparation of scoping comments, which were accepted through written comment forms, emails, and postings to the BLM website.

In January of 2011, a second planning newsletter was mailed to all governmental agencies, organizations, and members of the public who had requested to be placed on the mailing list. This newsletter provided an overview of the results of scoping, the availability of the scoping report, and the announcement of an Economic Strategies Workshop that was held in St. George, Utah on February 18, 2011.

The Draft RMPs for the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs NCAs and Draft Amendment to the St. George Field Office RMP were released for public review and comment on July 17, 2015 (Federal Register, July 17, 2015, Vol. 80, No. 137, pages 42527-42529). The public comment period ran for 120 days, closing on November 16, 2015. During the public comment period, the BLM held public Open Houses in three locations (St. George, Hurricane, and Salt Lake City) in an effort to provide information and respond to questions about the draft plans. The public was able to request hard copies or CDs of the draft plans and submit written comments at the meetings. The public meetings were announced in a press release in local and state-wide newspapers, on the Utah-BLM and St. George Field Office websites, and through the newsletter mailed to agencies, organizations, groups, and individuals on the mailing list. These three Open Houses were attended by a total of approximately 176 people.

The four alternatives proposed in the Draft RMPs and Draft Amendment included Alternative A, the No Action alternative that represented the continuation of current management practices under the 1999 St. George Field Office RMP, Alternative B, the agency's Preferred Alternative, and two other alternatives, Alternative C and Alternative D

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN THE DRAFT EIS

Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

Alternative A (No Action) is required by NEPA and serves as a baseline against which to compare the environmental consequences that could be associated with implementation of other alternatives. Under this alternative, management for the two NCAs, and the public lands affected by the Amendment, would be derived primarily from management decisions in the 1999 St. George Field Office RMP, as amended. Unless otherwise noted, or if there were no similar action, Alternative A (No Action) directly quoted, rather than paraphrased or updated, the goals, objectives, and management decisions from the St. George Field Office RMP. As written, this alternative may not always have clearly conveyed that it described how resources values and public land programs have been, and are currently managed, under the RMP. A description of the on-going management allowed a comparison of the three new alternatives and their environmental consequences. However, this alternative also reflected recent mandates for the three planning areas from OPLMA. As examples, the designation of BLM-managed wilderness in Washington County, through OPLMA, modified decisions from the St. George Field Office RMP. These modifications were reflected in the Alternative A (No Action) for the Red Cliffs NCA, as two designated wilderness units are located entirely or partially within this NCA.

Alternative A (No Action) was also updated to include the mandates from OPLMA that withdrew the public lands in both NCAs from the operation of a number of federal laws (OPLMA Section 1974 (g) (1) and 1975 (g) (1)). While Alternative A (No Action) would continue to provide considerable valid management direction for the two NCAs, and the public lands that could be affected by the Amendment of the St. George Field Office RMP, in many instances, management decisions from the St. George Field Office RMP conflict with the mandates of OPLMA or lack the specificity needed for future management.

Alternative B (Preferred Alternative)

Alternative B attempted to balance resource protection and human uses of the public lands in the two NCAs and on public lands affected by the Amendment. For the two NCAs, management focused on protecting native vegetation communities, wildlife habitats, cultural resources, and the scenic qualities of each NCA from threats, particularly loss to or damage from wildland fires. The restoration of damaged lands was also emphasized under this alternative.

Changes were proposed related to livestock grazing management strategies in Beaver Dam Wash NCA. Sustainable public recreation uses would be managed through zoning of the two NCAs, permitting, and the development of recreation trails and camping facilities to enhance visitor experiences. Under Alternative B, in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA, an Old Spanish National Historic Trail Management Corridor was proposed and management actions identified to conserve, protect, and restore trail resources, associated settings, and primary uses within that corridor. Emphasis was placed on environmental education, interpretation, and opportunities for citizen stewardship of NCA resources. Alternative B incorporated elements from the other alternatives, as well as unique elements that would further goals and objectives relating to scientific research opportunities in the two NCAs.

Three new ACECs were proposed for designation and eight existing ACECs carried forward under Alternative B of the Draft Amendment. Management prescriptions are proposed for the new ACECs would help to ensure the protection of at risk native plant species, through balanced levels of land use allocations and restrictions on public uses.

Changes were proposed for existing OHV area designations that would remove the mountain biking area designations and change the acres designated as Open, Limited, and Closed, for cross-country motorized OHV travel, to comply with federal regulations and BLM's Travel and Transportation Management guidance. The acreage identified as Open to cross-country motorized vehicle travel would be reduced from 80,668 acres under Alternative A (No Action) to 22,062 under this alternative.

Alternative C

Alternative C represented an approach to the conservation and protection of resource values that emphasized higher levels of restrictions on certain land uses and activities, while continuing to allow for compatible public uses in the two NCAs. Management would also focus on protecting the ecological and scenic values of the NCAs from damage or loss to natural and human-caused impacts. Restoration of damaged lands emphasized the use of native vegetation species and the least invasive methods to accomplish goals and objectives. Under this alternative, public lands in the NCAs would not be available for livestock grazing in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA. Alternative C identified lands in each NCA that would be managed for wilderness characteristics and as heritage areas focused on the protection of cultural resources. In the Beaver Dam Wash NCA, an Old Spanish National Historic Trail Management Corridor was proposed and management actions identified to conserve, protect, and restore trail resources, associated settings, and primary uses within that corridor. Like Alternative B, this alternative emphasized environmental education outreach, interpretation, and scientific research.

In the Draft Amendment, 14 new ACECs for threatened, endangered or BLM Sensitive Species were evaluated for administrative designation and eight existing ACEC designations were carried forward under this alternative. Management prescriptions proposed for the new ACECs would help to ensure the protection of the relevance and importance values of the ACECs, through higher levels of restrictions on public land allocations and uses.

As under Alternative B, existing mountain biking area designations would be revoked and acres designated as Open for cross-country motorized OHV travel reduced to comply with federal regulations and BLM's Travel and Transportation Management guidance. Alternative C would designate the highest amount of acreage, 387,222 acres, of public lands managed by the St. George Field Office as Limited to Designated Routes.

Alternative D

Alternative D emphasized a broader array and higher levels of public use and access, while still meeting the mandates of "conservation, protection, and enhancement" of resource values in the two NCAs. It emphasized diverse and sustainable recreation uses of the two NCAs, through the development of new, non-motorized trails and visitor amenities. Public lands within the Beaver Dam Wash NCA would continue to be available for livestock grazing. Corridors would be retained or designated to accommodate new utility and/or transportation rights-of-way. Cultural and paleontological resources were proposed to be allocated to conservation, scientific research, and public uses. In the Beaver Dam Wash NCA, an Old Spanish National Historic Trail Management Corridor was proposed and management actions identified to conserve, protect, and restore trail resources, associated settings, and primary uses within that corridor. Like Alternatives B and C, this alternative emphasized environmental education outreach, interpretation, and scientific research.

In the Draft Amendment, under this alternative existing mountain biking area designations would be revoked and acres designated as Open for cross-country motorized OHV travel would be reduced, when compared to Alternative A (No Action), to comply with federal regulations and BLM's Travel and Transportation Management guidance.

PROPOSED RMPS AND PROPOSED AMENDMENT/FINAL EIS

In developing the Proposed RMPs, Proposed Amendment, and Final EIS, the BLM has the discretion to combine components of the four alternatives presented in the Draft NCA RMPs and Draft Amendment/Draft EIS. The Proposed RMPs and Proposed Amendment include many of the management goals, objectives, and actions identified in BLM's Preferred Alternative, Alternative B. In response to public comments and input from the Cooperating Agencies, other Federal and State agencies, Tribal and local governmental entities, the proposed plans also include components of the other alternatives that were analyzed in the Draft EIS. In some cases, minor edits or clarifications were required and these are shown in italicized text surrounded by brackets in the proposed plans. Language from the Draft EIS that is not being carried forward in the proposed plans is shown as a strikeout. None of the minor edits or clarifications required modifications to the analysis of the environmental consequences presented in Chapter 4 of the Draft EIS. The BLM has, therefore, prepared a condensed or abbreviated Final EIS to support the Proposed NCA RMPs and Proposed Amendment, consistent with federal regulations at 40 CFR 1503.4 (c). Appendix E includes a table that shows how the Proposed NCA RMPs and Proposed Amendment vary from Alternative B, BLM's preferred alternative, of the draft plans, and also includes errata. The resulting Proposed RMPs and Proposed Amendment address the widest range of public and agency concerns over resource management and land uses, while still meeting the Congressionally-defined purposes of the NCAs and OPLMA's mandates related to public land management in Washington County.

The Proposed RMPs and Proposed Amendment contain the management goals, objectives, and actions developed to guide the long term management of the two NCAs and certain land uses on public lands administered by the St. George Field Office. This document also includes a summary of changes made between the draft plans and the Proposed RMPs and Proposed Amendment \Final EIS (Appendix E), as well as a summary of the written comments received during the public review and comment period and responses to the substantive comments (Appendix J).

NEXT STEPS

Following the release of the Proposed RMPs and Proposed Amendment/Final EIS, the public is provided a 30 day protest period and the Governor of the State of Utah is afforded a 60 day consistency review period. Pursuant to BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest that is or may be adversely affected by the approval or amendment of a resource management plan may protest such approval or amendment. A protest may raise only those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process and must be submitted within 30 days from date that the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability of the Final EIS in the Federal Register. For further information on filing a protest, please see the Dear Reader letter which describes in detail the required elements of a protest and the process that must be followed.

The BLM Director will make every attempt to promptly render a decision on each protest. The decision will be in writing and will be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the BLM Director will be the final decision of the Department of the Interior on each protest. Responses to protest issues will be compiled and formalized in a Director's Protest Resolution Report made available to the public following issuance of the decisions.

In addition to a 30-day protest period, the BLM must also provide a 60-day review period to the Governor of the State of Utah to ensure consistency with state and local plans, policies, and programs. Any responses from the Governor on consistency must be resolved before the BLM issues a Record of Decision and approved RMP or Amendment. If the Governor does not respond within the review period, the BLM can assume that the proposed RMP or Amendment decisions are consistent with state and local plans, policies, and programs(43 CFR 1610.3-2(e)).

Upon resolution of all planning protests and the Governor's consistency review, the BLM will issue the approved RMPs for the two NCAs, the approved Amendment to the St. George Field Office RMP, and three Records of

Decision. These will be posted on the BLM ePlanning website at <http://bit.ly/2av3Q1i> and made available to the public as hard copies or CDs.

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