

Abstract

Proposed Vernal RMP and Final EIS

Proposed Vernal Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement

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

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

Jurisdiction: Dagget, Duchesne, Uintah, and a small portion of Grand Counties, Utah

Abstract: The Vernal Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) describes and analyzes the Proposed RMP and draft alternatives for the planning and management of public lands and resources administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Vernal Field Office. The Vernal Field Office is located in the northeast corner of Utah and administers lands within Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah Counties, plus a small portion of Grand County. There are 5,518,859 acres within the boundary of the Vernal Field Office, of which 1,725,512 acres (approximately 30%) are BLM-managed surface lands. The Vernal Field Office administers energy-related mineral activities on 3.9 million acres of Federal mineral lands (includes 1.3 million acres of National Forest Service lands) and post-lease mineral operations on Indian trust mineral lands. The 1,911,000 acres of BLM-managed mineral estate includes the split estate mineral lands within the Hill Creek Extension (consisting of 185,500 acres of mineral estate underlying Indian trust surface).

The Proposed RMP is open for a 30-day review and protest period beginning with the date the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability of the Final EIS in the *Federal Register*.

Alternatives A through D were presented in the Draft RMP and EIS. Alternative E was presented in the Supplement to the Draft RMP and EIS. The management direction of **Alternative A (Preferred Alternative)** is generally broad and accommodates a wide variety of values and uses. **Alternative B** provides for most resource uses but would emphasize oil and gas development, where feasible. **Alternative C** would strongly emphasize maintenance of watershed conditions, species viability, properly functioning ecosystems, and a reduction of habitat fragmentation. **Alternative D (Current Management/No Action)** would maintain present uses by continuing current management direction and activities by all new mandates, Executive Orders, and directives that have been implemented since the Books Cliffs and Diamond Mountain RMPs were completed. **Alternative E** gives emphasis to all non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, including closure of these areas to mineral leasing and off-road vehicles, exclusion of rights-of-way, protection of undisturbed landscapes, and providing opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive recreation.

The Proposed RMP/Final EIS is primarily based on the Preferred Alternative (Alternative A) from the Draft RMP/EIS. However, it has been modified to include aspects of all alternatives analyzed after careful consideration of both public and internal comments received on the Draft and Supplement RMP/EIS. The major issues addressed consist of: (1) travel management, (2) energy and mineral resource exploration and development, (3) special designations, (4) non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, and (5) special status species.

Protest/Comment: Protests on the Vernal Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement Proposed must be postmarked or received no later than 30 days after publication of the EPA Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. The 30-day protest period (identified above) will not be extended. The close of the review and protest period will be announced in news releases, newsletters, and on the Vernal RMP/EIS website at <http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/vernal/planning.1.html>.

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