



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 REFER TO:

1610

(UT-930)

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is the ***Vernal Field Office Supplement to the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement***, which evaluates Non-Wilderness Study Area Lands with Wilderness Characteristics. This document supplements the information and analysis contained in the Vernal Field Office Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (DRMP/DEIS) that was released for public review and comment in January, 2005.

The DRMP/DEIS and this Supplement, together, constitute the complete Vernal Field Office DRMP/DEIS. These documents were prepared by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in consultation with cooperating agencies, and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), implementing regulations, BLM's land use planning handbook (H-1601-1), and other applicable law. The Supplement was prepared to enhance the options BLM may consider in the land use plan and to comply with all relevant law and policy. Comments on the DRMP/DEIS received during the review period in 2005 have not yet been incorporated into the development of the Proposed RMP. The comments received in 2005, and the comments you provide on this Supplement, will be used in developing the Proposed RMP and Final EIS.

This Supplement to the DRMP/DEIS presents an analysis of the effects of managing non-Wilderness Study Area (WSA) lands with wilderness characteristics in a protective manner. A summary of that analysis can be found in Table 2.5, Summary of Impacts, in the Supplement. The DRMP/DEIS did not analyze this type of management for all of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. During this planning process, BLM evaluated all of the public lands proposed by the public to Congress as wilderness, and new information submitted by the public during scoping regarding the wilderness characteristics of lands outside of existing WSAs, and BLM carried forward into this Supplement only those areas it found to have wilderness characteristics.

The DRMP/DEIS referred to these lands as *Non-WSA Lands with or Likely to Have Wilderness Characteristics*. The document also used other variations of that name, like *Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics* and *Non-WSA Lands Likely to Have Wilderness Characteristics*. Further, you may have seen or heard other terms like wilderness inventory areas, reasonable probability determination areas, or simply, areas with wilderness characteristics. All of these terms refer to the same lands: those public lands outside of existing WSAs that, during this planning process, BLM has determined have wilderness characteristics and will consider for management of those characteristics in this planning effort. For consistency and to minimize confusion, those lands will be referred to as *non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics* throughout this Supplement.

The DRMP/DEIS presented four alternatives for managing the public lands and resources and analyzed the effects of each management approach. None of these alternatives addressed management to protect all non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. This Supplement analyzes a fifth alternative, Alternative E, which emphasizes protection of all non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics and analyzes the effects of that management. Alternative E is the same as Alternative C except it adds a protective management prescription to 277,596 acres of land in 25 areas that comprise non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. Like all the alternatives in the DRMP/DEIS, Alternative E prescribes how all public lands managed by the Vernal Field Office will be managed, not just the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. Under Alternative E, the proposed decisions that apply to the lands outside of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics remain the same as those in Alternative C.

The BLM encourages you to provide information and comments pertaining to the analysis presented in this Supplement. Of particular importance is feedback concerning the adequacy and accuracy of the Supplement, the analysis of its management decisions, and any new information that would help the BLM complete the planning process. In developing the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, which is the next phase of the planning process, the decision maker may select an alternative in its entirety or various management decisions from each of the alternatives analyzed in the DRMP/DEIS and Supplement for the purpose of creating a management strategy that best meets the needs of the resources and values in this area under the multiple use and sustained yield mandate. With respect to Alternative E, that means the BLM may choose to protect all, some, or none of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, or the BLM may choose to select all or some of the actions of the protective management prescription. Your timely comments will help formulate the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

You may want to refer to the Vernal Field Office DRMP/DEIS so that you have the full context for this Supplement, including a description of the alternatives, environment, and anticipated impacts. It is available electronically at <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/ut/vernal/>. A limited number of hard copies of the DRMP/DEIS are available on a first-come, first-served basis from the Vernal Field Office at the address below.

Comments on the Supplement will be accepted for 90 days after the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. Comments may also be submitted electronically at UT_VN_RMP_Supplement@blm.gov or by mail to:

Bureau of Land Management
Vernal Field Office RMP Comments
Attention: Kelly Buckner
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078

To facilitate analysis of comments and information submitted, we strongly encourage you to submit comments in an electronic format. Your review and specific comments on the content of this document are critical to the success of this planning effort.

It is BLM's practice to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations and businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations and businesses will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

Thank you for your continued interest in the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan. We appreciate the information and suggestions you have contributed to the planning process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Selma Sierra', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Selma Sierra
State Director

