

## Livestock Grazing Plan Amendment EIS

### FACT SHEET: Vegetation

#### VEGETATION

##### *What are plants?*

Plants are a fundamental part of natural cycles of energy and materials. They serve as the basic source of energy and organic material in most of nature. Through photosynthesis, they convert sunlight, carbon dioxide and water into oxygen and plant material (carbohydrates), thereby providing food and fiber for animals (herbivores and many insects) and for humans. They also provide habitat (shelter) for many animals, help hold soils in place (prevent soil erosion), serve as the source of many medicines, and have many other esthetic uses (such as ornamentals).

##### *What is biodiversity and why is it important?*

There is a wide variety of naturally occurring plants (biodiversity), about 300,000 species worldwide. This diversity is significant for many reasons, including maintenance of the natural processes on which all life on Earth depends. Biodiversity also helps ensure that natural systems, including animals and humans, are able to adapt to uncertain environmental changes. Natural plant diversity (natural plant communities) is a basic indicator of land health.

##### *What is land health and why is it important?*

Land health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. It is a reflection of the ability of the land to sustain the wide range of natural processes on which life depends. Healthy lands are better able to provide the materials and services we rely on, and are better able to respond and adapt to uncertain environmental changes (that is, healthy lands are better able to sustain the demands we place on them).



The planning area is located in the northwestern portion of the Colorado Plateau ecoregion. The area is further divided into four sub-ecoregions:

Escarpments, Arid Canyonlands, Semiarid Benchlands, and Canyonlands. The Escarpments are along the northern portion of the planning area, the Arid Canyonlands are primarily in the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (GCNRA), and the Semiarid Benchlands and Canyonlands occur throughout the rest of the planning area. Although deserts generally have lower plant diversity than other biomes, the planning area is home to many regionally unique species. GSENM contains around 125 plant species that occur only in Utah or on the Colorado Plateau, 11 of which are found only in the Monument.

The flora and vegetation of the Escarpments sub-ecoregion, including Skutumpah Plateau, White Cliffs, and Canaan and Boulder mountains, are influenced by proximity to the Utah High Plateaus ecoregion to the north. These montane uplands serve as a migration corridor for species of the Wasatch and Uinta Mountains ecoregion, and act as

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LANDS**



# Vegetation (continued)



an effective barrier to desert species from the Great Basin. Characteristic vegetation communities and species include pinyon-juniper, mountain mahogany, fir, and spruce.

The Arid Canyonlands sub-ecoregion primarily overlaps the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (GCNRA) portion of the planning area in the south and contains a number of Mojave Desert species and species restricted to Navajo sandstone. Characteristic vegetation communities and species include blackbrush, saltbush-greasewood, Indian ricegrass, galleta, fourwing saltbush, blue grama, mat saltbush, sand dropseed, and sagebrush.

Semiarid Benchlands and Canyonlands make up the remainder of the planning area. This region has relatively few endemic species compared to the other sub-ecoregions, but represents the northern boundary for several species including Chestnut milkvetch, Fern bush, Darrow's buckwheat, and Jones' false cloakfern. Characteristic vegetation communities and species include pinyon-juniper woodland, sagebrush, galleta, blue grama, four-wing saltbush, blackbrush, Mormon tea, and grasses.

Steep canyons, limited water, seasonal flood events, unique and isolated geologic substrates, and large fluctuations in climatic conditions all influence the composition, structure, and diversity of vegetation associations of this region. The Proclamation recognizes that "... the blending of warm and cold desert floras, along with the high number of endemic species, place this area in the heart of perhaps the richest floristic region in the Intermountain West." The protection of this diversity is a primary goal in Monument management.



For more information, please visit the GSENM Livestock Grazing Plan Amendment Webpage: <http://blm.gov/pgld>

**Please submit your comments by  
January 13, 2013.**

You can email, fax, or mail your comments.

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