



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

Notice of Proposed Supplementary Rules for Public Lands Managed by the Moab Field Office in Grand County, Utah

Proposed Supplementary Rules for Restriction of Roped Activities in the Corona Arch and Gemini Bridges Areas

Why is BLM seeking public comment on this topic again?

BLM has undergone two public decision making processes related to recreation in the Corona Arch and Gemini Bridges areas since acquiring Corona Arch in a land exchange in 2014. The first was a decision (Jan 6, 2015) to temporarily restrict roped activities while BLM conducted more extensive outreach and considered management of the newly acquired lands. The second decision (May 5, 2016) approved these restrictions on a permanent basis. In each public process there was overwhelming support for restricting roped activities in these two specific areas to reduce user conflict and protect these iconic geologic features. The next step in implementing the decision made on May 5, 2016 to permanently restrict roped activities is to undergo federal rule making, which is also a process that seeks public input and participation.

BLM has worked with user groups and the general public to educate visitors about the decision and the restrictions. Developing and including supplementary rules into the code of federal regulations will provide BLM with additional tools to enforce the restrictions.

Why are Corona and Gemini arches being restricted to roped activities?

The restrictions are designed first and foremost to protect the iconic geologic features from resource damage, as well as address user conflicts. When BLM acquired Corona Arch, recreation specialists observed visible scarring to the rock from previous roped activities. Visitors expressed concerns to BLM regarding their experiences at both Corona Arch and Gemini Bridges, even before BLM acquired Corona Arch. The majority of the 40,000 visitors a year to these sites have expressed a desire to hike and photograph in the area without the disturbance created by people rappelling, swinging, or highlining at these two sites. Corona Arch is within a hiking focus area, created in the Moab Field Office Resource Management Planning Process (2008). Following extensive public outreach in two separate decisions, BLM has decided to permanently restrict roped activities at these two specific sites to protect natural resources and the visitor experience for the overwhelming majority of users.

For climbing enthusiasts over a million and a half acres remain open to these activities in the Moab Field Office, including two climbing focus areas. The Richardson-Ampitheatre (Fisher Towers) is a world famous climbing area, and the

Wall Street sport climbing area along the Colorado River is popular with beginners and advanced climbers.

Is this a controversial action?

This is not controversial for the majority of users that support the restrictions in order to resolve user conflict and protect the iconic geologic features at these sites. However, this decision and development of supplementary rules, does directly affect a small number of users that did enjoy climbing, swinging, rappelling, and highlining in these areas. One such user appealed the initial Jan 6, 2015 decision for the temporary restrictions to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, however BLM's decision was upheld.