



Tres Rios Field Office Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Facts, Answers & Questions

April 15, 2016

Q: What is an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)?

A: ACECs are public lands where special management is required in order to protect the area's values. To be eligible for designation as an ACEC, an area must meet criteria for both relevance and importance. An ACEC possesses significant historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish or wildlife resources (including habitat, communities, or species), natural processes or systems or natural hazards. The significance of these values and resources must be substantial in order to satisfy the importance criteria.

Q: How many ACECs is the BLM proposing?

A: The BLM is considering whether to amend the Tres Rios RMP to designate up to 18 areas, encompassing 130,000 acres, as ACECs. [Click here](#) to review maps of these areas. These nominated areas are being proposed for the conservation of important ecological and cultural resource values.

Q: What use restrictions is the BLM proposing within the ACECs?

A: The BLM will evaluate each area to determine whether it should be designated as an ACEC, and if so, what management prescriptions are necessary to protect the relevant and important values. Examples of management prescriptions are route designations, limiting ground-disturbing activities in certain areas to avoid sensitive plant species or cultural resources, or seasonal travel restrictions.

Q: Is the ACEC proposing to close any areas to the public?

A: The BLM will evaluate each area to determine whether it should be designated as an ACEC, and if so, if any travel management prescriptions are necessary to access areas.

Q: How would the proposal affect the efforts to designate the Dolores River Canyon as a National Conservation Area (NCA)?

A: Congress or the President has the authority to approve additions to the National Conservation Lands System, including areas that may already be designated as ACECs. A potential ACEC may be contained within or overlap with a NCA or other congressionally designated area provided the designation is necessary to protect a resource or value.

Q: How does scoping relate to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process?

A: As part of the preparation for analyzing a project proposal, NEPA requires that there be an early and open process for determining the scope of the issues to be addressed. This process is commonly known as “NEPA scoping,” during which the BLM seeks public input. Using input obtained during the scoping period, the BLM will develop alternatives and refine its analysis to focus on significant issues, as well as eliminate issues that are not significant from further detailed study. The scoping process is the best time to identify issues, determine points of contact, establish project schedules, and provide recommendations to the agency.

Q: How long is the scoping period?

A: Scoping comments will be best considered if received by May 4, 2016, 60 days from the publishing of the *Federal Register* [notice](#) on March 4, 2016.

Q: What type of comments is the BLM looking for?

A: Comments identifying significant issues to be considered in the alternatives and addressed in the analysis are the most helpful in providing the agency a “scope” for its analysis. It is important to understand that submitting a scoping comment on a proposal is not a “vote” on whether the action should take place.

Q: What are the next steps?

A: After the 60-day scoping period, the BLM will consider comments related to the ACECs in the development of alternatives for a Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Assessment. The BLM will evaluate each area to determine whether it should be designated as an ACEC, and if so, what management prescriptions are necessary to protect the relevant and important values.

Q: Where can I find more information?

A: For more information, go to the project website at <http://on.doi.gov/1SXsHWF>.