



The Farmington Mancos-Gallup RMP Amendment/EIS Newsletter

US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Issue 1, March 2014

Introduction from the Field Manager

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Farmington Field Office (FFO) is in the initial stages of preparing a resource management plan (RMP) amendment and associated environmental impact statement (EIS) that will address potential oil and gas exploration and development activities on the Mancos/Gallup formations within the FFO. This will amend the existing 2003 Farmington RMP.

The Mancos/Gallup formations lie within the San Juan Basin in northwestern New Mexico. New technology is allowing for additional development on the formation, which was previously considered a fully developed oil and gas play. This additional development will result in unforeseen impacts that previously were not recognized or analyzed in the 2003 FFO RMP/EIS. Additionally, the 2002 reasonable foreseeable development scenario (RFD), which was prepared to project the estimated amount of development of oil and gas resources in the FFO, will need to be revised to account for additional development on the Mancos/

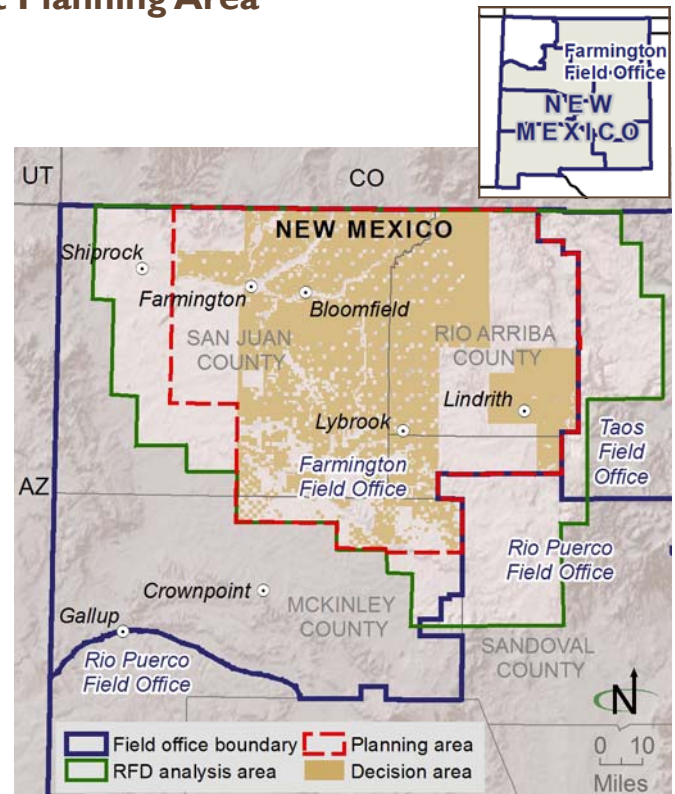
Gallup formations. Based on the revised RFD, the FFO will evaluate the management actions in the existing 2003 RMP and analyze the impacts of increased oil and gas development. Some existing management actions will be updated, and new management actions will be added to account for the impacts of this additional development.

This is the first in a series of newsletters designed to keep you informed on the progress of the Mancos-Gallup EIS and how you can participate. Inside, you can find information about the Mancos-Gallup EIS planning area, what an RMP involves, preliminary planning issues and criteria, and how you can participate in this first phase of the process. We appreciate your help in this effort, and we look forward to your continued interest and participation in this project.

Gary Torres, FFO Field Manager

Farmington RMP Mancos-Gallup Amendment Planning Area

The 4.2 million-acre planning area is comprised of federal, state, and private lands as well as Indian reservations overlying the Mancos/Gallup formations within portions of San Juan, Rio Arriba, McKinley, and Sandoval Counties in New Mexico. The decision area for the Mancos-Gallup EIS includes only the surface land and subsurface mineral estate within the planning area for which the BLM has authority to make land use and management decisions. The decision area is made up of approximately 1.3 million acres of BLM-administered surface and sub-surface plus 1 million acres of federal mineral estate beneath lands owned or managed by other entities (private, state, tribal, or other federal agencies). To aid in cohesive management across the Mancos/Gallup formations, the BLM is completing an updated RFD across a 6.2 million-acre RFD analysis area extending into portions of the BLM Taos and Rio Puerco Field Offices as well as some tribal and National Forest System-administered surface outside the FFO. Agencies managing these areas may use the RFD analysis for future land-use planning decisions.



What is a Resource Management Plan?

An RMP, similar to a county master plan, is a land use plan that describes broad multiple-use guidance for managing lands and federal mineral estate administered by the BLM. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act directs the BLM to develop such land use plans and to provide for appropriate uses of public lands. Decisions in land use plans guide future land management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions.

The BLM land use (or RMP) planning process, explained in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1600 and the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook and Manual (H-1601-I; BLM Manual 1601), falls within the framework of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) environmental analysis and decision making process described in the Council on Environmental Quality regulations of 40 CFR 1500-1508, the Department of the Interior NEPA Manual (516 DM 17), and the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1).

How Can You Participate?

Public involvement is an integral part of preparing the Farmington Mancos-Gallup RMP Amendment/EIS. The public scoping period gives the public and other interested agencies and organizations the opportunity to provide comments on issues to be addressed and methods to be used in the RMP Amendment before the BLM begins drafting it. The official scoping period began with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on February 25, 2014, and will continue for 60 days (ending on April 28, 2014). During the scoping period, the BLM will host three public open houses in Farmington, Aztec, and Cuba, New Mexico. Notices

providing information on these meetings will be published in local newspapers at least 15 days before the meetings.

The public is formally invited and encouraged to participate in the planning process for the RMP Amendment during the public scoping period. Some ways you can participate are:

- ◇ Attending one or more of the open houses to learn about the project and planning process and to meet BLM representatives
- ◇ Reviewing the progress of the RMP Amendment online at the Mancos-Gallup EIS website at: <http://www.blm.gov/nm/mancos>. The website will be updated with information, documents, and announcements throughout the RMP Amendment and EIS preparation
- ◇ Mailing, faxing, or emailing a comment to the RMP Amendment address (see back page)
- ◇ Contacting us to join or remain on the Mancos-Gallup EIS mailing list. You *must* contact us in order to receive future mailings and information by:
 - E-mailing us at BLM_NM_FFO_RMP@blm.gov
 - Mailing a letter to our office (see back page)
 - Contacting Peggy Deaton at (505) 564-7664

Next Steps

The preliminary schedule below outlines major steps in the EIS process and what happens at each step.

<u>Public Scoping and Resource Data Collection (We are here!)</u>	<u>Alternative Development and Draft RMP Amendment/ Draft EIS Preparation</u>	<u>Draft RMPA/Draft EIS Publication</u>	<u>Proposed RMPA/Final EIS Preparation and Publication</u>	<u>Record of Decision & Approved RMPA Preparation and Publication</u>
Spring—Summer 2014	Summer 2014—Summer 2015	Summer—Fall 2015	Fall 2015—Fall 2016	Fall—Winter 2016
Conduct special studies	Use public comments in creating alternatives	Publish draft EIS	Review and incorporate public comments on draft EIS	Write and publish record of decision
Host public scoping meetings	Analyze impacts of alternatives	Host public meetings	Publish final EIS	
Gather public comments on scope over 60-day period		Accept public comments on draft EIS during 90-day comment period	30-day public review and protest period	
Publish scoping report summarizing public comments				

Mark Your Calendar!



Upcoming Open Houses

March 19, 2014, 4-7pm

San Juan College, Henderson Fine Arts Ctr., Suns Rm.
4601 College Blvd., Farmington, NM 87402

March 20, 2014, 4-7pm

Aztec Senior-Community Center, Main Room
101 S. Park Ave., Aztec, NM 87410

March 21, 2014, 12:30-3:30pm

Lybrook Elementary/Middle School, Gymnasium
9935 U.S. 550, Cuba, NM 87013

Preliminary Planning Issues

Planning issues are conflicts or concerns over a resource management topic that is well defined and entails alternative actions or decisions. Based on the changed circumstances leading to this RMP Amendment, the BLM expects to make decisions on four categories of issues (see box below). We expect most public issues and concerns to fall within one of these categories; however, we do not presume that they are all-encompassing. The issue categories may be revised based on the comments we receive, and new issue categories may be added. The BLM requests your comments on these or other issues on BLM-administered lands within the Mancos-Gallup EIS planning area.

Issue 1. Oil and Gas Development

How should the BLM manage fluid mineral leasing to address impacts on other resources given the change in projected oil and gas activity in the planning area?

Issue 2. Lands and Realty

Given expected increased demand for rights-of-way and power lines to support growing communities, right-of-way corridors may need to be designated. Additionally, older withdrawals expiring may need to be reconsidered, and new withdrawals may be considered.

Issue 3. Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

Do lands with wilderness characteristics exist in the planning area, and if so, how should they be managed?

Issue 4. Vegetation Management

How should the BLM maintain or restore healthy landscapes to address the anticipated increase in oil and gas development?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

Planning criteria guide development of the Mancos-Gallup EIS by helping define the decision space. They are generally based on applicable laws, BLM Director and New Mexico State Director guidance, and the results of public and governmental participation (43 CFR 1610.4-2). The BLM developed preliminary planning criteria to set the sideboards for focused decision-making and analysis in the Mancos-Gallup EIS. A selection of the planning criteria developed by the FFO is included below:

- The FFO will prepare the RMP amendment in compliance with Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the NEPA, and all other applicable laws, Executive Orders, and BLM management policies.

- The FFO will use the EIS as the analytical basis for any decision it makes to amend the RMP.
 - No decisions will be made relative to non-BLM administered lands or minerals.
 - The FFO will recognize valid existing rights under the RMP, as amended.
 - The FFO will coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies, and tribal governments in the EIS and amendment process to strive for consistency with existing plans and policies, to the extent practicable.
 - The FFO will coordinate with tribal governments and provide strategies for the protection of recognized traditional uses in the EIS and RMP amendment process.
 - The FFO will take into account appropriate protection and management of cultural and historic resources in the EIS and RMP amendment process and will engage in all required consultation.
 - The FFO will recognize in the EIS and amendment the special importance of public lands to people who live in communities surrounded by public lands and the importance of public lands to the nation as a whole.
 - The FFO will make every effort to encourage public participation throughout the EIS process.
 - The FFO has the authority to develop protective management prescriptions for lands with wilderness characteristics within RMPs. As part of the public involvement process for land use planning, the FFO will consider public input regarding lands to be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics.
 - Environmental protection and energy production are both desirable and necessary objectives of sound land management practices and are not to be considered mutually exclusive priorities.
 - The FFO will strive to minimize potential adverse environmental impacts.
 - The FFO will strive to minimize potential adverse social and economic impacts.
 - The FFO will facilitate oil and gas development and production and provide options for flexibility to the oil and gas industry for environmentally sound exploration, development, and operations.
 - The FFO will update management actions that are no longer adequate to address unforeseen impacts of additional oil and gas development within the Mancos/Gallup formations that are not accounted for in the current RMP.
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Public Meeting Schedule

Farmington, NM	March 19, 2014
Aztec, NM	March 20, 2014
Cuba, NM	March 21, 2014

See Page 2 of the newsletter for meeting times and locations.

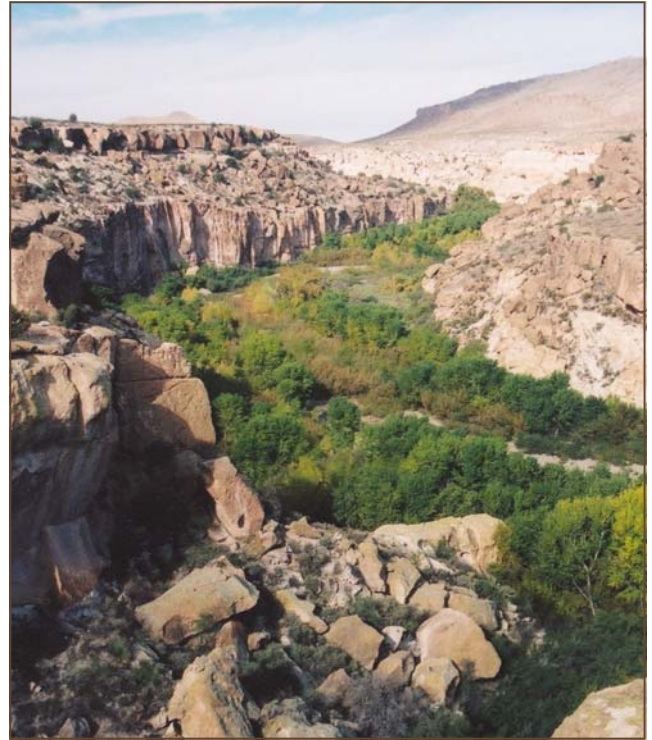
Contact us to Stay on the Mailing List!

You must contact us in order to stay on this mailing list! To stay on the list, request removal, or update your address, contact us by one of the methods below. You can also use these methods to submit a scoping comment.

Email: BLM_NM_FFO_RMP@blm.gov

Postal Mail: Ms. Peggy Deaton
Bureau of Land Management
6251 College Blvd., Suite A
Farmington, NM 87402

Phone: (505) 564-7664



Before providing your phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information, you should be aware that your information may be made publicly available at any time. While you can request that your personal identifying information be withheld from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

PLACE
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