



# News Release

Canyon Country District, Utah

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lisa Bryant, (435) 259-2187

Dec. 15, 2016

## **BLM Approves First Master Leasing Plan in Utah**

*Extensive Outreach and Collaboration Create Blueprint  
for Responsible Development in the Moab Area*

**MOAB, Utah**—The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today released the final decision approving a plan that will guide responsible mineral development in and around Moab while also protecting important natural resources, iconic scenery, and recreational opportunities. The Moab Master Leasing Plan/Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments (Approved Plan) is the culmination of extensive collaboration with the public and partners in southeastern Utah.

In crafting the Approved Plan, the BLM brought together a diverse set of stakeholders, including local community members, industry representatives, recreation enthusiasts, tribes, and other interested parties. The BLM also worked closely with state and local agencies as well as the National Park Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. More than 28,000 public comments were received and considered in developing the final plan.

“This plan takes a landscape-level approach to balancing the protection of the iconic scenery in and around Moab with access to the rich energy resources found there,” said Secretary Jewell. “As the first Master Leasing Plan in Utah, the collaborative process is a model for how communities can work together to support thoughtful development while protecting world-class environmental, cultural and recreational resources.”

The Approved Plan, which will guide future development of oil, gas and potash, encompasses 785,000 acres of public land managed by BLM’s Moab and Monticello Field Offices. The plan area is home to red rock landscapes and unique geologic features, as well as Arches and Canyonlands National Parks—all of which draws nearly two and a half million visitors each year. In addition to these incredible natural resources, the plan area is rich in mineral resources and possesses high development potential for oil, gas and potash.

“We started this effort by making sure that everyone had a seat at the table. Through that inclusive process, we’ve ended up with a plan for Moab that carefully balances responsible energy development, world-class recreation and spectacular outdoor resources,” said BLM Director Neil Kornze. “We are grateful to the many Utahns who rolled up their sleeves and helped us craft a thoughtful, durable plan.”

The BLM initiated a move toward MLPs in May 2010, as part of a sweeping oil and gas reform initiative to address a system that was bogged down in litigation and community protests. The plans establish a framework for determining which areas are appropriate for responsible exploration and development of minerals while protecting the area's conservation resources. The plans were designed to encourage stakeholder input early in the planning process in order to reduce protests and litigation to provide developers with greater certainty. MLPs also provide direction for resolving resource conflicts, protecting important conservation resources, and supporting outdoor recreation and other activities that benefit local communities and public land visitors.

The Approved Plan focuses protection on areas with high scenic quality, high-use recreation areas, and other areas with sensitive resources and focuses energy development and exploration in areas with fewer resource conflicts. Key elements of the Approved Plan include:

- Prioritizing new leasing of oil, gas and potash in different parts of the Planning Area to reduce conflicts from overlapping development and allow for orderly development;
- Phasing potash leasing to test the feasibility of potash development;
- Minimizing surface disturbance in sensitive areas by reducing the density of well sites;
- Protecting National Park scenic qualities by strategically closing 145,000 acres of BLM-administered lands to mineral leasing;
- Allowing energy development while providing additional surface protection to about 306,000 acres that are highly valued for scenery and recreation, through the use of No Surface Occupancy stipulations on future leases;
- Using a comprehensive list of the most current and state-of-the-art best management practices to reduce, prevent, or avoid adverse environmental or social impacts; and
- Providing additional protections for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

“This Approved Plan is a milestone for BLM-Utah,” said BLM State Director Ed Roberson. “Implementing this plan will create more certainty for mineral development, contribute to the vitality of the area's recreation economy and maintain the incredible quality of life enjoyed by local communities.”

Copies of the Record of Decision and Approved Plan are available for public review at the BLM Utah State Office in Salt Lake City, the Canyon Country District Office in Moab, and the Monticello Field Office in Monticello. This document and all other supporting documents are also available online at <http://go.usa.gov/xksyS>.

In conjunction with the finalization of the Moab MLP, the BLM also released the preliminary alternatives for the San Rafael Desert MLP, which was initiated earlier this year. These alternatives were developed based on input received during the public scoping process. Like the Moab MLP, the San Rafael Desert plan will provide a roadmap for the orderly development of oil and gas resources in the planning area, while also protecting important conservation areas in

southeastern Utah. The San Rafael Desert MLP will focus on about 525,000 acres in Emery and Wayne counties. The goals of the planning process are to:

- Resolve long-standing protests on lease parcels that have been sold, but not issued in the planning area;
- Determine whether to modify or lift lease suspensions that have been in place pending further analysis addressing lands with wilderness characteristics;
- Evaluate potential oil and gas development scenarios;
- Identify and address potential resource conflicts and environmental impacts from oil and gas development; and,
- Identify potential conditions of approval and mitigation strategies for oil and gas development activities.

Additional information about the San Rafael MLP is available online at <http://go.usa.gov/cJcPw>. Comments may be submitted online through this website, as well as by mail and email. Written comments should reference “San Rafael Desert MLP Alternatives” and can be mailed to: BLM Price Field Office 125 South 600 West Price, UT 84501 or by email to: [BLM\\_UT\\_PR\\_MAIL@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_UT_PR_MAIL@blm.gov). The BLM will be accepting comments on these preliminary alternatives through Jan. 20, 2017.

For further information, please call the Moab Field Office (435)259-2100. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to leave a message or question. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Replies are made during normal business hours.

*The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In Fiscal Year 2015, the BLM generated \$4.1 billion in receipts from activities occurring on public lands.*

-BLM-

Follow us on Twitter @BLMUtah