



The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Las Cruces District Office (LCDO) is preparing a revision of its 1986 White Sands Resource Management Plan (RMP), an amendment to its 1993 Mimbres RMP, and an environmental impact statement (EIS). This planning effort—referred to as the TriCounty RMPs/EIS—is an opportunity for BLM to update its management of public land in Sierra, Otero, and Doña Ana Counties in south-central New Mexico (collectively these three counties are called the Planning Area). The planning process began in 2005 with public scoping, which generated comments that have been valuable to help BLM understand the public's views on management of public lands within the TriCounty Planning Area. Since then, BLM has gathered extensive data and generated preliminary alternatives for the future management of public lands.

This is the third in a series of newsletters to keep you informed about the TriCounty RMPs/EIS and to announce several upcoming public workshops that BLM will host to provide additional information on the preliminary alternatives for the TriCounty RMPs/EIS.

Welcome to the third newsletter issue for the BLM's TriCounty RMPs/EIS. If you are new to the planning process, you may want to view previous issues of the newsletter on BLM's Web site at www.nm.blm.gov under the Planning/NEPA link, or contact the BLM Las Cruces District Office for more information.

This newsletter provides a brief summary and highlights of the preliminary alternatives for your review. BLM resource specialists developed these alternatives in order to present the overall range of management strategies. Alternatives include a "no action" alternative (Alternative A) which represents current management, and three "action" alternatives (Alternatives B, C, and D) that represent reasonable, yet varying, responses to the issues identified as part of the planning process.

BLM developed goals and objectives for resources and uses of public land to guide the management actions and use restrictions covered in the preliminary alternatives. With consideration of these goals and objectives, BLM developed the range of alternatives to offer broad-scale options that address all resource categories (as opposed to focusing on one particular resource). As you review the enclosed information you will likely find that some elements of the preliminary alternatives more closely correspond to your interests and concerns than others – and your preferences for the management of public land have been covered within the range presented. BLM anticipates and encourages comments that will help broaden the range of alternatives being considered. Based on the public input received during the workshops, BLM will revise the preliminary alternatives, develop a preferred alternative (likely

by combining elements from each preliminary alternative), and prepare the Draft RMPs/EIS.

Description of Preliminary Alternatives

Each of the preliminary alternatives provides for multiple uses; the alternatives vary in whether conservation of resources or increased human use would be emphasized.

ALTERNATIVE A (NO ACTION)

Alternative A describes management as it would continue under the White Sands RMP and Mimbres RMP, as amended. This alternative describes how the public lands currently are being managed and the uses presently allowed. Until new RMPs are approved, these decisions will continue to be in effect.

ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B generally places an emphasis on resource conservation and reducing human uses of public lands compared to Alternative A. With this alternative, BLM has defined a restrictive approach to management of public lands, while still providing for multiple uses.

ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C provides a mix of resource protection and resource uses, that attempts to provide resource conservation in specific areas, while allowing for continued and in some cases increased resource uses in other areas.

ALTERNATIVE D

Alternative D generally places an emphasis on resource uses and production, while still providing for resource protection necessary to meet regulatory requirements.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TRICOUNTY RMPs/EIS PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES^{1, 2}

Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
<p>Trails and Travel Management: <u>Sierra and Otero Counties:</u> Areas open to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All areas not designated as limited or closed Red Sands area <p>Areas where OHV use would be limited to existing or designated routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind and Chess Draw watershed area Moccasin and Otto Draw watershed area Watershed area east of Tularosa and south of Tularosa River Watershed area east of Crow Flats Percha Creek riparian area Lone Butte area Brokeoff Mountains Cornudas Mountains Cuchillo Mountains WSAs <p>Areas closed to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation study plot enclosures Rattlesnake Hill Archaeological District Jarilla Mountains <p><u>Doña Ana County:</u> Area open to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aden Hills area <p>Areas where OHV use would be limited to existing or designated routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All not specifically designated as open or closed (including WSAs) <p>Areas closed to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mexican border area south of Anapra Columbus Road and south of State Route 9 Portions of the Organ/Franklin Mountains 	<p>Trails and Travel Management: <u>Sierra and Otero Counties:</u> Areas open to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None <p>Areas where OHV use would be limited to existing or designated routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACECs Areas east of the Rio Grand in Sierra County and public lands in Otero County <p>Areas closed to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSAs <p><u>Doña Ana County:</u> Area open to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None <p>Areas where OHV use would be limited to existing or designated routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACECs Areas east of the Rio Grande <p>Areas closed to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSAs 	<p>Trails and Travel Management: <u>Sierra and Otero Counties:</u> Area open to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Sands area <p>Areas where OHV use would be limited to existing or designated routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACECs WSAs Areas east of the Rio Grand in Sierra County and public lands in Otero County <p>Areas closed to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None <p><u>Doña Ana County:</u> Area open to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aden Hills area <p>Areas where OHV use would be limited to existing or designated routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACECs WSAs (unless closed) Areas east of the Rio Grande <p>Areas closed to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organ Needles WSA 	<p>Trails and Travel Management: <u>Sierra and Otero Counties:</u> Areas open to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Sands area Areas not specifically designated limited or closed <p>Areas where OHV use would be limited to existing or designated routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACECs WSAs <p>Areas closed to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None <p><u>Doña Ana County:</u> Area open to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aden Hills area <p>Areas where OHV use would be limited to designated routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACECs WSAs (unless closed) <p>Areas closed to OHV use would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organ Needles WSA
<p>Grazing: Management according to New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management would allow adjustments to use levels, season of use, kind of livestock, and stocking rates. All areas would be available for grazing, except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percha Creek Picacho Peak Dripping Springs Tularosa Creek 	<p>Grazing: Management according to New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management would allow adjustments to use levels, season of use, kind of livestock, and stocking rates. All areas would be available for grazing, except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percha Creek Picacho Peak Dripping Springs Tularosa Creek Developed recreation sites 	<p>Grazing: Management according to New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management would allow adjustments to use levels, season of use, kind of livestock, and stocking rates. All areas would be available for grazing, except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picacho Peak Dripping Springs Tularosa Creek 	<p>Grazing: Management according to New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management would allow adjustments to use levels, season of use, kind of livestock, and stocking rates. All areas would be available for grazing, except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picacho Peak Dripping Springs Tularosa Creek
<p>Recreation: The following Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) would be identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doña Ana Mountains SRMA 	<p>Recreation: The following SRMAs would be identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elephant Butte SRMA Las Cruces SRMA Lake Valley SRMA Three Rivers Petroglyph SRMA Red Sands SRMA 	<p>Recreation: The following SRMAs would be identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elephant Butte SRMA Las Cruces SRMA Lake Valley SRMA Three Rivers Petroglyph SRMA Red Sands SRMA Aden Hills SRMA 	<p>Recreation: The following SRMAs would be identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elephant Butte SRMA Las Cruces SRMA Lake Valley SRMA Three Rivers Petroglyph SRMA Red Sands SRMA Aden Hills SRMA Tularosa Creek SRMA Talavera SRMA
<p>Lands and Realty: Areas identified for disposal: 214,000 acres</p>	<p>Lands and Realty: Areas identified for disposal: 63,000 acres</p>	<p>Lands and Realty: Areas identified for disposal: 152,000 acres</p>	<p>Lands and Realty: Areas identified for disposal: 181,000 acres</p>

Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
<p>Special Designations: Sierra and Otero Counties (excluding McGregor Range):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Rivers Petroglyph ACEC • Sacramento Escarpment ACEC • Cornudas Mountains ACEC • Alamo Mountain ACEC • Wind Mountain ACEC • Alkali Lakes ACEC • Jornada del Muerto WSA • Sacramento Escarpment WSA • Guadalupe Escarpment WSA • Brokeoff Mountains WSA <p><u>Doña Ana County:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organ/Franklin Mountains ACEC • Los Tules ACEC • Robledo Mountains ACEC • Doña Ana Mountains ACEC • Rincon ACEC • San Diego ACEC • Sierra de Las Uvas WSA • Robledo Mountains WSA • Organ Mountains WSA • Organ Needles WSA • Peña Blanca WSA • Aden Lava Flow WSA • West Potrillo Mountain/Mount Riley WSA • Paleozoic Trackways Research Natural Area (RNA) • Aden Lava Flow RNA • Kilbourne Hole National Natural Landmark (NNL) 	<p>Special Designations³: Sierra and Otero Counties (excluding McGregor Range):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All ACECs and WSAs listed under Alternative A • Caballo Mountains ACEC • Mud Mountain ACEC • Percha Creek ACEC • Southern Caballo Mountains ACEC • Nutt Mountain ACEC • Brokeoff Mountains ACEC • Jarilla Mountains ACEC • Sacramento Mountains ACEC • Six Shooter Canyon ACEC • Pup Canyon ACEC • Van Winkle Lake ACEC • Tularosa Creek ACEC • Cornudas Mountains ACEC • Southern Sacramento Mountains ACEC <p><u>Doña Ana County:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All ACECs and WSAs listed under Alternative A • Trackways ACEC • Picacho Peak ACEC • Bar Canyon ACEC (addition to the Organ/Franklin Mountains ACEC) • Doña Ana ACEC (addition to the Doña Ana Mountains ACEC) • Tortugas Mountain ACEC • Broad Canyon ACEC • Robledo Mountains Addition (addition to the Robledo Mountains ACEC) • East Potrillo Mountains ACEC 	<p>Special Designations³: Sierra and Otero Counties (excluding McGregor Range):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All ACECs and WSAs listed under Alternative A • Caballo Mountains ACEC • Mud Mountain ACEC • Percha Creek ACEC • Southern Caballo Mountains ACEC • Nutt Mountain ACEC • Brokeoff Mountains ACEC • Jarilla Mountains ACEC • Sacramento Mountains ACEC • Six Shooter Canyon ACEC • Pup Canyon ACEC • Van Winkle Lake ACEC • Tularosa Creek ACEC • Cornudas Mountains ACEC • Southern Sacramento Mountains ACEC <p><u>Doña Ana County:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All ACECs and WSAs listed under Alternative A • Trackways ACEC • Picacho Peak ACEC • Bar Canyon ACEC (addition to the Organ/Franklin Mountains ACEC) • Doña Ana ACEC (addition to the Doña Ana Mountains ACEC) • Tortugas Mountain ACEC • Broad Canyon ACEC • Robledo Mountains Addition (addition to the Robledo Mountains ACEC) • East Potrillo Mountains ACEC 	<p>Special Designations: Sierra and Otero Counties (excluding McGregor Range):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All ACECs and WSAs listed under Alternative A <p><u>Doña Ana County:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All ACECs and WSAs listed under Alternative A
<p>Wilderness Characteristics: WSAs would be managed according to the Interim Management Guidance established by BLM. No additional areas would be specifically managed to maintain wilderness characteristics.</p>	<p>Wilderness Characteristics: WSAs would be managed according to the Interim Management Guidance established by BLM. In addition, the following areas would be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutt Mountain • Bar Canyon • Sacramento Escarpment ACEC • Otero Unit 	<p>Wilderness Characteristics: WSAs would be managed according to the Interim Management Guidance established by BLM. In addition, the following areas would be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutt Mountain • Bar Canyon 	<p>Wilderness Characteristics: WSAs would be managed according to the Interim Management Guidance established by BLM. No additional areas would be specifically managed to maintain wilderness characteristics.</p>

¹ All decisions would apply only to BLM-administered lands.

² Acreages presented are approximate.

³ Management prescriptions within ACECs would differ in Alternatives B and C.

BLM's Planning Process and What's Next

The planning process for developing the RMPs/EIS for the TriCounty Planning Area is well underway. To date BLM has developed the planning criteria (guidelines to follow during the planning process), identified issues through public scoping, completed the Scoping Report, collected baseline data to understand the existing condition of the environment, and developed preliminary

alternatives based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

After the public workshops on the preliminary alternatives (details on back page), BLM will proceed with analyzing the effects that each alternative would have on the environment. The results of these analyses will be documented in the EIS—in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

After the alternatives are analyzed and the Draft RMPs/EIS is ready for publication, BLM will announce the availability of the Draft RMPs/EIS for public review and comment. During the 90-day review period, BLM will accept written comments and will conduct public meetings to accept your comments on the adequacy of the Draft RMPs/EIS.

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How to Participate in the Planning Process

BLM has scheduled public workshops on December 12, 13, and 14 to introduce and discuss the alternatives. The workshops will be an open-house format where individuals can review information, including selected maps, and ask questions of and provide comments to BLM staff.

Doña Ana County

December 12, 2006, 4-7 PM
Doña Ana County Government
Center
845 N. Motel Blvd.
Las Cruces, NM

Otero County

December 13, 2006, 4-7 PM
Otero County Courthouse
1000 New York Ave.
Alamogordo, NM

Sierra County

December 14, 2006, 4-7 PM
Civic Center
400 W. 4th St.
Truth or Consequences, NM

Please attend one of these workshops to review additional information and discuss the preliminary draft alternatives with BLM staff. Following the public workshops, BLM will post materials presented on their Web site at www.nm.blm.gov under the Planning/NEPA link.

As you review the enclosed information and attend one of the workshops, you may wish to consider these questions:

- *Are your issues and concerns addressed in at least one of the alternatives?*
- *Can your uses of the public land be accommodated in at least one alternative?*
- *Are the resources important to you adequately protected in at least one alternative through restrictions on uses?*

BLM continues to maintain a mailing list of individuals and organizations interested in the planning process. If you wish your

name and address to be removed from the mailing list, please let us know. Otherwise your name will be retained on the list and you will receive information on the TriCounty RMPs/EIS in the future.

Informational materials, such as this newsletter, are available on the BLM Web site at www.nm.blm.gov under the Planning/NEPA link.

If you have any questions, would like to be on the mailing list, or would like to speak to someone, you can call our toll-free information line at **1-877-877-0918**, leave a message, and someone will return your call as soon as possible.