



NEWS RELEASE

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Planning for Public Lands: BLM Meeting Location Changed for Next Week

All Four Tri County BLM Meeting Locations Have Been Identified

LAS CRUCES – The BLM is looking for public input on its new planning effort, which will affect Dona Ana, Otero and Sierra Counties. The location of the first of four scoping meetings has been changed in anticipation of large public interest. The new venue for the Las Cruces meeting is being changed from the Las Crucés Field Office to the Best Western, Mesilla Valley Inn, 901 Avenida de Mesilla, in the Columbus Conference Center to accommodate the anticipated interest. The meeting will start at 6:30 on Tuesday March 15.

BLM will use the public input and information from these meetings to guide the preparation of two resource management plans and an associated environmental impact statement for the three counties.

We look forward to working with the public throughout this three-year planning process, said Ed Roberson, BLM, Las Cruces Field Office Manager. Our goal for the plans is to guide future resource management for the long-term needs of future generations. We want to continue to make decisions for multiple uses and interests.

The purpose of a resource management plan is to provide a framework for managing public land and for allocating resources over a planning period of 15 to 20 years. During the life of a plan, it is evaluated periodically to see if it remains adequate and continues to meet legislative and policy requirements, and land use and resource needs. If it does not meet the requirements and needs, the plan is revised or amended. This involves the preparation of a new plan to replace the existing resource management plan.

With continued growth, land uses will continue to increase. These changes warrant analysis and updating or amending BLM's current management direction. In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, BLM will prepare an EIS to assess the effects of implementing the new plans.

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BLM is hosting four public open house scoping meetings. Meetings will take place from 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Dates are as follows:

March 15 Las Cruces, Best Western Mesilla Valley Inn, Columbus Conference Center, 901 Avenida de Mesilla

March 16 Alamogordo, Otero County Courthouse, Commissioner's Chambers, 1000 New York Ave.

March 22 Truth or Consequences, Civic Center, 400 West 4th Street

March 23 Anthony, Women's Intercultural Center, 303 Lincoln Street.

Each open house will begin with a brief overview of the planning and EIS process. Prior to and following the presentation, the public will be encouraged to review informational displays and discuss the plans and EIS with BLM representatives. Comments on the resource management plans and EIS will be accepted throughout the planning process. In order to be useful in guiding the direction of the planning process, comments must be received by the end of the 60-day scoping period (March 31, 2005).

Completion of the draft plans and EIS is anticipated in Fall 2005. The draft will be released to the public for a 90-day review period, during which time BLM will conduct public hearings to gather comments on the draft document.

BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages approximately 13.4 million acres of public land in New Mexico. BLM is responsible for management of public land and resources based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, a combination of uses that take into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources.

For more information or updates on the planning effort, log onto the project web site at: http://www.nm.blm.gov/lcfo/tri_county/tricounty.html