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August 6, 2004

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is the *Silverton Outdoor Learning and Recreation Center Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement* (PRMP Amendment/Final EIS). This document follows from and refines the Draft EIS released on June 20, 2003. It includes changes made on the basis of public comments on the Draft EIS, additional data collection completed since the Draft EIS was released, consultation with other federal and state agencies, and other miscellaneous considerations. This PRMP Amendment/Final EIS retains the same agency-preferred alternative identified in the Draft EIS, but it provides additional description and analysis of its environmental consequences. Please see Chapter 4, Consultation and Coordination, for a summary of the comment letters received, analysis of individual comments, and BLM responses. Both the PRMP Amendment/Final EIS and Draft EIS are available on the San Juan Field Office web site, <http://www.co.blm.gov/sjra/index.html>.

This PRMP Amendment/Final EIS contains analysis to support both a proposed land use plan decision and an implementation decision. The PRMP Amendment/Final EIS is being published for a 30-day review and protest period for the proposed land use plan decision to add lift-served skiing and sightseeing to the list of allowable uses (kinds and levels of recreation) authorized on BLM-administered public lands specific to the SOLRC permit area within the Silverton Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). The implementation decision is whether, and under what conditions, to authorize SOLRC's requested long-term use of the permit area. This decision will be documented in the Record of Decision (ROD).

The ROD will be prepared following the 30-day protest period. The ROD will document the Responsible Official's decisions regarding both the land use change (RMP amendment) and the long-term use authorization. The implementation decision may then be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals following the publication of the ROD.

The BLM protest procedures are as follows:

Any person who participated in the planning process for the PRMP Amendment and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected may protest approval of this amendment and the land use plan decisions contained within it (See 43 CFR 1610.5-2) during the 30-day review and protest period. Only those persons or organizations who participated in the planning process leading to this PRMP may protest. A protesting party may raise only those issues submitted for the record during the planning process leading up to the publication of this PRMP Amendment. These issues may have been raised by the protesting party or others. New issues may not be brought into the record at the protest stage.

The 30-day period for filing a protest begins when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publishes in the Federal Register its Notice of Availability of the PRMP Amendment/Final EIS. There is no provision for any extension of time. To be considered "timely," a protest, along with all attachments, must be postmarked no later than the last day of the protest period. The protest period ends on September 7, 2004.

A letter of protest must be filed in accordance with the planning regulations, 43 CFR 1610.5-2(a)(1). Protests must be in writing. E-mailed and faxed protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular or overnight mail postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, BLM will consider the e-mailed or faxed protest as an advance copy, and the protest will receive full consideration. If you wish to provide BLM with such advance notification, please direct faxed protests to the attention of the BLM protest coordinator at 202-452-5112, and e-mailed protests to Brenda_Hudgens-Williams@blm.gov.

If sent by regular mail, send to:

Director (210)
Attention: Brenda Williams
P.O. Box 66538
Washington D.C. 20035

For overnight (i.e., FedEx) mailing, send protests to:

Director (210)
Attention: Brenda Williams
1620 L Street, N.W.
Suite 1075
Washington, D.C. 20036

In order to be considered complete, a protest must contain, at a minimum, the following information:

1. The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest;
2. A statement of the issue or issues being protested;
3. A statement of the part or parts of the PRMP Amendment/Final EIS being protested. To the extent possible, this should be done by reference to specific pages, paragraphs, sections, tables, maps, etc., included in the document;

4. A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues submitted during the planning process, or a reference to the date the issue or issues were discussed for the record; and
5. A concise statement explaining why the Colorado BLM State Director's proposed decision is believed to be incorrect. This is a critical part of a protest. Care should be taken to document all relevant facts. As much as possible, protests should reference or cite relevant planning documents, environmental analysis documents, or available planning records (i.e., meeting minutes or summaries, correspondence, etc.). A protest that merely expresses disagreement with the Colorado BLM State Director's proposed decision, without any data, will not provide us with the benefit of the protestor's information and insight. In this case, the Director's review will be based on the existing analysis and supporting data.

At the end of the 30-day protest period and after the Governor's consistency review, the PRMP Amendment/Final EIS will become final, excluding any portions under protest. Approval of the PRMP Amendment/Final EIS will be withheld until final action has been completed on all protests.

Public comments submitted for this planning review, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the San Juan Public Lands Center in Durango, Colorado, during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Comments, including names and addresses of respondents, will be retained on file in the same office as part of the public record for this planning effort. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or address from public inspection or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

We appreciate your interest and participation in the management of your public lands.

Sincerely,



Pauline E. Ellis
Columbine Field Office Manager/District Ranger

