

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is considering a proposal to exchange up to 10 parcels of federal land (approximately 2,693 acres) in Rio Grande County to acquire up to 189.8 acre-feet of water annually from the Anderson Ditch located near Monte Vista. Disposal of the parcels is in conformance with BLM's land use plans and meets the disposal criteria in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. Copies of the Notice are being sent to known interested parties and published in the Valley Courier.

The purpose of the proposed exchange is to acquire a permanent source of augmentation water for the Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area (also known as Blanca Wetlands). The acquired water would be used to offset depletions to the Rio Grande that are caused by the operation of confined aquifer wells that supply water to Blanca Wetlands. Under state water law, BLM is required to obtain an augmentation plan for the long-term operation of the wells. Securing a long-term augmentation plan is critical because Blanca Wetlands is designated as an official wetlands mitigation site for wetland losses caused by the construction and operation of the Bureau of Reclamation's Closed Basin Project. In addition, Blanca Wetlands provide habitat for more than a dozen threatened, endangered, or sensitive species and provide nesting and migratory habitat for thousands of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds.

Attached are a copy of the Notice of Exchange Proposal and a project map. In order to be considered in the environmental analysis, comments about this proposal must be in writing. Written comments should be sent to: Sue Swift-Miller, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, La Jara Field Office, 15571 County Road T-5, La Jara, CO 81140, or faxed to 719-274-6301, before February 2, 2008.

For more information, please see the BLM's website at www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/slvplc.html or contact Sue Swift-Miller at 719-274-8971, or Tom Malecek, Field Office Manager, at 719-657-3321.

Sincerely,

Dan Dallas
Center Manager

Enclosures

- 1 – Notice of Exchange Proposal
- 2 – Project Map