



## How Can You Be Involved?



The RMPA/EIS process includes opportunities for the public and agency partners to stay informed and participate, as shown in the flow chart inside this bulletin. The BLM WRFO will continue to maintain a meaningful public outreach program throughout the project. To gain further information about the project or obtain a copy of published project documents, please visit our website:

<http://www.blm.gov/rmp/co/whiteriver/documents.htm>

To request more information about the project, or to be added or removed from the mailing list, please contact Carol Hollowed, BLM Project Manager, at 970-878-3836 or via email at [caroline\\_hollowed@blm.gov](mailto:caroline_hollowed@blm.gov).

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The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) White River Field Office (WRFO) in Meeker, Colorado, is preparing a Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will address potential oil and gas exploration and development activities within the 1.5 million acres it manages in northwestern Colorado (see map to the right). Of this, the BLM administers approximately 1,455,900 surface acres, and 365,515 acres of federal split mineral estate. The WRFO is located primarily in Rio Blanco County, with additional small tracts located in Garfield and Moffat counties. Contained within the WRFO boundary are privately-owned lands and lands administered by the BLM, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and State agencies, such as the Colorado State Land Board, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

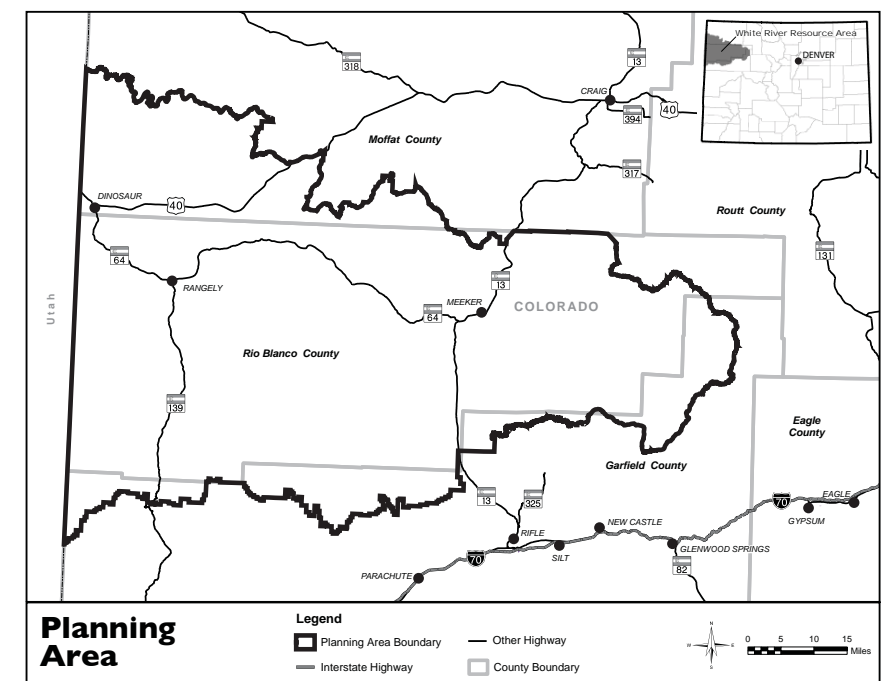
## Where We Are in the Process

Our last Planning Bulletin was issued in September 2006. Since that time, BLM has completed and is continuing to work on many of the tasks associated with the RMPA planning process. In addition to the major milestones accomplished over the last year, the WRFO has actively coordinated with the federal, state, and local agency partners, or Cooperating Agencies. More detail on the progress of the activities listed below is provided within this bulletin.

- A Scoping Report was issued in May 2007 and provides a summary of scoping activities and the issues and concerns raised by the public and agencies during scoping.
- A Final Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) was issued in November 2007. The document provides a description of the physical

and biological characteristics of the resources within the planning area and how these resources are currently being managed.

- The WRFO is actively developing alternatives to provide a reasonable range of alternatives that will respond to the purpose and need of the RMPA and achieve the goals and policies of the BLM for resource management.
- A Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD) scenario has been developed for the WRFO. The RFD provides a projection of oil and gas development within the planning area for the next 20 years under a scenario of minimum restrictions. It is not a decision or authorization of any kind, but it is used as baseline information for a thorough environmental analysis of potential impacts.





## Summary of Scoping

Public input is a critical part of the RMPA planning process. The first step of the public participation process involved public scoping, which extended from June 14 through September 30, 2006. During this time, BLM hosted three public scoping meetings in September 2006 in Meeker, Rangely, and Rifle, Colorado. Through scoping, BLM received a total of 69 unique comments from agencies and the general public which helped BLM identify the range and scope of issues of concern to the public and stakeholders, and ultimately will help guide development of a comprehensive EIS.

A Final Scoping Report was issued in May 2007 that provides a summary of the concerns expressed by the public and interested agencies. Planning issues of concern included the scope of the decisions to be made through the RMPA, the range and scope of alternatives to be developed, and the role of agencies and other interested parties. The management and protection of natural resources such as wildlife,



habitat, and air quality was a primary concern voiced by the public. In addition, commentors frequently noted the importance of appropriate management practices and land use policy to protect resources from degradation.

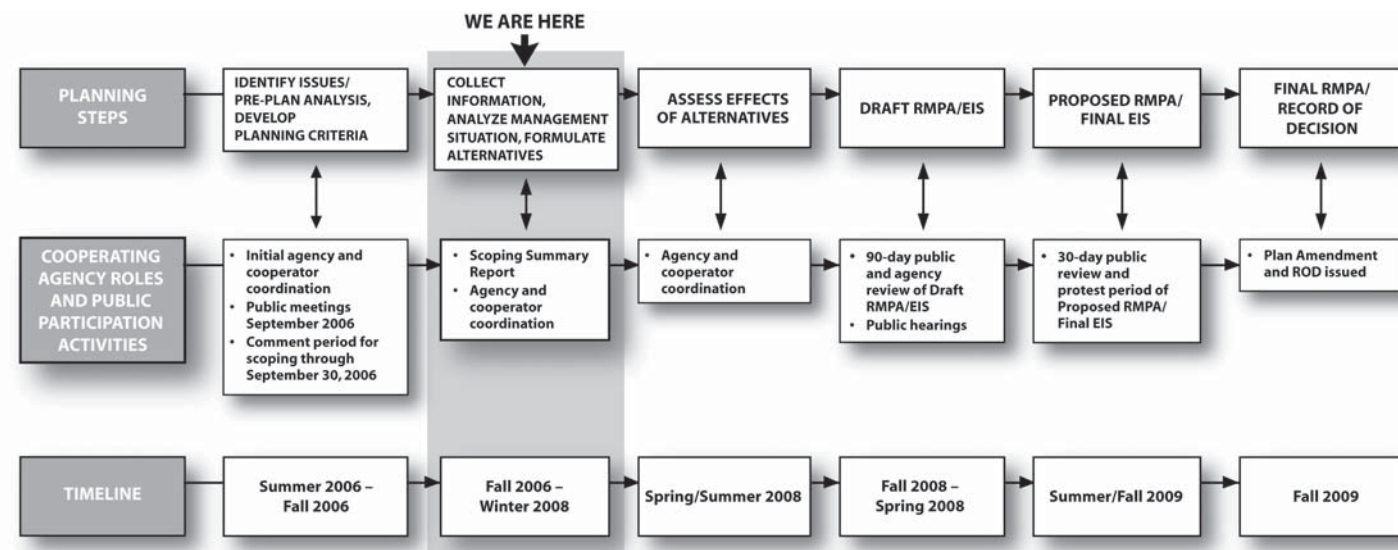
## Analysis of the Management Situation

A Final Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) for the WRFO was issued in November 2007. It is a planning precursor to developing potential alternatives, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations, and an early component of the RMPA process. The AMS is a summary document that describes

the physical and biological characteristics and current condition of the resources within the WRFO planning area and how these resources are currently being managed. An analysis of the resource conditions and current management provides a reference for developing an amendment for the existing land use plan.

The data developed for the AMS is a snapshot in time to provide a characterization of the baseline conditions within the Field Office. Updates and revisions to data are continually ongoing by the WRFO; therefore, revised data will be included in future planning documents such as the RMPA/EIS for this project.

## Planning and NEPA Process



## Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenario Completed and Available

This RMPA will analyze a range of alternatives addressing various levels of oil and gas development and associated mitigation to reduce impacts to resource values within the 2.675 million acre Field Office boundary. Planners need a baseline from which to develop alternatives and analyze impacts related to oil and gas development, and that's where the Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenario, or RFD, comes in.

BLM geologists, petroleum engineers, and resource specialists recently completed an RFD for the WRFO through thorough consultation with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources and the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, as well as coordination with the oil and gas industry.

An RFD provides an estimate of the maximum oil and gas development under the minimum amount of restrictions possible for the planning area over the next 20 years. It's not a decision and it doesn't authorize anything. It is simply a planning tool

that projects the highest amount of development that BLM would anticipate to occur under a scenario of the least amount of restrictions.

The RFD identified a range of possible development over the next 20 years, from 550 multiple well pads and 6,725 acres of associated disturbance, which would occur if development continued at the current pace, to 2,556 multiple well pads and 31,257 acres of associated surface disturbance, which is the highest estimate from industry. About 88 percent of the projected development under these scenarios would be for Federal minerals.

An Executive Summary of the RFD is available on the planning website, <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/co/whiteriver/documents.htm>

## Alternatives Development

Following the scoping period, the WRFO developed preliminary draft alternative themes to reflect issues raised by the public during the scoping period and identified by BLM during the pre-plan analysis. These preliminary draft alternative themes included a range of alternatives that would analyze varying levels of



restrictions on oil and gas development and various measures to mitigate resulting impacts.

On November 2, 2007, BLM hosted a workshop with its cooperating agencies and Federal agency partners to engage them in a joint discussion to refine the range of the preliminary draft alternatives considered and the desired outcomes developed. Receiving input from agency partners at this stage in the planning process is a fundamental step in assuring collaborative development of management alternatives. Based on input received at this workshop on the alternative themes, BLM is developing draft alternatives for each alternative theme to express: 1) desired outcomes or desired future conditions for each resource (i.e., specific management goals, standards, and objectives); and 2) uses or allocations allowable on the public land surface and mineral estate. Each draft alternative will provide a different emphasis for managing the public lands and resources within the planning area and represents a complete and reasonable land use plan.

Another workshop with cooperating agencies and Federal agency partners to review and refine these draft alternatives, and any additional draft alternatives to be considered in the RMPA, is scheduled for mid-December 2007.

