

The parcel to be acquired is currently not under BLM management, and an amendment of the current Resource Management Plan (RMP) is required to address acquisition and future management of the parcel by BLM. As part of the RMP amendment, an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared to analyze and compare the impacts of the management alternatives for the acquired lands. As provided by 43 CFR 1610.5-5, the BLM will prepare the plan amendment and associated EA simultaneously with the processing of the Notice of Exchange Proposal (NOEP). The plan will be amended in conformity with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and BLM management policies. The BLM will ask state and local governments to be cooperators on the plan amendment. BLM will work with interested parties to identify the management decisions that are best suited to local, regional, and national needs. The public scoping process will identify planning issues and planning criteria. The BLM will prepare the land management amendment through coordination with other federal, state and local agencies, and affected users of BLM managed lands. The BLM will hold public meetings during the plan scoping period. Early participation is encouraged and will help determine the future management decisions of the BLM-administered lands involved in this amendment. Comments on issues and concerns can be submitted in writing to the address listed above and will be accepted throughout the creation of the Draft RMP amendment/EA. In addition to the ongoing public participation process, the BLM will provide formal opportunities for public participation by conducting scheduled public meetings and requesting comments upon BLM's publication of the draft RMP amendment/EA. The BLM will notify the Governor of Colorado, the Routt County Commissioners, adjacent landowners, and potentially affected members of the public of the proposed management decisions. The Emerald Mountain Partnership has promoted the exchange. The Emerald Mountain Partnership is a non-profit group dedicated to the conservation of the natural resources of Emerald Mountain and surrounding lands and to the creation of a multi-use model of land use to ensure the compatibility of agriculture, wildlife, recreation, and education. A notice of exchange proposal (NEOP) will be prepared, published in local news media, and mailed to interested parties.

Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of the NOEP may request one from the LSFO contact listed above.

Documents pertinent to this proposal may be examined at the LSFO and Web site at: [http://www.co.blm.gov/lra/emerald\\_mtn/em.html](http://www.co.blm.gov/lra/emerald_mtn/em.html). Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the LSFO during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday through Friday, except holidays; and may be published as part of the EA. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review 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 available for public inspection in their entirety.

Preliminary issues and management concerns have been identified by BLM personnel, other agencies, and in meetings with the Emerald Mountain Partnership, the Routt County Commissioners, and user groups. They represent the BLM's knowledge to date on the existing issues and concerns with current management. The preliminary issues include: impacts to users of BLM-administered lands and adjacent private landowners; impacts to wildlife habitat; and impacts to water quality, vegetation, including riparian and wetland areas, soils, and recreation opportunities on Emerald Mountain. These issues, along with others that may be identified through public participation, will be considered in the planning process. After gathering public comments on what issues the plan amendment should address, the suggested issues will be placed in one of the three categories:

1. Issues to be resolved in the plan amendment;
2. Issues resolved through policy or administrative action; or
3. Issues beyond the scope of the plan amendment.

Rationale will be provided in the plan for each issue placed in category two or three. In addition to these major issues, a number of management questions and concerns will be addressed in the plan amendment. The public is encouraged to help identify these questions and concerns during the scoping phase.

An interdisciplinary approach will be used to develop the plan amendment in order to consider the variety of resource

issues and concerns identified. Disciplines involved in the planning process will include specialists with expertise in rangeland management, minerals and geology, forestry, outdoor recreation, law enforcement, cultural resources, wildlife and fisheries, lands and realty, hydrology, soils, vegetation, and fire.

(Authority: 43 CFR 1610.2(c) and (f)).

**John E. Husband,**

*Field Manager.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[NM-030-1610-DO]

#### **Notice of Intent To Prepare a Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision, a Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA), and Associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); and Notice of Public Scoping Meetings.**

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent to Revise the White Sands RMP, New Mexico and Notice of Intent to Amend the Mimbres RMP, New Mexico, and Notice of Public Scoping Meetings.

**SUMMARY:** The BLM proposes to revise the White Sands RMP and to amend the Mimbres RMP. The revision and amendment and associated environmental analysis will update planning level decisions for public lands in Sierra, Otero, and Dona Ana Counties, which are managed by the Las Cruces Field Office (LCFO), New Mexico. The proposed RMP revision and amendment are intended to address issues that have developed since the previous RMPs were prepared in 1986 and 1994 respectively. This notice initiates the public scoping process to identify specific issues related to the proposed revision and amendment and the NEPA process.

**DATES:** The public scoping period for the proposal will commence with publication of this Notice. Comments about the proposal must be submitted on or before 60 calendar days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes its NOI in the **Federal Register**. The BLM can best utilize your participation, comments and resource information submissions during the 60 day comment period and scheduled public meetings. Public meetings will be held in Truth or

Consequences, Alamogordo, and Las Cruces, New Mexico to ensure the opportunity for local community participation and input. All public meetings will be announced through the local news media and will be posted on the New Mexico BLM Web site (<http://www.nm.blm.gov>) at least 15 days in advance.

**ADDRESSES:** Existing planning documents and information are available at the Las Cruces Field Office, 1800 Marquess St., Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005. Written comments regarding the proposed plan revision and amendment should be sent to the BLM at the above address, Attention: RMP Team Leader. Written comments may also be faxed to 505-525-4412 or e-mailed to [LCFO\\_RMP@nm.blm.gov](mailto:LCFO_RMP@nm.blm.gov). Comments that are faxed or e-mailed must include "Scoping Comments for LCFO-RMP" in the subject line. Public comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the LCFO during regular business hours 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the EIS. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review 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 and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Tom Phillips, RMP Team Leader, at (505) 525-4377. To have your name added to our mailing list, contact Rena Gutierrez at (505) 525-4338 or via e-mail at: [Rena\\_Gutierrez@nm.blm.gov](mailto:Rena_Gutierrez@nm.blm.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The area encompassed by this planning effort includes Sierra, Otero, and Dona Ana Counties, New Mexico. Public lands in Sierra and Otero County are administered under the White Sands RMP, while public lands in Dona Ana County are administered under the Mimbres RMP. This entire Planning Area is about 6.65 million acres with approximately 2.88 million surface acres of public land and 5.01 million acres of federal minerals. BLM managed lands comprise about 43 percent of the three-county area.

The planning process will comply with the Federal Land Policy and

Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and associated Federal regulations. The BLM will work collaboratively with interested parties to identify the management decisions that are best suited to local and regional needs as well as national needs and concerns.

There are several preliminary issues that BLM is seeking public input on through scoping. These issues were identified from evaluation of decisions in the current RMPs that BLM believes require updating and include: recreation; off highway vehicle management; threatened and endangered species management; renewable energy development potential (solar, wind, etc.); Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs); naturalness, solitude, and primitive recreation; special status species habitat management; access; travel management; rights-of-way; and land tenure (acquisition or disposal). The preliminary planning criteria, which have been identified to guide the development of the RMP Revision-Amendment/EIS, are:

A. Actions must comply with laws, regulations, executive orders, and BLM Manuals (*i.e.*, supplemental program guidance).

B. Actions must be reasonable and achievable and allow for flexibility where appropriate (*i.e.*, adaptive management).

C. The Economic Profile System (EPS) developed by the Sonoran Institute will be used as a community involvement technique and a source of demographic and economic data for the planning process.

D. Actions will be considered through an interdisciplinary approach.

E. The White Sands RMP Revision and the Mimbres RMP Amendment planning team will work cooperatively with county and municipal governments, other Federal, State and local agencies, and interested groups and individuals. Collaborative public involvement and participation will be emphasized throughout this process.

F. The revision and amendment will establish the guidance upon which the LCFO will manage public lands within the three counties.

G. The planning process will include an EIS that complies with NEPA standards.

H. The revision and amendment will provide for the maintenance and enhancement of habitats for special status species within the Planning Area, while allowing the public the opportunity for access to public lands in a productive and meaningful way.

I. The revision and amendment will recognize valid existing rights related to the use of public lands. The revision and amendment will define the process that the LCFO will use to address applications or notices filed after the completion of the revision and amendment on existing land use authorizations.

J. The RMP revision and amendment process will involve Native American tribal governments and will provide strategies for protection of cultural resources on public lands.

K. Decisions in the revision and amendment will strive to be compatible with existing plans and policies of adjacent local, State, and Federal governments and agencies, as long as the decisions are in conformance with BLM management policies.

Public participation will be encouraged through the three public meetings described above. Early participation is encouraged. In addition to the public meetings, opportunities for public participation will be available during the development of alternatives and upon publication of the Draft EIS. Notification of the publications and updates will be sent to various State and local government agencies, interest groups, Native American Tribes, permittees, and other interested public, as well as to the local news media. Federal, State and county governments have been asked to participate in the process and will be offered an opportunity to be cooperating agencies to assure their active participation.

Dated: November 5, 2004.

**Linda S. C. Rundell,**

*New Mexico State Director.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### National Park Service

#### Notice of Extension of the Public Review Period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Oil and Gas Management Plan, Big Thicket National Preserve

**AGENCY:** National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

**SUMMARY:** This notice informs the public that the comment period is extended.

**DATES:** The comment period is extended 30 days, to March 10, 2005.

**ADDRESSES:** The OGMP/DEIS will be available for public review and comment at the following locations: Office of the Superintendent, Art Hutchinson, Big Thicket National Preserve, 3785 Milam Street, Beaumont,