

# CHAPTER 5

## AGENCIES AND INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED AND LIST OF PREPARERS

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### HISTORY OF THE PLANNING AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The planning process began on May 7, 2003, when BLM published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document in the *Federal Register* (Vol. 68, No. 88, pages 24498-24500).

Over 2,600 flyers were sent to potential interested parties identified by the Field Offices. The flyers briefly described the planning process and asked for issues or a reply from those who wanted to remain on the mailing list. A scoping information package was sent to Federal, State, and local agencies and individuals, with additional information on the planning process and the project, including the BLM's identification of preliminary issues to be addressed. Approximately 500 persons, groups/organizations, and agency contacts wanted to remain on the mailing list.

The BLM initiated contact with a number of different agencies, including:

- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Forest Service
- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- New Mexico Historic Preservation Division
- New Mexico State Land Office
- New Mexico State Forestry Division
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs

The BLM sent letters initiating consultation with 32 tribes in New Mexico and surrounding states known to have traditional patterns of land use in New Mexico. Letters were also sent to all Navajo Nation Chapters in New Mexico.

The BLM's Resource Advisory Council was briefed in early June 2003. Congressional delegations were briefed at project initiation. Thirteen public scoping meetings were held in New Mexico and Texas to obtain information on the public's concerns and ideas. The BLM consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on threatened and endangered species issues, as required by the Endangered Species Act, and has involved the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish in the planning process, for consideration respectively of cultural resources and special status species. One Federal agency, the Western Colorado Area Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the BLM as a cooperating agency so that Bureau of Reclamation land surrounding the Navajo Reservoir in northwestern New Mexico could be included in the planning process (MOU finalized November 26, 2003).

The Scoping Report (2003) for the project describes in greater detail the efforts BLM made to inform the public and Federal, State, Tribal, and local entities about the project during the scoping period, as well as the comments received. Copies of the Scoping Report are available

through the BLM New Mexico State Office, and on the New Mexico BLM web site, [www.nm.blm.gov](http://www.nm.blm.gov).

An update flyer describing the alternatives was sent to those on the project mailing list on March 5, 2004, with a return card for requesting a copy of the preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA). A preliminary EA was released for public comments on April 16, 2004 with a public comment period ending on May 21, 2004. The preliminary EA was sent to approximately 160 individuals and agencies, including various Tribes and five Navajo Nation chapters. In addition, the EA was posted on the New Mexico BLM web site. Five comments were received and are addressed in Appendix D.

The EA may be protested for 30 days following its release to the public in July, 2004. Decisions to delineate fire management areas and identify broad vegetation treatments are RMP-level decisions and may be protested. Decisions to identify boundaries of FMUs are implementation-level decisions and may be appealed. The EA has been sent to the Governors of New Mexico and Texas for a 60-day review period to ensure that it is consistent with State law.

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