

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

New Mexico State Office

January 2000

Proposed Statewide Resource Management Plan Amendment/
Final Environmental Impact Statement

New Mexico Standards for Public
Land Health and Guidelines for
Livestock Grazing Management

Joint Leads for project

New Mexico Bureau of Land Management
State of New Mexico

Cooperators for Project

Chaves County
Catron County
Eddy County
Grant County
Hidalgo County
Lincoln County
Luna County
Otero County
Sierra County

It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

BLM/NM/PL-00-001-1020

The cover art work was provided by Robert Jones a rancher and BLM grazing permittee from Otero County.



Bureau of Land Management
New Mexico



Office of the Lieutenant Governor
New Mexico

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is the Proposed Statewide Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA)/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

This Proposed Statewide RMPA/Final EIS for New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management reflects input by the public who commented on the Draft. Citizens serving on the New Mexico Resource Advisory Council (RAC) reviewed all the comments and made numerous changes to clarify the RAC Alternative. They are to be commended for their concern for the health of public land.

All parts of the proposed plan amendment may be protested. Only those persons or organizations who participated in the planning amendment and analysis process may protest issues previously raised in the Draft. Protests must be sent to the Director (WO-210), Bureau of Land Management, Attn: Brenda Williams, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240. Also send a CC to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, State Capitol Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505 - Attention Cecilia Abeyta. Protests must be postmarked on or before February 28, 2000. The protest must include the following information: (1) 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 parts or part being protested; (4) a copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning amendment process by the protesting party or an indication of the date the issue or issues were discussed for the records; and (5) a concise statement explaining why the BLM New Mexico State Director's decision is wrong.

For those who do not want to protest the proposed plan amendment but wish to comment on the proposed plan, they may do so. All comments received will be considered in preparation of the Record of Decision. Comments must also be postmarked on or before February 28, 2000 and sent to: BLM - S&G Comment, NM931, P.O. Box 27115, Santa Fe, NM 87502-0115.

At the end of the 30-day protest period, the Proposed Plan Amendment, excluding any portions under protest, will become final. Approval will be withheld on any portion of the plan under protest until final action has been completed on such protest. A Record of Decision will be published and the RMP updated to reflect the amendment changes following resolution of any protests.

Thank you for participating in this planning amendment process. Your continued involvement will allow us to effectively manage public land and resources throughout the State.

M. J. Chávez
BLM State Director

Walter D. Bradley
Lieutenant Governor, New Mexico

ABSTRACT

New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management

Proposed Statewide Resource Management Plan Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement

Draft ()

Final (X)

United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

1. Type of Action: Administrative (X) Legislative ()

2. Abstract: This environmental impact statement (EIS) documents the effects of adopting statewide standards for public land health and guidelines for grazing management on BLM-administered land in New Mexico. The standards or guidelines adopted would be incorporated into eight existing resource management plans (RMPs) covering public land in New Mexico. This action is proposed in accordance with revised regulations for livestock grazing on BLM-administered land (43 CFR §4100). The proposed standards and guidelines were developed in consultation with the statewide Resource Advisory Council (RAC). Consistent with the regulations other agencies as well as the public had input.

The Proposed Plan's standards and guidelines are those recommended by the RAC. The modifications are shown in Chapter 2. The RAC Alternative was also the Preferred Alternative in the Draft RMPA/EIS.

Four alternatives are considered in the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS. They include the No Action (present management) Alternative, County Alternative, Fallback Alternative and the RAC Alternative.

3. For further information contact:

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Approved: _____
State Director, BLM

Approved: _____
Lt. Governor, New Mexico

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
AHPA	Archeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1994
AIRFA	American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978
ALMRS	Automated Lands and Minerals Record System
AML	Appropriate Management Level
AMP	Allotment Management Plan
ARPA	Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979
AUM	Animal Unit Month
AUY	Animal Unit Year
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	Best Management Practices
°C	Degrees Celsius
C	Custodial
CDNST	Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CR	Conservation Recommendations
CRMP	Coordinated Resource Management Plan
DPC	Desired Plant Community
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FCRS	Farm Cost and Returns Survey
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
FS	Forest Service
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GABS	Grazing Authorization and Billing System
GIS	Geographic Information System
HMA	Herd Management Area
HMAP	Herd Management Area Plan
I	Improve
IO	Input/Output Model
LAP	Livestock Activity Plan
LGMP	Livestock Grazing Management Practice
LUP	Land Use Plan
M	Maintain
MFP	Management Framework Plan
MLRA	Major Land Resource Area
mm	Millimeters
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
NMDFRS	New Mexico Division of Forestry and Resource Survey
NMDGF	New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
NMED	New Mexico Environment Department
NMSU	New Mexico State University
NMWQCC	New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission

NOI	Notice of Intent
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPS	Nonpoint Source Pollution
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service)
OHV	Off Highway Vehicle
PAH	Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon
PILT	Payment-In-Lieu-of-Taxes
PMOA	Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement
PNC	Potential Natural Community
PRIA	Public Rangeland Improvement Act
RAC	Resource Advisory Council
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision
ROW	Right-of-Way
RPM	Reasonable and Prudent Measures
R&PP	Recreation and Public Purposes
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SMA	Special Management Area
TCP	Traditional Historic Properties
T&E	Threatened and Endangered
TGA	Taylor Grazing Act
TIA	Takings Implication Assessment
TUP	Temporary Use Permits
VOP	Value of Production
WA	Wilderness Area
WHA	Wildlife Habitat Area
WSA	Wilderness Study Area
USDI	United States Department of the Interior
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

CONVERSIONS

Length

mm/25.4 = inches
cm/2.54 = inches
meters x 3.28 = feet

Area

hectares x 2.47 = acres
square kilometers x .386 = sq. miles
1 section is approximately 640 acres and/or 1 sq. mile

Temperature

degrees Celsius x 1.8 +32 = degrees Fahrenheit

S U M M A R Y

SUMMARY

This Statewide Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) documents the effects of adopting standards for public land health and guidelines for livestock grazing management on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered land in New Mexico. The standards and guidelines would be incorporated into eight BLM resource management plans (RMP) that cover approximately 13.5 million acres. In addition, for each alternative there are existing land use decisions that are not in conformance with the standards. These decisions would be changed to bring them into conformance.

The action is proposed in accordance with revised regulations (43 CFR §4180) for livestock grazing on BLM-administered land. Standards describe conditions needed for healthy sustainable public rangelands and relate to all uses of public land. They provide the measure of resource quality and functioning condition upon which the public land health will be assessed. Each standard will be most effective if it can be tailored for site-specific activities that occur in different areas. However, by incorporating the standards into the existing RMPs, all activities will be subject to the standards. In order to measure the effectiveness of each standard in specific areas, a set of measurable indicators and associated criteria are identified. These indicators and criteria would be used to evaluate the standards. The RMPA/EIS analysis identified that most activities will be minimally affected by the standards. The most affected activity will be livestock grazing.

Guidelines for livestock grazing are management tools, methods, strategies, and techniques designed to maintain or achieve standards. Guidelines for other activities are not a part of the proposal, but may be developed at a later date.

Of the 2,193 grazing allotments, it is projected that between 287 to 480 allotments would have lands that do not meet the standards, depending on the alternative. Of the allotments having lands not meeting the standards, the majority would have to adjust the management of their livestock to some extent. The most common management adjustment would be a deferment from grazing period, or a change in season of use. In a few cases, a reduction in

livestock numbers would be needed; however, large scale reductions in numbers of livestock are not expected because adjustments have been made over time through the BLM Rangeland Monitoring Program. In the short-term, some allotments would increase livestock numbers while others may be adjusted downward. Statewide, the numbers are expected to remain at approximately the past 10-year average. In the long-term, livestock use is expected to increase as the rangelands improve in health and the forage production increases.

In the Proposed Statewide RMPA/EIS, four alternatives were analyzed in detail. The No-Action (Present Management) Alternative would continue land management and livestock grazing practices that BLM used prior to the passage of the current grazing regulations approved on February 22, 1995. These practices cannot be continued under the current regulations; however, an analysis is provided to serve as a baseline for analysis of the other three alternatives.

The Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Alternative (Proposed Action) was developed by the New Mexico Statewide RAC. The RAC members were from various parts of the State and represented various uses and interests in public land. During the development process, they received a great deal of input from the public. In addition to the physical and biological standards, it provides a separate standard for Sustainable Communities and Human Dimension. Following the public comments period on the Draft RMPA/EIS the RAC modified their proposed alternative. The modifications make the alternative more in concert with the regulations (43 CFR §4180).

The County Alternative is proposed by the New Mexico members of the Coalition of Arizona/New Mexico Counties. This alternative provides for a balance in each standard between the human dimension and physical and biological values and goals. This alternative focuses on insuring that historic grazing practices are maintained.

The Fallback Alternative was developed as part of the current grazing regulations (43 CFR §4180) published in 1995. The Fallback Standards and Guidelines are now in place on an interim basis pending completion

of the analysis and Record of Decision. This alternative does not include Human Dimension Standards. Rather, it focuses on the physical and biological goals and values and is the most environmentally proactive.

All three alternatives provide for improved physical and biological conditions for the public land in New Mexico. However, the alternatives vary by the number of allotments improved and in the treatment of the human dimension.

Although the alternatives vary on the treatment of the human dimension, quantification of social and cultural impacts is not possible due to lack of being able to identify specific lands not meeting the standards. Therefore, the level of impact at the individual, family and community level can not be determined, only the direction of impact can be estimated.

University of New Mexico's Public Policy Center conducted a public opinion survey in May of 1995. Considering the top priority of the different multiple uses on public rangelands, they found that New Mexicans rate the potential uses as follows:

Point 1

- 49% view environmental preservation as top priority,
- 23% view commercial uses as top priority,
- 22% view recreational uses as top priority,
- and
- 6 % view all three as having equal priority

Point 2

- A substantial majority (over 75%) of New Mexico citizens believe it to be moderately to extremely important to preserve ranching as a way of life in the state (Baca, 1996).

RAC Alternative

In public comments on the Draft RMPA/EIS, both rural and environmental interests have suggested other alternatives, but view the RAC Alternative as being more satisfactory than another alternative. Thus, both view the RAC as a middle ground alternative. The RAC Alternative provides for maintenance of ranching as a way of life in the State and for enhancement of the physical and biological

environment and improved recreational resources on the lands currently not meeting the standards. Therefore, the alternative is providing for the maintenance and improvement of qualities that a majority of the New Mexico citizens value.

County Alternative

Of all the alternatives, the rural interests supported the County Alternative the most, while the environmental interests opposed the County Alternative the most. Based on the University of New Mexico's Public Policy Center poll, this alternative would please the New Mexico citizens who view preservation of ranching as a way of life to be moderately to extremely important. However, it may be a concern to the New Mexico citizens who view environmental preservation or recreation as the top priority.

Fallback Alternative

Environmental interests support the Fallback Alternative over any other alternative. However, the rural interests oppose the Fallback Alternative the most of any of the alternatives. Based on the University of New Mexico's Public Policy Center poll, this alternative would please the New Mexico citizens who view environmental preservation or recreation as top priority, but may be a concern to New Mexico citizens who view preservation of ranching as a way of life to be moderately to extremely important.