

Fact Sheet: BLM's Proposed Planning Rule

Overview

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared a proposed rule to improve the resource management planning process. The proposed rule would revise existing regulations which describe how the BLM conducts its planning activity. The proposed regulations are part of the BLM's ongoing Planning 2.0 initiative, an effort that strives to rethink the resource management plans that provide the framework for the management of public lands. The proposal will make changes to regulations that are guided by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. The original regulations were first completed in 1979 and later revised in 1983 and 2005.

The primary goals of the proposed planning rule are to improve the bureau's ability to respond to environmental, economic and social changes in a timely manner; to strengthen opportunities for other Federal agencies, State and local governments, Indian Tribes, and the public to be involved in the initial decisions leading to the development of BLM land use plans; and to improve the BLM's ability to address landscape-scale resource issues and use landscape-level management approaches to more efficiently and effectively manage the public lands.

Highlights of the Proposed Rule

Early Public Involvement. The proposed rule would establish several new opportunities for early public involvement during the planning process. The public would be provided opportunities to submit data and information and to review preliminary versions of key planning documents including a preliminary statement of purpose and need, preliminary alternatives and their rationale, and preliminary procedures, assumptions, and indicators to be used in the effects analysis.

Planning Assessment. The proposed rule would require the development of an upfront planning assessment prior to developing a land use plan. The planning assessment would provide a description of baseline resource environmental, ecological, social, and economic conditions in the planning area. This step would provide for additional public involvement, including an opportunity to submit data and information.

High Quality Information and Best Available Science. The proposed rule would improve the BLM's ability to utilize the high quality information, including the best available science and geo-spatial data, when it develops plans and implements future actions. The proposed changes affirm the importance of using high quality data as a foundation for BLM planning and management.

Landscape-Level Planning. The proposed rule would provide the agency flexibility to plan across traditional administrative boundaries. The BLM Director would also be provided discretion to determine future RMP boundaries.

Planning Framework. The proposed rule would distinguish between the plan components that are mandatory elements of a plan and with which all future decisions must be consistent, and

optional implementation strategies that are not components of the plan but may help guide plan implementation.

Protest. The proposed rule would revise the protest procedures to provide more detailed information on what constitutes a valid protest issue and for consistency with new terminology. The proposed rule would also provide electronic methods for protest submission.

Reaffirmation of FLPMA Policy. The proposed rule would reaffirm the policy guidance in FLPMA requiring management of the public lands for multiple use and sustained yield and includes a definition of the concept of sustained yield emphasizing this tenant of public land management.

Outreach and Public Comment

The proposed rule is open for public comment for 60 days after its publication in the *Federal Register*.

You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- **Mail:** Director (630), Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, N.W., Room 2134LM, Washington, DC 20240, Attention: 1004-AE39.
- **Personal or messenger delivery:** U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 20 M Street, S.E., Room 2134LM, Attention: Regulatory Affairs, Washington, DC 20003.
- **Federal eRulemaking Portal:** <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions at this Web site.

We expect to host a public meeting in mid-March as well as a webinar. The dates and locations are to be determined and will be announced separately. We will also be conducting tribal consultation on this issue. For more information on the proposed rule, or details on the public meeting when they become available, please visit the BLM website at: www.blm.gov/plan2