

# ARIZONA Planning Bulletin



Arizona Strip Resource Management Plan Revision  
Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument Management Plan  
Vermilion Cliffs National Monument Management Plan

## Bureau of Land Management & National Park Service Arizona Strip

October 2003, Vol. 5

### **Preliminary Alternative Scoping Process**

The Arizona Strip planning team consisting of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS) personnel prepared preliminary management alternatives for the planning area, which includes Grand Canyon-Parashant and Vermilion Cliffs National Monuments. The planning team presented the preliminary alternatives to the public beginning in May 2003. This allowed the public an additional opportunity to participate in the overall planning process. Because alternatives are the driving force behind any Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), it was felt that additional public participation at this critical juncture (before the draft EIS is completed) would improve the alternatives and subsequent management plans.

The public received information and an invitation to comment on the preliminary alternatives through the Arizona Planning Bulletin (Vol. 4) and public scoping meetings in five cities in June 2003. This allowed many individuals, organizations, agencies, and groups the opportunity to state their concerns and provide useful suggestions before the finalization of the alternatives. The planning team is currently making changes to the alternatives based on these suggestions and concerns as well as BLM Wilderness Study Area (WSA) policy changes and additional guidance from Washington.

Another result of the preliminary alternative scoping process was increased awareness and participation in the planning effort at both the local and national levels. Meeting attendance was double that of the initial scoping meetings held during the summer of 2002. The preliminary alternative scoping period generated 6,272 comment letters, which is nearly triple the amount when compared to the 2,219 comment letters received in 2002. Increasing public awareness and involvement will improve the resulting management plans.

Nine cooperating agencies also provided invaluable comments and suggestions at various stages in the alternative formulation process. They will continue to work with the planning team as the alternatives are finalized and the draft EIS is completed in 2004.

### **Future comment opportunities**

Along with the refinement and ongoing analysis of the alternatives is the development of a preferred alternative. The revised alternatives along with the preferred alternative will be presented to the public in the draft EIS. While the next formal round of meetings and comment period allowing further public participation will occur after completion and distribution of the draft EIS, the planning team continues to seek public input in the alternative development and refinement process.

## Scoping Summary

### Public meetings well-attended

Public meetings on the preliminary alternatives were held this past summer in five communities. These informal open houses provided the public an opportunity to receive information on the preliminary alternatives, to ask questions, and to provide input.

Public Scoping Meetings, Summer 2003			
Date	Place	Attendance	Comments
June 2	Mesquite, NV	13	2
June 3	St. George, UT	85	7
June 4	Fredonia, AZ	41	0
June 5	Kingman, AZ	36	2
June 6	Flagstaff, AZ	174	31
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>349</b>	<b>42</b>

While only 42 individuals provided comments on the preliminary alternatives at the public scoping meetings, an additional 6,230 individuals, groups, or organizations sent comment letters by mail, email, or fax to the planning team. The planning team then reviewed, analyzed, and summarized all comments received by July 25, 2003. They derived a total of 40,741 individual concerns and remarks from the comment letters received.

Most of those who commented showed their preference for one of the five preliminary alternatives (Preliminary Alternatives A-D, and the No Action Alternative). Many of these individuals also supported their preference by providing a reason why they preferred one preliminary alternative to another. Very few individuals showed a preference for Preliminary Alternative B or C, with most split between Preliminary Alternative A and Preliminary Alternative D and/or the No Action Alternative.

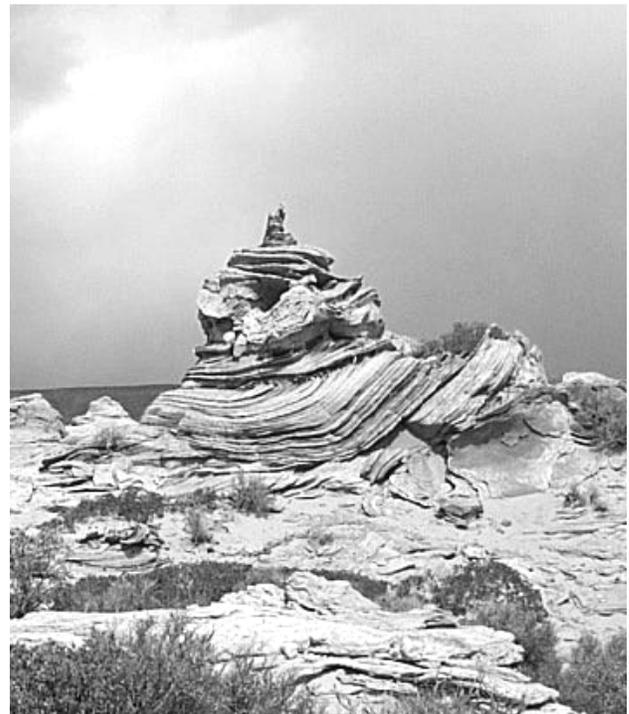
### Preference for Preliminary Alternative A

Preliminary Alternative A contained the fewest miles of open roads, recommended protection for all lands with wilderness character, and provided the most primitive recreation

opportunities. Those who preferred this preliminary alternative liked the focus on protection of lands with wilderness character and showed strong support for restoration and long-term preservation of natural and cultural resources. They believed that Preliminary Alternative A would be the best in protecting and preserving monument objects and unique Arizona Strip values, such as remoteness, scenery, and wildlife. These individuals generally preferred additional restrictions on recreation, livestock grazing, mining, and other human activities as a means of protecting the resources.

### Preference for Preliminary Alternative D and/or the No Action Alternative

Preliminary Alternative D had the most miles of open roads and trails, the largest amount of multiple-use lands, and the widest variety of recreational opportunities. Many respondents who supported Preliminary Alternative D also supported the No Action Alternative and emphasized the concept of "multiple-use." They generally agreed that the area should be protected, especially the lands within the monuments, but also stressed the desire to manage for maintained or increased human use, especially recreation and ranching activities.



## Wilderness Changes

The BLM recently received direction from the Department of the Interior (DOI) that directly affects the preliminary alternatives and results in a number of major modifications. These directions are in draft format, stem from the recent “Utah Wilderness Settlement” (April 2003), and relate to BLM’s ability to designate WSAs. A summary of the history and reasons for the revised direction is presented below. More information on the settlement is available on-line at [www.doi.gov/wilderness](http://www.doi.gov/wilderness).

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 gave the BLM 15 years to inventory and identify lands suitable for designation as wilderness by Congress. That inventory and review was completed in 1991 and recommendations were submitted to Congress in 1993. In January 2001, the BLM issued the “Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures Handbook” (H-6310-1) to provide direction on the inventory of wilderness characteristics and the study of those areas with characteristics for designation as WSAs. The State of Utah and others sued the DOI/BLM over BLM’s additional inventory to designate and manage new WSAs during the 1990s. In the lawsuit settlement, the DOI/BLM agreed that FLPMA does not allow designation of WSAs after 1993. BLM recently rescinded the wilderness handbook through normal procedures and it will no longer be used as guidance in the land use planning process.

The BLM does not have authority to extend the 15-year FLPMA wilderness review process to identify areas for Congressional designation as

wildernesses, including establishment of WSAs. The BLM can continue to inventory lands for wilderness characteristics (size, naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, and special features) and can identify measures in the land use plan to protect those characteristics.

This new direction for BLM wilderness planning does not affect NPS lands within Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument.



## Changes in Alternatives and Management Areas

After analyzing public comments and incorporating new DOI directions, the planning team has revised the preliminary alternatives. The new draft alternative themes (see insert below) no longer include management areas (monument, wilderness/primitive, general, and urban interface) in the planning process.

### NEW DRAFT ALTERNATIVE THEMES

<b>Alt. A</b>	<i>No Action Alternative:</i> Current management, as modified by the national monument proclamations
<b>Alt. B</b>	<i>Emphasis on minimal human use/influence:</i> Fewest miles of open roads and trails; focus on natural processes and other unobtrusive methods for ecosystem restoration, resource management, and scientific research; more protection of wilderness characteristics and enhancement of remoteness, and least motorized recreation opportunities
<b>Alt. C</b>	<i>Emphasis on balanced resource protection and human use/influence:</i> Moderate amount of open roads and trails, mix of natural processes and “hands-on” techniques for ecosystem restoration, resource management, and scientific research; mix of motorized and primitive recreation opportunities
<b>Alt. D</b>	<i>Emphasis on aggressive restoration, maximum human use/influence and widest array of visitor experiences:</i> Most miles of open roads and trails, focus on “hands-on” techniques for ecosystem restoration, resource management, and scientific research, fewer remote settings, most motorized and least primitive recreation opportunities
<b>Preferred Alternative</b>	The Preferred Alternative will be built after analysis and include the best elements and decisions from the other alternatives, including all valid decisions carried forward from the No Action Alternative

## Planning Tools

The plan will use a number of tools to manage, inventory, and protect natural and cultural resources and recreation, as well as an area's remote and primitive qualities. Some of these tools include:

- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Oil and Gas leasing stipulations
- Public Use Sites (archaeological and historical sites)
- Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
- Route Evaluation/Designation/Decision Tree
- Special Recreation Management Areas
- Visual Resource Management

The planning team is working with nine cooperating agencies, other federal and state agencies, organizations, and local communities.

## Planning Progress

Alternative Refinement	Fall 2003
Impact Analysis	Winter 2003
Draft Management Plan/EIS	Summer 2004
Public Meetings	Fall 2004
Proposed Management Plan/ Final EIS	Winter 2005

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