

approximately 22 million acres; Alternative 4 would make available approximately 11 million acres; and Alternative 5 would make available approximately 8 million acres. The BLM considered six additional alternatives but did not carry those alternatives forward for detailed analysis for the reasons discussed in the Draft Programmatic EIS.

A reasonably foreseeable development scenario (RFDS) was developed as part of the Draft Programmatic EIS to help define the potential magnitude of solar energy development that could occur within the 11-State study area by 2045. Based on the RFDS, the estimated demand for solar energy generation on public lands by 2045 will be approximately 93,000 megawatts, which would require making approximately 700,000 acres of public land available for utility-scale solar development.

The BLM has identified Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative in the Draft Programmatic EIS. Alternative 3 would make public lands within 10 miles of existing and planned transmission lines over 100 kilovolts available for solar applications unless otherwise excluded based on the resource-based exclusion criteria identified in the EIS. Alternative 3 would improve the solar development application process by excluding solar energy development applications from areas where protection is warranted and providing development siting opportunities in specified "solar application areas" while maintaining sufficient siting flexibility to account for site-specific resource considerations on a case-by-case basis under subsequent project-specific decisions.

Mitigation

Mitigation under the Programmatic EIS would generally take the form of avoidance and minimization. Avoidance would be achieved by excluding certain areas of public lands from solar energy development applications, depending on the alternative, based on defined criteria. Minimization would be achieved by requiring that various programmatic design features be incorporated into solar development proposals. Additional mitigation, including further avoidance, minimization, and compensation, may be required and incorporated into a solar development proposal at the project approval stage.

Schedule for the Decision-Making Process

The BLM will provide this and additional opportunities for public participation consistent with NEPA and land use planning processes, including

a 30-day public protest period and a 60-day Governor's consistency review on the Final Programmatic EIS and Proposed RMP Amendments. The Proposed RMP Amendments/Final Programmatic EIS is anticipated to be available for public protest in August 2024.

The BLM will continue to consult with Indian Tribal Nations on a government-to-government basis in accordance with Executive Order 13175, BLM MS 1780, and other Departmental policies. Tribal concerns, including impacts on Indian trust assets and potential impacts to cultural resources, will be given due consideration. Consultation will continue on an individual basis with interested Tribes.

Comments on the Draft Programmatic EIS would be most helpful if provided at a level similar to that of master planning and zoning and with a focus on where solar development on public lands is most appropriate and where it should be disallowed and precluded from consideration. Comments about suggested design features that may be appropriate for the BLM to require are also encouraged.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1506.6, 40 CFR 1506.10, 43 CFR 1610.2)

Benjamin E. Gruber,

Acting Assistant Director, Energy, Minerals, and Realty Management.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[BLM_CO_FRN_MO4500176823]

Notice of Availability of the Record of Decision for the Approved Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan for the Royal Gorge Field Office, Colorado

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces the

availability of the Record of Decision (ROD) for the approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Royal Gorge Field Office located in eastern Colorado. The Colorado State Director signed the ROD on January 9, 2024, which constitutes the final decision of the BLM and makes the approved RMP effective immediately.

DATES: The Colorado State Director signed the ROD on January 9, 2024.

ADDRESSES: The ROD/approved RMP is available online at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/39877/510>. Printed copies of the ROD/approved RMP are available for public inspection at Royal Gorge Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, 3028 E. Main, Cañon City, CO 81212 or can be provided upon request by contacting BLM Project Manager John Smeins at jsmeins@blm.gov or 719-252-8212.

A copy of the Protest Resolution Report is available at: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/public-participation/protest-resolution-reports>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Smeins, Project Manager, telephone 719-252-8212; address 3028 E Main St., Cañon City, CO 81212; email jsmeins@blm.gov. Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services for contacting Mr. Smeins. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The BLM prepared the Eastern Colorado proposed RMP/final environmental impact statement (EIS) to evaluate and revise the management strategy for resources, resource uses, and special designations on public lands managed by the Royal Gorge Field Office, which is the planning area for the RMP. Existing management decisions for public lands and resources in the Royal Gorge Field Office are currently described in two documents: the 1986 Northeast RMP, as amended; and the 1996 Royal Gorge RMP, as amended.

The planning area encompasses approximately 35 million acres of land under various jurisdictions, including the BLM, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, State of Colorado, and local government, and private lands in 37 counties across south-central and eastern Colorado. The Browns Canyon National Monument is not part of the planning area for this RMP/EIS, as it is

the subject of a separate plan. The Eastern Colorado RMP will provide management direction for approximately 658,200 acres of BLM-administered surface land and approximately 3,311,900 acres of BLM-administered mineral estate. The decision area includes all BLM public lands and approximately 2,673,000 acres of split-estate Federal minerals on private, local government, and State lands. It does not include National Forest System land and other Federal land where the BLM does not make planning decisions about oil and gas management and other uses. The BLM typically adopts the requirements determined by those Federal surface-managing agencies when leasing the associated mineral estate; while such lands are within the planning area, they are outside the decision area for this RMP.

The approved RMP emphasizes balancing resources and resource use among competing human interests, land uses, and the conservation of natural and cultural resource values, while sustaining and enhancing ecological integrity across the landscape, including plant, wildlife, and fish habitat. This plan has four geographic landscapes with distinct management and incorporates a balanced level of protection, restoration, and enhancement, as well as the use of resources and services to meet ongoing programs and land uses with an emphasis on local community visions for the future of public lands.

Through this collaborative planning effort, the approved RMP describes the actions to guide future management and meet desired resource conditions. The preferred alternative for the draft plan was carried forward into the final with modifications.

The BLM provided the proposed RMP/final EIS on July 7, 2023, for a 30-day public protest period and received five protest letters. The BLM's Assistant Director for Resources and Planning resolved all protests. Responses to protest issues have been compiled and documented in a Protest Resolution Report (see **ADDRESSES**). No changes to the Eastern Colorado proposed RMP/EIS were necessary as a result of protests.

The BLM provided the proposed RMP/final EIS to the Governor of Colorado for a 60-day Governor's consistency review. No inconsistencies with State or local plans, policies, or programs were identified during the Governor's consistency review of the proposed RMP/final EIS. No changes to the Eastern Colorado proposed RMP/EIS were necessary as a result of the Governor's consistency review.

The decisions limiting camping are implementation decisions and are appealable under 43 CFR part 4. These decisions are contained in Tables II-16 and II-17 of the approved RMP. Any party adversely affected by the proposed camping limitations may appeal within 30 days of publication of this Notice of Availability pursuant to 43 CFR, part 4, subpart E. The appeal must be filed with the Royal Gorge Field Manager at the above listed address. Please consult the appropriate regulations (43 CFR, part 4, subpart E) for further appeal requirements.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1506.6, 40 CFR 1506.10, 43 CFR 1610.2)

Douglas J. Vilsack,

BLM Colorado State Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[BLM_MT_FRN_MO4500177558]

Notice of Proposed Filing of Plats of Survey; South Dakota

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of proposed official filing.

SUMMARY: The plats of surveys for the lands described in this notice are scheduled to be officially filed 30 calendar days after the date of this publication in the BLM Montana State Office, Billings, Montana. The surveys, which were executed at the request of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Great Plains Region, Aberdeen, South Dakota are necessary for the management of these lands.

DATES: A person or party who wishes to protest this decision must file a notice of protest in time for it to be received in the BLM Montana State Office no later than February 20, 2024.

ADDRESSES: A copy of the plats may be obtained from the Public Room at the BLM Montana State Office, 5001 Southgate Drive, Billings, Montana 59101, upon required payment. The plats may be viewed at this location at no cost.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joshua Alexander, BLM Chief Cadastral Surveyor for South Dakota; telephone: (406) 896-5123; email: jalexand@blm.gov. Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay

services for contacting Mr. Alexander. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The lands surveyed are:

Fifth Principal Meridian, South Dakota

T. 124 N., R. 53 W.,
Sec. 21.

A person or party who wishes to protest an official filing of a plat of survey identified earlier must file a written notice of protest with the BLM Chief Cadastral Surveyor for South Dakota at the address listed in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice. The notice of protest must identify the plat(s) of survey that the person or party wishes to protest. The notice of protest must be received in the BLM Montana State Office no later than the date described in the **DATES** section of this notice; If received after regular business hours, a notice of protest will be considered filed the next business day. A written statement of reasons in support of the protest, if not filed with the notice of protest, must be filed with the BLM Chief Cadastral Surveyor for South Dakota within 30 calendar days after the notice of protest is received.

If a notice of protest of the plat(s) of survey is received prior to the scheduled date of official filing or during the 10 calendar day grace period provided in 43 CFR 4.401(a) and the delay in filing is waived, the official filing of the plat(s) of survey identified in the notice of protest will be stayed pending consideration of the protest. Upon receipt of a timely protest, and after a review of the protest, the Authorized Officer will issue a decision either dismissing or otherwise resolving the protest. A plat of survey will then be officially filed 30 days after the protest decision has been issued in accordance with 43 CFR part 4.

If a notice of protest is received after the date described in the **DATES** section of this notice and the 10-calendar-day grace period provided in 43 CFR 4.401(a), the notice of protest will be untimely, may not be considered, and may be dismissed.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in a notice of protest or statement of reasons, you should be aware that the documents you submit—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available in their entirety at any time. While you can ask us to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we