

March 10, 2009

BLM Proposes Transportation Plan for Public Lands near Florence, Ariz.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Tucson Field Office is proposing a transportation plan covering approximately 96,320 acres of public lands near Florence and Superior, Ariz. and is now seeking public comment during a 60-day review period.

The purpose of the Middle Gila Canyons Transportation and Travel Management Plan and accompanying Environmental Assessment (EA) is to designate travel routes and identify use restrictions needed to protect sensitive resources in the planning area.

The transportation plan identifies approximately 263 miles of road or primitive road, along with several Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) sport sites. All routes in the plan are based on a comprehensive travel route inventory completed in 2003, as well as stakeholder meetings convened in 2007. The management alternatives identified in the plan evolved from a route evaluation conducted by the Middle Gila Conservation Partnership in 2005. The Middle Gila Conservation Partnership is a group of interested representatives from state, federal and local agencies who assisted the BLM in maintaining recreational use in the Middle Gila region while preserving the area's natural resource value. In addition, a range of public interests provided input in developing the proposed plan.

The EA results conclude that the proposed plan is not expected to have a significant impact on the environment, and it is designed to reduce some of the current impacts to sensitive resources on public lands.

Copies of the plan and EA are available online at http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/travel_mgmt.html. To request a hard copy, call the BLM Tucson Field Office at 520-258-7242. Copies are also available for review at the Tucson Field Office and Phoenix District Office.

Comments may be submitted by May 8, 2009, to Mark Lambert or Francisco Mendoza, Outdoor Recreation Planner; Tucson Field Office; 12661 East Broadway; Tucson, Ariz. 85748-7208, or by e-mail at mgc_travel@blm.gov.

After consideration of the comments received, the BLM will implement the Middle Gila Canyons Transportation and Travel Management Plan beginning in the summer of 2009. For more information, please contact Kristen Lenhardt at 520-258-7200.

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The BLM manages more land – 258 million acres – than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western States, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.