

Chapter One

Community Collaboration and Community Vision Excerpts



BLM Agua Fria National Monument
and
Bradshaw-Harquahala

Proposed Resource Management Plan
and
Final Environmental Impact Statement
June 2008

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Agua Fria National Monument Resource Management Plan (RMP), the Bradshaw-Harquahala RMP, and their joint Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) have been prepared to provide guidance on current and future management decisions for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Phoenix District (PD). These plans represent the culmination of many months of planning on the part of BLM's PD staff, BLM Arizona State Office staff, representatives of communities within the planning areas, cooperating and collaborating Government agencies, special interest and user groups, and several hundreds of concerned citizens. The decisions outlined in the pages that follow, as a distillation of the combined thought, effort, and research from all those involved, will enable BLM to manage the Agua Fria National Monument as well as other BLM-managed lands north and west of the Phoenix metropolitan area. These plans will also consolidate management decisions, now contained in several existing plans, in one comprehensive plan to guide BLM's management actions for years to come.

Combined, the planning areas encompass more than 3 million acres in a complex mosaic of land ownerships and jurisdictions. BLM manages the resources on 967,000 surface acres within these planning boundaries, including the entire 70,900 acres of Agua Fria National Monument.

1.4 Process

1.4.1 Collaboration and Cooperation

Collaboration and cooperation are areas of emphasis in BLM's approach to the planning process. The main parties involved in these processes are the general public and interest groups, cooperating agencies, tribal governments, and collaborating agencies and groups. These participants, their roles, and impacts on the planning process are described below.

1.4.2 Community Collaboration and Community Vision

To establish valuable communication relationships before beginning specific planning, James Kent Associates (JKA), under contract to BLM, met with residents and community groups in or next to the planning areas. In addition to building communication networks for the formal planning process, JKA received citizens' inputs on issues and concerns related to BLM's land management practices and helped citizens gain a better understanding of the land use planning process. JKA's staff informally visited with residents in the following settings:

- in community settings,
- in civic and social group meetings, and
- in the communities of Wickenburg, Yarnell, Buckeye, Tonopah, Castle Hot Springs, New River, Black Canyon City, Cordes Junction, Mayer, Dewey, Humboldt, Prescott Valley, and Phoenix.

Contacts were also made in Flagstaff and Prescott, Arizona.

Once established, communication networks served as an integral link between BLM, citizens, and communities by fostering interest

and participation in the planning process. When BLM's managers and staff communicate and collaborate with communities on RMPs and planning issues, the plans are considerably more successful than those prescribing a process or those that do not consider the issues, needs, insights, assets, or resources of local communities.

To begin preparing the Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala RMPs and EIS, a series of workshops for both scoping and development of the Alternatives described in Chapter 2 and in the Introduction, were held in central community locations. The series of informal meetings provided the citizens and the BLM's managers with time to reflect on the local issues between discussions. At the same time, citizens' interests were viewed side by side with BLM's management concerns, allowing planners to integrate management concerns with community interests in ways that fostered collaboration and; more importantly, shared land stewardship.

These workshops encouraged citizens to do the following:

- refine issues,
- discuss visions for the future of public lands, and
- begin exploring alternative ways to manage public lands and resources.

BLM considered citizen's input, from both groups and individuals, as they developed the Alternatives. Additionally, citizens could submit formulated Alternatives as well as vision statements for specific community areas or resources. These ideas were also considered in the range of Alternatives, and analyzed in the EIS.

The BLM's planning process has fostered the climate for effective community visioning of their future in relationship to public lands. In many cases those visions have been integrated into local, regional, and other planning efforts. Those visions have thus expanded the value of the collaborative environment supported by the BLM's planning process.

Overall, the collaborative environment has resulted in open communication. Additionally, this environment has created an increased sense of public ownership of the following:

- the planning process,
- the decisions that result from it, and
- the importance of collaborative stewardship as a strategy for implementation.

1.4.3 Community Vision Statements

As part of an extensive community collaboration throughout the planning process, several communities prepared community vision statements. These statements played an integral role in developing the overall vision for these plans. Following are the vision statements developed by each community.

These statements are presented not as an endorsement by BLM, but rather to show the interrelationship between BLM-managed lands and the people who live, work, and recreate around these lands. These statements do not reflect the visions of all members of the community. They are the collective thoughts of citizens who chose to participate in the planning process. Furthermore, certain vision statements propose actions that are beyond the scope of BLM's legal authority to influence or implement.

1.4.3.1 Black Canyon City

The ultimate desire of the citizens of Black Canyon City is the preservation of the rural nature of our community and the natural beauty of our surroundings. Coincidental to that desire is the retention of open space to be used for designated public recreational activities. The community would like a sufficient amount of BLM-managed lands surrounding the town dedicated to future development of public trails, nature preserves, and riparian areas. A sufficient amount of land would be a minimum depth of five miles from the private property

lines around the community. The State Trust Lands within that area would be purchased by BLM for inclusion in the designated open space.

The community would like the viewshed protected from the town to the mountaintops in all directions. Limiting further commercial or residential development will also help protect the limited water supply in our area. In support of these considerations, many residents have expressed an interest in working with BLM and other communities to assure continued protection, cleanliness, access, and enjoyment of the public lands in our area.

1.4.3.2 Castle Hot Springs

Our community has a vision to maintain our remote yet reachable lifestyle, yet we also recognize that recreational use will increase and needs to be accommodated. This is not only an enforcement issue for the BLM, Yavapai and Maricopa counties, and the City of Peoria, but also an increasing social issue for our community. With this in mind, our community embraces the following as a means to maintain our way of life, as well as deal with increased outside pressure:

- Existing, historically described roads on BLM land must be mapped, legally described, and dedicated so as to ensure that residents and property owners can continue to access and use their lands into perpetuity.
- We need to seriously consider a recreational-user fee, earmarked for the local community, imposed on non-residents to help fund the substantially increasing costs associated with recreational uses.
- Existing roads (whether public, private, or easement) located in areas subject to occasional inundation will be exempt from permitting requirements for continued maintenance in this area.
- In considering changes in the use of private property in this area, the county or city will not be permitted to consider

federal goals and objectives for the surrounding property.

- All federal lands in the Lake Pleasant area are to be treated the same as private property with regard to obtaining new or perfecting existing legal and physical access.
- Mineral rights retained by BLM in this area under private property will be transferred gratis to the surface owners.
- We want a community-based stewardship group to proactively plan and later provide expertise, labor, and cultural wisdom with BLM on all recreational uses, including but not limited to non-motorized and motorized trails.
- Many of the existing water wells are in the "younger alluvium" as currently defined by recent case law.
- Encourage the re-establishment of a northern loop road around Lake Pleasant linking to Table Mesa Road at I-17 for health/safety/welfare purposes.
- Target shooting needs to be encouraged in appropriate and safe areas. Our community is willing, as a stewardship group, to counsel BLM on appropriate areas for target shooting.
- Encourage appropriate discreet cell-site development to provide for better law enforcement telecommunications.

1.4.3.3 Dewey Humboldt - Friends of the Agua Fria River Basin

Our vision is based on the overwhelming grassroots support for retaining public lands for open space made during BLM's scoping comment process. Imagine living here a half a century from now. What would we like our public lands and our communities to look like? The following vision is written as if today is in the year 2050. It describes what can be seen and what took place back in 2003 to make that a reality. Please share in this dream for the future. In the year 2050, we envision the following:

The BLM Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area (including the local communities of Dewey, Humboldt, Mayer, Spring Valley, and Cordes Lakes) represents preserved and protected tracks of open space that have sustained their natural health, diversity, and productivity throughout the first half of the 21st century. These tracts of land are crowded by an uncontrolled urban sprawl. This development explosion stretches from Phoenix to Black Canyon City and continues toward the west and north along the highway corridors to Prescott and Flagstaff. The Agua Fria National Monument and the expanded BLM-managed lands in the Cordes Junction, Mayer, Dewey, and Humboldt areas (referred to as the Upper Agua Fria Basin) are the only open space areas along major roadways. Not surprisingly, these open spaces have been a significant factor in maintaining the rural character within a large section of central Arizona.

BLM continues to work with the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors to support a staunch conservation of the natural and human ecological relationships within the county. The Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area has become a showcase of ecological and rural community sustainability. It provides numerous recreational opportunities for the large and growing urban areas within the state of Arizona, as well as examples of sound traditional agricultural enterprises. These multiple uses of the land include protection of human antiquities, continued environmentally sustainable ranching, hunting, fishing, hiking, equestrian use, bird watching, planned off-road vehicle access, wild river designations, and ecologically responsible mining.

BLM has continued to successfully manage these lands to preserve water flow and water recharge. They have done this by ensuring that all riparian tributaries and supporting uplands feeding the Agua Fria River and monument have remained in their natural state. Wildlife habitat (and corridors) has been identified and protected predominately through the expansion of lands under BLM supervision. This expansion of BLM-managed lands took place almost half a century ago (around 2003-04). At

that time, all lands originally identified for disposal under the old management plan were reclassified and retained as open space under federal ownership.

BLM then furthered their commitment to protecting open space for multiple uses by either forming partnerships with state and other federal agencies, or directly acquiring wide strips of land on either side of the existing BLM-managed lands within Yavapai County. This allowed BLM to successfully buffer their original parcels from development and encroachment. It is interesting to note that in the early part of the 21st century BLM honored the wishes of the people they served (to keep public land public and to protect open space). This visionary and courageous action resulted in preserving a large section of central Arizona for the native flora and fauna, as well as the use and enjoyment of many generations of Arizonans.

1.4.3.4 New River

The Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area maintains the wild and scenic character of today, while continuing to provide an array of public opportunities in the future for visual resources, water, education, recreation, and exploration within the framework of a healthy, properly functioning landscape. This does include grazing and/or other commercial endeavors, if they are consistent with and support the overall vision. Emphasis is on maintaining the scenic views and recreational opportunities while protecting the watershed function.

1.4.3.5 Wickenburg

The Wickenburg Outdoor Recreation Committee seeks to establish a system of world-class equestrian trails surrounding Wickenburg that will buffer the area from Phoenix valley urban sprawl, and preserve the open space value of the local landscape. The area of this trail system will afford a multitude of opportunities for all recreational enthusiasts, and serve to enhance the lifestyles of all community members.