

News Release

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Aug 13, 2007

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BLM to Accept Roan Plateau ACEC Electronic Comments

GLENWOOD SPRINGS - The Bureau of Land Management today announced it will accept electronically submitted public comments on the proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern portion of the Roan Plateau resource management plan amendment.

"We have been committed to meaningful public involvement since we began the planning effort for the Roan Plateau seven years ago," said Glenwood Springs Field Manager Jamie Connell. "We're reopening the public comment period on the ACECs for another 14 days to ensure that those wishing to submit comments electronically have that opportunity." The comment period will be extended 14 days from the publication of the Federal Register Notice, which is anticipated to occur no later than August 20, 2007.

Information on how to submit electronic comments on the proposed ACEC designations for the Roan Plateau will be available on the same date at <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/co/roanplateau/comments.htm>. Written comments may also be mailed to: Bureau of Land Management, Glenwood Springs Field Office, 50629 Hwy 6 and 24, Glenwood Springs, CO 81601. BLM's innovative management plan for the Roan Plateau resulted directly from the significant amount of public involvement in the process as well as close coordination with its formal cooperating agencies, which include the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Garfield and Rio Blanco counties, the town of Parachute, and the cities of Glenwood Springs and Rifle.

BLM's Preferred Alternative in the November 2004 Draft Plan for the Roan proposed two ACECs totaling 11,529 acres. Based on public and local government comments on that Draft, BLM nearly doubled the acres of proposed ACECs in the September 2006 Proposed Plan. This included adding two ACECs below the rim of the plateau, which brought the total acres of proposed ACECs to 21,034.

Before issuing a final decision on for the Roan, BLM found that the proposed ACECs were not adequately described in the November 2004 Federal Register Notice announcing the availability of the Draft Plan, as required under BLM regulations. In

June BLM issued a decision on all the lands in the Roan planning area except for the 21,034 acres proposed for ACEC designation - which is about 30 percent of the area - and announced a 60-day public comment period on the lands proposed as ACECs. The four proposed ACECs help lay the framework for the innovative approach to oil and gas development for the Roan plateau. Virtually all of the 21,034 acres of proposed ACECs would be managed under no surface occupancy stipulations, which means no surface disturbance. When the proposed ACECs are taken with the additional 17,336 acres stipulated no surface occupancy in the June decision, more than 50 percent of the planning area would be stipulated no surface occupancy to create wildlife seclusion areas, protect Colorado River cutthroat trout and water resources, and protect scenic views.

The June Record of Decision provides critical protections for fish and wildlife habitat, plants, special places, viewsheds, and traditional recreation and other uses of the plateau. The Decision also allows for very restricted and limited energy development that would require using the latest directional drilling techniques. The Decision follows clear direction Congress gave BLM in 1997 to enter into leases for the exploration, development and production of petroleum on the lands of the Roan Plateau "as soon as practicable."

The June decision provides the framework for an innovative, highly restrictive approach to oil and gas development. Development on top of the Plateau will be conducted in a staged, ridge-by-ridge approach, with well pads no closer than one-half miles apart. Surface disturbance on top is limited to approximately one percent of the total acres at any one time. This highly restrictive approach still allows more than 90 percent of the federal natural gas in the planning area to be recovered. Additional background information on the proposed ACEC designations for the Roan Plateau is available at <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/co/roanplateau/>.

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