

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

WGA WINTER MEETING

DATE: December 6, 2014
LOCATION: Office of the Secretary
TIME: 7:30AM – 8:30PM
FROM: Zaina Javaid, O/S, 202-513-7778

Updated Information is highlighted

I. PURPOSE

This memo provides preliminary information about the WGA winter meeting.

II. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS (As of 12/5/14)

7:30-8:00 AM:	Meeting with Governor Mead
8:30-10:00 AM:	Governor's Private Breakfast Meeting
10:15-10:30 AM:	Opening Remarks by Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval
10:30-10:45 AM:	Keynote Address by Secretary Ernest Moniz
11:00-11:45 AM:	Keynote Speech Prep/Down Time
11:45 AM-12:00 PM:	Media Availability with Secretary Moniz
12:00-1:45 PM:	Lunch
12:45-1:15 PM:	Your Keynote Remarks
1:55-2:00 PM:	Governors & Special Guests Group Photo
2:00-2:30 PM:	Meeting with Governor Sandoval
2:30-3:00 PM:	Hold for Press Time/Down Time
3:00-3:30 PM:	Meeting with Idaho Governor Butch Otter
3:30-4:00 PM:	Meeting with Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper
4:00-4:30 PM:	Hold for Press Time/Down Time
4:30-5:00 PM:	Meeting with Montana Governor Steve Bullock
5:00-5:30 PM:	Hold for Press Time/Down Time
5:30-6:00 PM:	Meeting with Utah Governor Gary Herbert
6:05-6:45 PM:	WGA Reception
6:45-8:30 PM:	Governors and Spouses Private Dinner

**Note: Please refer to the trip schedule for most recent agenda. There may be a meeting with Sec. John Laird added later.*

III. ATTACHMENTS

- WGA Briefing on Wildfire Management [below]
- WGA Briefing on Endangered Species Act [below]
- WGA Briefing on Western Land Management Issues [below]
- WGA Briefing on DRECP [below]

- Endangered Species Act Attachments *[attached separately]*
- Current List of Attendees *[attached separately]*
- Attendee Facebook *[attached separately]*
- Most Recent WGA Agenda *[attached separately]*

**BRIEFING MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY
WGA WINTER MEETING – WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT**

DATE: December 6 – 7, 2014
LOCATION: Four Seasons Hotel – 3960 Las Vegas Blvd South, Las Vegas, NV 89119
FROM: Kim Thorsen, DAS – PRE, (202) 208-5773
Janice M. Schneider, ASLM; (202) 208-2422
Kris Sarri, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, PMB, (202) 208-1927
Jim Douglas, Director, Office of Wildland Fire, (202) 208-7754
SUBJECT: The impacts of catastrophic wildfires and DOI's strategy for addressing this threat

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to prepare you to address members of the Western Governors' Association (WGA) and answer questions related to the Department's wildland fire management program and our shared responsibilities (the Department's, our partners, and stakeholders such as WGA) and the Department's efforts to prepare for, respond to, and recover from catastrophic wildfires, particularly in the context of the protection of the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem. The threat of rangeland fire to sage-grouse habitat within the Great Basin geographic area is of enormous concern to both the Department and many of the members of the WGA. It is expected there will be a high level of interest expressed on the topic at the WGA's winter meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Through your attendance at the meeting and your keynote address at the December 6 luncheon, you will have ample opportunity to discuss the Department's leadership and collaboration with state, local, Tribal and Federal governments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders on the topic of wildland fire. This may include a discussion of the outcomes and objectives from the recent conference, "The Next Steppe: Sage-grouse and Rangeland Wildfire in the Great Basin," that was held in Boise, ID in early November.

II. KEY FACTS/HOT TOPICS

About the Office of Wildland Fire:

- Wildland fire does not recognize jurisdictional boundaries. The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (National Cohesive Strategy) is a commitment that as stakeholders we all share responsibilities for managing our lands; protecting our nation's natural, tribal, and cultural resources; and making our communities safe and resilient for future generations. The Cohesive Strategy has three goals: (1) to restore and maintain resilient landscapes across all jurisdictions; (2) prepare communities to live with and withstand a wildfire without loss of life and/or property; and (3) safely, efficiently, and effectively respond to wildfires when they happen.

- While the principles of the National Cohesive Strategy are already being implemented in some places, we need to continue to strengthen those existing efforts and partnerships that are working. This includes further collaborative opportunities with WGA to strengthen state and federal partnership to deal with rangeland fire.
- In 2015, Interior becomes the lead co-Chair (Kris Sarri) of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) and will be pursuing an active agenda to fully engage the states and other non-federal partners in implementation of the National Cohesive Strategy's philosophy and goals.
- Note that in October 2014, the WGA informed the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture that the organization was withdrawing from participation in the WFLC in order to pursue other priorities. We hope to re-engage the WGA and encourage them to be strong partners in seeking intergovernmental approaches to resilient landscapes, fire adapted communities, and effective fire operations.
- Research indicates that focusing treatments on wildland-urban interface and critical infrastructure alone will not resolve the occurrence of high severity wildfires that threaten key values. The objective of the Department's Resilient Landscapes program is to create landscapes that are resilient to fire through a place-based approach.
- Land and resource management is inclusive of wildland fire management—neither is a separate activity.

The Department's efforts to prepare for, respond to, and recover from catastrophic wildfires:

- Wildland fire is one of the most significant threats to sage-grouse habitat in the Great Basin region, which includes parts of Idaho, Utah, Nevada and Oregon, and is of great concern many of the western Governors.
- Nearly 4,600 fires were reported and over 3.9 million acres burned across the Great Basin geographic area and Oregon in 2012, representing more than 42 percent of the total number of acres burned across the United States.
- In 2013, over 6,000 fires were reported and over 1.3 million acres burned across the Great Basin states and Oregon (30 percent of the total number of acres burned in 2013 across the United States).
- Wildland firefighters are effective approximately 98 percent of the time in initial attack to ignitions in the Great Basin; the remaining 2 percent of fires cause the most devastating fire effects to the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem. We are primarily searching for the 2 percent solution. While the addition of local capacity through rangeland fire protection associations and the like will help address initial attack, adding huge amounts of firefighting resources alone may not necessarily be the answer. Rather, we believe we must deal with this issue through pre-fire activities (including resilience) and post-fire recovery.

- It is important to increase awareness about the priority of natural resource and habitat issues as we develop approaches to managing wildfire.

III. TALKING POINTS

Please also see attached key messages on the Fire Budget from the Office of Wildland Fire, and the attached key messages on the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and the Department's Resilient Landscape programs.

IV. BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

The Department and USDA recognized early on in the cohesive strategy effort that the nation's wildland fire management issues could not be solved alone. Therefore, the National Cohesive Strategy was developed using an "all-lands, all-hands" approach in collaboration with key traditional and non-traditional stakeholders, including the Western Governors' Association.

At the WGA meeting in June 2014, WGA Chair Governor Brian Sandoval announced that wildland fire would be one of his top priorities during his tenure. To capitalize on Governor Sandoval's interest in working more closely with YOU and the Department and to bring needed attention to the challenges of fighting rangeland fires, ASLM Janice Schneider suggested a collaborative workshop to develop a proactive rangeland fire strategy to minimize the threat of fire to Greater Sage-grouse (GSG) would be timely.

In addition, FWS has expressed concern about the ability to address the threat of fire and the uncertainty associated with post-fire habitat restoration. FWS identified those specific areas of concerns as factors that could potentially influence their decision to list the species in September 2015.

The Presidential briefing for the WGA in June highlighted both the importance the Administration places on wildfire as an issue of national concern and their desire to work together with the Governors on various other issues of mutual concern, in particular, the manner in which wildfire suppression is funded.

Over 300 people attended "The Next Steppe: Sage-grouse and Rangeland Wildfire in the Great Basin." This included high level representation from the Department including Mike Connor, Janice Schneider, Neil Kornze and Dan Ashe and many other Federal and Tribal representatives, state partners, and non-governmental stakeholders, including The Nature Conservancy.

The goal of the conference was to better understand the threat of rangeland fire in the sagebrush steppe and to use this knowledge to produce policy and operational recommendations for enhanced coordination and landscape-scale habitat protection as part of our sage-grouse strategy. Another objective for the conference was to share the various success stories and collaborative efforts that are occurring locally and regionally.

In her closing remarks at the conclusion of the conference, Noreen Walsh [FWS Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region] said:

“The sage steppe ecosystem evolved with periodic fire, small scale, low intensity range fires. The problem that we all know is that when we introduce an invasive annual, the frequency of fire gets out of whack, we end up with cheatgrass becoming dominant, we get into an endless loop of more cheatgrass and more fire, and areas transition into a new steady state. Therefore, I argue that this issue is mostly about what we do PRIOR TO FIRE and what we do AFTER FIRE in the sage steppe to reduce the dominance of cheatgrass and make sure we don’t transition to that new state.”

In addition, Noreen raised the important point that while the FWS’ listing decision for the sage-grouse may have been the catalyst for the conference, “It’s not just about the sage-grouse. It’s even more about the 350 other species and the health of our largest mostly intact North American ecosystem that is trending in the wrong direction.” By the end of the conference we received over 200 suggestions for potential policy and operational changes.

We recommend that in your remarks YOU consider reinforcing the importance of continued collaboration with the Governors and their staff to address recommendations that surfaced through the dialogue at the rangeland fire conference, emphasizing that their input is critical to a successful cohesive strategy for addressing the threat of rangeland fire to the sage steppe ecosystem, including as part of our collective strategy to minimize potential threats to GSG.

Your remarks should also highlight Gov. Sandoval’s focus on fire, the importance of fire in the Great Basin in relation to GSG, the President’s focus on fire issues, and the opportunity to further our collaboration with the States on this and other key natural resource management issues, as well as the Department’s proposed next steps on this issue.

V. NEXT STEPS

The National Cohesive Strategy provides a platform for having a more engaged dialogue among the many stakeholders at all levels, including non-traditional partners. An understanding of roles, desired outcomes, and action necessary among stakeholders allows each of our programs to focus more acutely on fulfilling our respective responsibilities while promoting action by other partners.

Wildland fire management cannot be a stand-alone program. It must be an integrated (all-lands, all-hands) program that works hand-in-hand with other natural resource, land use, and program areas, where we can achieve the most difference on the ground, together.

The objective of the Department’s Resilient Landscapes program is to create landscapes that are resilient to fire through a place-based approach. It is a project-focused initiative, supported by the Wildland Fire Management and bureaus’ natural resource management programs.

The 2015 President’s Budget included a Resilient Landscape initiative that would will invest and leverage fire funding (federal and non-federal) with natural resource funding in order to prepare

for, respond to, and recover from wildfire by expanding our fire resilient landscapes and better address the growing impact of wildfire effects on communities, critical infrastructure, federal and tribal lands. Non-federal landowners and organizations will be encouraged to participate and materially contribute to restoring a resiliency across the entire landscape.

Internal DOI discussions are ongoing surrounding potential policy and operational changes that may occur as a result of the conversations and feedback provided at the rangeland fire conference.

The BLM has and will continue to take important steps to improve the response to rangeland fire. These include issuing Instruction Memoranda prioritizing GSG resources, incorporating the Fire and Invasive Assessment Tools (FIAT) into the ongoing Resource Management Plan process, and populating the USFWS/USGS's Conservation Efforts Database (CED) to capture all plans, projects and strategies since 2010 that either prescribe or encourage conserving important GSG habitat. Additionally, the President's proposed Fire Budget "fix", if successful, will help significantly preserve key needed pre-suppression and post-fire recovery funds.

Building on the work already done through the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, we need to explore further collaborative opportunities with WGA to strengthen state and federal partnership to deal with rangeland fire. Additionally, given the length of time that it takes to restore sagebrush habitat in these arid areas, prevention and protection of this high valued habitat is key. Thus, notwithstanding the existing efforts, many issues arose at the fire conference where additional significant improvements can be achieved.

As a result, there is a general consensus that a Secretarial Order calling for the development of an enhanced multi-agency/multi-stakeholder rangeland fire and ecosystem restoration strategy at the landscape level would be a critically important development to both (i) capitalize on the opportunity and excitement created by the fire conference and keep momentum moving; and (ii) ensure that a rangeland fire strategy is in place prior to the start of the 2015 fire season as the US Fish and Wildlife Service considers its listing decision.

ASLM is taking the lead on drafting a Secretarial Order for your consideration. The proposed Secretarial Order would address fire prevention, pre-fire fuels reduction, suppression (resource prioritization), post-fire recovery, science and stakeholder collaboration. It will direct the development of an enhanced strategy before the beginning of the 2015 fire season. We currently anticipate that YOU will announce that you intend to issue the Order shortly after discussions with the Governors at WGA.

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- Key messages on the Fire Budget provided from the Office of Wildland Fire.
- Key messages on the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and the Department's Resilient Landscape programs are attached.
- Information memo on the BLM Fire and Aviation Program's role in addressing sagebrush-steppe ecosystems and associated critical sage-grouse habitat in the West.

Wildland Fire Management Budget Cap Adjustment

The FY 2015 President's budget proposes to establish a new framework for funding fire suppression operations in the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service to provide stable funding for fire suppression, while minimizing the adverse impacts of fire transfers on the budgets of other fire and non-fire programs.

- Fire seasons are becoming longer and more intense. The President's budget proposes to change how fire suppression costs are budgeted to treat the requirements of extreme fire seasons in the same way as other emergency disaster needs.
- We budget for fire costs using a ten-year average of fire suppression costs; but in a peak season with catastrophic fires, we are forced to move funding from programs across the Department to meet the increased costs of wildfire suppression.
- For example, in 2012, Interior's fire suppression costs were 23 percent higher than the ten-year average calculation, requiring the Department to take funds from other fire accounts – including fire preparedness, fuels management, and restoration funds –and non-fire program accounts at the end of the fiscal year. In 2013, the two agencies – Interior and the Forest Service – redirected or borrowed over \$500 million to fund increased firefighting costs.
- The President's 2015 budget proposal for fire is similar to legislation being considered in Congress. It allows for a balanced suppression and pro-active fuels management and restoration program, with flexibility to accommodate peak fire seasons but not at the cost of other Interior missions or by adding to the deficit.
- Modeled on the Federal Emergency Management Disaster Relief program, creating a new wildfire cap adjustment would fund the most severe one percent of fires.

The President's budget seeks to remedy this situation by requesting a total funding level of \$1.034 billion for the Wildland Fire program including a wildfire suppression cap adjustment of \$240.4 million.

- The cap adjustment is an authority ceiling and not a funding target.
- The adjustment is based on the forecast made by scientists using weather, climate, and drought data and evaluating historical expenditure data.
- Only extreme fires that require emergency response or those that are located near urban areas, or activities during abnormally active fire seasons, which rightly should be considered disasters, would be permitted to be funded through the adjustment to the discretionary spending limits.
- Under this new framework, the 2015 budget request for suppression covers 70 percent of the 10-year suppression average within the domestic discretionary cap.
- This base level ensures that the cap adjustment would only be used for the most severe fire activity since it is about 1 percent of the fires that cause about 30 percent of the costs.
- Interior and the Forest Service would continue to be accountable for fire costs and track costs per fire, ensure elevation of spending approvals based on set protocols, and report on the results.
- The cap adjustment does not increase overall discretionary spending, as it would reduce the authority ceiling for the existing disaster relief cap adjustment by the amount required for fire suppression requirements.

- The proposal is in line with legislative proposals sponsored by Senators Wyden and Crapo (S.1875) and Representatives Simpson and Schrader (H.R. 3992) with Representatives DeFazio and Labrador as cosponsors.
- The Secretary supports the President's new approach to funding fire suppression. The legislative proposals, sponsored by Senators Wyden and Crapo and Representatives Simpson and Schrader, are in line with the President's approach. The Secretary has addressed support for this new approach on numerous occasions in the past year.

Without the cap adjustment, the 2015 budget is \$794.0 million. The preponderance of the 2015 budget for Wildland Fire is within the discretionary caps. Included within the request are increases totaling \$66 million for preparedness, burned area rehabilitation, and a new resilient landscape component to complement fuels management.

- **Suppression \$268.6 million, a reduction of \$17.3 million** to fund 70 percent of the inflation-adjusted 10 year suppression average to address the normally anticipated range for fire response.
- **Preparedness \$319.0 million, +\$37 million for investments** in firefighters (BIA workforce, Veterans), aviation, and strengthening tribal capacities.
- **Burned Area Rehabilitation \$18.0 million, +\$2 million for post-fire treatments** strengthen our capacity to begin restoration of fire damaged lands that cannot recover naturally.
- **Fuels Management (previously called Hazardous Fuels; this term changed in 2015) \$146 million, + \$1.3 million** to work with communities and others to reduce wildfire risk by eliminating fuel build up and promoting effective management of wildfire risk.
- **Resilient Landscapes +\$30 million for a new program** to conduct treatments that improve the integrity and resilience of forests and rangelands, including areas outside the wildland-urban interface. The treatments will be coordinated with and supported by the resource management programs of the four Interior wildland fire management bureaus (BIA, BLM, FWS, and NPS) to ensure their effectiveness in addressing each bureau's unique needs and priorities, and the projects will be supported by bureau matching funds. Resilient landscape projects will address long-term restoration and maintenance of forest and rangeland health to increase resiliency to fire, improve habitat, protect watersheds, mitigate invasive species, and similar goals. These projects reduce the risks of fire but also incorporate other land and resource management objectives.

2015 Projected Available Resources and Preparedness Funding

(This information is provided in anticipation that you may be asked questions about wildfire preparedness during subsequent sessions of the meeting)

The Department projects equal to or a greater number of resources available to support wildland fire suppression in 2015 than in 2014.

- In 2014, the Department had available over 3400 firefighters, 200 pieces of heavy equipment, 745 engines, and 67 single engine airtankers and 400 helicopters on exclusive use and call when needed contracts.

The Department's FY 2015 budget request includes a program increase of \$34.1 million for Preparedness.

- The increased funds will enhance Interior's readiness capabilities by supporting additional firefighters, longer seasonal tenures, aviation efficiencies, and other measures.
- A major share of the Preparedness increase will be devoted to strengthening the BIA wildfire program by, among other things, funding contract support costs, providing

workforce development opportunities for firefighters, and enhancing administrative support capabilities.

The budget also supports significant investments to strengthen wildfire response, prevention, and vegetative management programs intended to help reduce the severity of wildfires.

The budget request also includes a \$2.0 million increase for the Burned Area Rehabilitation program to address greater post-fire rehabilitation needs caused by the 2012 and 2013 fire seasons.

No funding is requested in the FLAME Wildfire Suppression Reserve.

- Under the proposed new budget framework, all suppression funding is requested in Wildland Fire Management – Suppression Operations.

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (WILDFIRE ATTACHMENT 2)

Wildland fire does not recognize jurisdictional boundaries. Working together, we can do more to achieve the goals of the National Cohesive Strategy—to restore and maintain resilient landscapes across all jurisdictions; prepare communities so they can live with and withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property; and safely, efficiently, and effectively respond to wildfires when they happen.

- The National Cohesive Strategy and associated tools, science, and data provide for improved planning and implementation.
- The National Cohesive Strategy is a platform for having a more engaged dialogue among the many stakeholders at all levels, as well as involving non-traditional partners (e.g., insurance companies, zoning officials, etc.) in the discussion.
- An understanding of roles, desired outcomes, and action necessary among stakeholders allows our programs to focus more acutely on fulfilling our responsibilities while promoting action by other partners.

The outcome of the cohesive strategy effort is more than a set of documents; it is a commitment that as stakeholders we all share responsibilities for managing our lands; protecting our nation's natural, tribal, and cultural resources; and making our communities safe and resilient for future generations.

- Wildland fire management must be an integrated program that works hand-in-hand with other natural resource, land use, and other program areas, where we can achieve the most difference on the ground, together. (i.e. All Hands, All Lands)
- It is an integrated program that prioritizes efforts where there is an opportunity to work with our neighbors and partners who are taking action to make the most collective difference across the landscape.

Across the nation, we recognize that the principles of the National Cohesive Strategy are already being implemented in some places. We need to continue to strengthen those existing efforts and partnerships that are working.

- Together, we can learn from and replicate collaborative behaviors and successful practices to achieve even greater success nationally.

Our future success will be defined by our commitment and ability to work together to achieve the vision and goals of the National Cohesive Strategy. Partnerships and collaborative planning to prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire is the foundation on which the National Cohesive Strategy was built and vital to our success into the future.

- Although our missions and priorities are diverse, we are united across fire and resource programs, with a common vision and set of goals defined by the National Cohesive Strategy.
- Implementation of the National Cohesive Strategy will be undertaken in the same manner it was created - with recognition of the differences among stakeholders across the country and a vision of how we can collectively achieve more together.

Resilient Landscapes

Focusing treatments on wildland-urban interface and critical infrastructure alone will not resolve the occurrence of high severity wildfires.

- A recent scientific publication by the Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI) suggests that although hazardous fuels treatments near communities can reduce wildfire risks to homes and people, backcountry fuels treatments are equally important to prevent the "mega" wildfires¹ that most often start on federal lands and eventually burn onto state and private lands. The Department recognizes this issue by proactively proposing a new approach that complements the existing Fuels Management Program.

The objective of the Resilient Landscapes program is to create landscapes that are resilient to fire through a place-based approach.

- Funding will be provided to Resilient Landscape Collaboratives that are comprised of Federal, Tribal, state, non-governmental organization (NGO), and stakeholder partnerships.
- Resilient Landscape Collaboratives invest and leverage fire funding with natural resource funding in order to prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire by expanding our fire resilient landscapes and better address the growing impact of wildfire effects on communities, critical infrastructure, federal and tribal lands.

The Resilient Landscapes program is not a stand-alone program; it is a project-focused initiative, supported by the Wildland Fire Management (WFM) and bureaus' natural resource management programs.

- The Resilient Landscape program seeks to improve and maintain resiliency despite changing climate and ecological conditions.
- While funding is part of the WFM program, the Resilient Landscapes program is coordinated and supported by resource management programs and funding.
- Governance includes both fire and resource management program leadership.

WILDFIRE ATTACHMENT 3:

INFORMATION/ BRIEFING MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

DATE: December 2, 2014
 FROM: Ron Dunton, acting BLM Assistant Director for Fire and Aviation
 SUBJECT: The Bureau of Land Management Fire and Aviation Program

¹ Mega-fires are a situation as much as they are an incident. Emotions run high when they occur. They are not defined in absolute terms, using physical measures (e.g. acres burned). Instead, these are the "headline" wildfires where operational limitations, public anxieties, media scrutiny, and political pressures collide. (*The Mega-Fire Phenomenon: Toward a More Effective Management Tool*, Brookings Institute, 2005)

This paper is to further inform the Secretary about the Bureau of Land Management Fire and Aviation program; and particularly its role in addressing sage-steppe ecosystems and associated critical sage-grouse habitat in the West.

BACKGROUND

The BLM Fire and Aviation program is one of the largest and most complex of all federal wildland fire programs, with far-reaching responsibilities including hazardous fuels management, community assistance and fire mitigation, fire response and suppression, fire aviation, training, and protecting life, property and natural resources on nearly 250 million acres of public land.

The BLM has a highly mobile, agile and flexible fire response capability comprised of fully equipped and versatile air and ground forces, including nearly 300 wildland engines; 1,700 primary firefighters – more than the other DOI firefighting agencies combined – and a surge capacity to approximately 8,900 total firefighters; as well as a variety of other equipment, multiple types and sizes of fixed-wing and rotor aircraft and a large support network.

The effectiveness of the program is shown in achieving an initial attack success rate that averages around 95 percent, meaning that the BLM fire response organization contains nearly 100 percent of all fire starts before they exceed 300 acres.

Through agreements, partnerships and collaboration with other federal agencies, state governments and county and local departments, the BLM Fire and Aviation program extends its reach and effectiveness on the landscape.

Coupled with a nimble and effective response capability, the BLM fuels management program targets its efforts on creating fire breaks or otherwise modifying the vegetative makeup to alter fire behavior and slow the spread of a fire, which contributes to the high success rate in battling new fire starts. The agility of the fire program allows the movement of crews for fuel work similar to the movement and prepositioning of crews for fire response.

DISCUSSION

The role, visibility and importance of the BLM Fire and Aviation program have reached new heights in recent years with the convergence of climate and drought conditions and a steady decline of critical sage-steppe habitat, most notably affecting sage-grouse. The BLM manages more than half the nation's sage-grouse habitat; and rangeland fire presents one of the most significant threats to that habitat.

In an effort to design a strategy to further protect and conserve remaining habitat, the BLM in November brought together leading scientists, policy-makers and fire management practitioners, as well as state and local government representatives and private-sector constituents, at a conference titled *The Next Steppe: Sage-grouse and Wildfire in the Great Basin*. The goal of this conference was to build upon current best-management practices and develop new ones, and encourage new ways of thinking about and addressing wildfire and fuels management issues.

The conference generated tremendous interest and input from across the spectrum of fire management, fire policy and government and private interests. Senior policy and operations leaders are on a fast-track to analyze the conference findings and suggestions and develop a comprehensive strategy for moving forward to better manage rangeland fuels, reduce the spread

of invasive species and limit the adverse effects of wildfire. Enhanced best management practices and related measures are being developed for implementation in 2015 and beyond.

NEXT STEPS

The BLM Fire and Aviation program will continue to build on past successes, continue implementing new and emerging technologies, and consistently refine and enhance its best-management practices as new science is developed and new information arises. The future may well include a greater emphasis on pre-fire fuels management and higher priority projects to enhance protection of the sage-steppe; renewed focus on effective fire response on the rangeland; and greater science-based post-fire rehabilitation efforts. The short- and long-term path forward, however, will rely heavily on the comprehensive strategy established by policy and operations leaders following complete analysis of the recent conference findings.

INFORMATION BRIEFING MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

WGA WINTER MEETING – ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

DATE: November 23, 2014
FROM: Michael J. Bean, Principal Deputy Ass't Sec. for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
Subject: Endangered Species Act and the Western Governors' Association

The purpose of this memo is to prepare you for possible discussion of the Endangered Species Act at the December meeting of the Western Governors' Association

BACKGROUND

The Western Governors' Association has adopted a series of policy resolutions regarding the Endangered Species Act (ESA), including a 2013 resolution calling on Congress to amend and reauthorize the ESA based upon seven broad goals. More recently, a 2014 resolution focused less on congressional reauthorization and more on implementation actions that could be taken to engage the states more fully in ESA decision-making.

The sort of broad-scale amendment and reauthorization of the ESA called for in WGA's 2013 resolution has not happened since 1988. Since then, there have been only a few serious efforts to review and make major amendments to the law, all of which have failed. The most recent of these was engineered by the then-chairman of the House Resources Committee, Richard Pombo, in 1995. The Pombo measure passed the House with overwhelming Republican support and virtually no Democratic support.

Despite the history of failed congressional efforts to revisit the ESA, the recent elections make it likely that another run at the ESA will be tried. Contributing to that likelihood is the fact that many ESA-related controversies are brewing (e.g., the potential listing of the greater sage-grouse, threatened litigation over the listing of the Gunnison's sage grouse, ongoing litigation over the listing of the lesser prairie-chicken, the recent judicial overruling of the delisting of wolves in Wyoming, uncertainty over whether or when the grizzly bear will be re-proposed for delisting, the unresolved issue of water management in California's Bay-Delta ecosystem, and longstanding controversies over timber harvests on BLM lands in Oregon). In the past, efforts to enact far-reaching changes to the ESA had difficulty gaining traction because few members had ESA controversies in their states or districts. The fact that there are more ESA controversies on the map today, and the ideological tilt of the new Congress have given opponents of the ESA an opportunity to make major changes to it.

DISCUSSION

WGA's 2013 resolution noted the "strongly-held differences in how the Act should be renewed" that existed within the WGA itself. Perhaps because of those strongly held differences, the resolution called for reauthorization legislation "developed in a consensus fashion that results in broad bipartisan support and maintains the intent of the Act." There has not been a serious prospect for achieving broad bipartisan support for ESA reauthorization since Bruce Babbitt's nearly successful effort to broker a bill with Senators John Chafee and Dirk Kempthorne in 1997. The prospects for broadly bipartisan ESA legislation at this point seem vanishingly remote. Nevertheless, the 2013 WGA resolution provides a generally constructive framework for discussing the ESA with the WGA or its individual governors.

The 2013 resolution sets forth seven broad goals, as follows:

1. Quantifiable criteria for recovery should be published at the time of listing a species, including population or population trend objectives, and should be done in consultation with the states. While there are significant practical challenges with this recommendation, new legislation would not necessarily be required to implement it.
2. State conservation efforts should be rewarded by listing a species only in states or areas where it is imperiled, rather than throughout the entirety of its range. Although accomplishing this goal would almost certainly require new legislation, it bears noting that the FWS policy published July 1, 2014, regarding the meaning of the statutory term "significant portion of its range," substantially limits the circumstances in which a species can be listed throughout the entirety of its range based on threats that occur in only a portion of its range.
3. Enhance the role of states in recovering species, such as by delegating to them the authority to develop recovery plans and regulate incidental take. While this recommendation is short on details, it should be noted that some, if not most, of what it seeks to achieve could be done without new legislation.
4. Ensure the use of sound science, and in particular the data and expertise of the states in making ESA decisions. Although FWS believes it does this already, the recommendation clearly reflects the view of WGA that it does not do so adequately. Like several other recommendations, there are opportunities to be responsive to this recommendation within the existing statutory framework.
5. Funding for ESA activities "needs to escalate rapidly," and in particular funding is needed to incentivize conservation efforts by landowners. The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund established under Section 6 should be managed as a block grant program under which the states would determine their spending priorities. Notwithstanding this recommendation, it should be noted that in the context of the Sage Grouse Task Force, some states have made clear that their governors are opposed in principle to increased funding for federal programs.
6. The term "foreseeable future" needs to be defined, because WGA believes that uncertainty as to its meaning is resulting in inappropriate listing decisions,

particularly with respect to projections of future impacts of climate change. The approach to “foreseeable future” that the FWS takes is context specific (i.e., the foreseeable future may be much different for some species than for others). Solving the perceived problem with a statutory definition seems unlikely; administrative action may be more promising.

7. States should be full partners in listing and recovery planning decisions, particularly when models are used to predict future effects.

In 2014, WGA adopted another resolution, focused on actions to preclude the need to list species. While not limited to greater sage-grouse, many of the recommendations in this resolution clearly derived from WGA’s sage grouse (and lesser prairie-chicken) experience. Thus, for example, the resolution called for:

- Giving full consideration to voluntary conservation efforts when making listing decisions;
- Creating a presumption that listing is not warranted when states have developed conservation plans that have been approved by the FWS
- Clarifying what conditions are needed to avoid a listing when issue a proposed listing rule; and
- Requiring that the federal commitment to conserving a species reflect the proportion of that species’ habitat that it found on federal land.

NEXT STEPS

The new Congress is more likely than at any time in the past decade to try to make major changes to the ESA. If it does, the WGA could be an influential player in that effort.

WGA’s 2013 resolution calling for a congressional revision of the ESA sets forth a reasonably constructive agenda, parts of which can be (and some of which already have been) addressed administratively. At the December WGA meeting, you may be asked about prospects for revising the ESA. If you are, you should commend WGA for recognizing the need in its 2013 resolution for broad bipartisan support for any ESA revision. You should commend it as well for the soundness of the seven policy goals that it sets forth, noting that many can be (and to some degree have been) advanced administratively. Given the challenge of securing broad bipartisan support for any legislation in the new Congress, however, you should encourage the WGA to work with us to address as many of its concerns as possible through ongoing or new administrative initiatives. If an opportunity arises to address the ESA in a truly bipartisan manner, however, you should express a clear desire and willingness to have the Department fully engaged.

Both to reduce the perceived need for new legislation and to improve the effectiveness of the ESA, it is important that FWS aggressively carry out the “ESA Strategy Action Plan” recently

developed in conjunction with CEQ, NOAA, and USDA. That action plan includes a number of rulemaking and other administrative changes. Some of these are directly responsive to concerns reflected in the WGA resolutions (e.g., the proposed policy on pre-listing mitigation crediting, which contemplates very close collaboration with the states, and the proposed policy on excluding areas subject to conservation agreements, which incentivizes voluntary conservation efforts by landowners). Other proposed administrative changes clarify ambiguous ESA terms or processes that are important to address, but that are not responsive to the broader set of issues identified in the WGA resolutions. Although time is limited within which to undertake new regulatory initiatives that address those broader concerns, communicating a willingness to start that process may put us in a better posture to respond to legislative proposals.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Q & As *[below]*
2. 2014 WGA Resolution on Endangered Species *[attached separately]*
3. 2013 WGA Resolution on Endangered Species *[attached separately]*

ATTACHMENT 1: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. The ESA has not been reauthorized by Congress since 1988. Isn't it time to review and amend this law, and will you work with the new Congress to do so?

A. When WGA issued its resolution last year calling for revision of the Endangered Species Act, it emphasized that this should be done in a way that achieves broad bipartisan support and maintains the intent of the law. We all know how difficult that will be, but if the new Congress elects to tackle this issue in a broad bipartisan way, we will of course be at the table offering constructive suggestions. In the meantime, however, there are many things that can be done administratively to improve the implementation of the ESA by engaging the states more effectively, incentivizing voluntary conservation efforts, and increasing predictability. We are working on a number of those things now and would welcome the opportunity to work with WGA to identify other initiatives of that character.

Q. In order for the delisting of wolves in Idaho and Montana to be accomplished, Congress had to step in and direct that outcome. Would you support Congress doing so now with respect to wolves in Wyoming?

A. We share Wyoming's strong disappointment with the recent court ruling that overturned our decision delisting wolves in Wyoming, despite the court's acknowledgement that the Wyoming wolf population had recovered. We believe that Wyoming should be managing this recovered population and are exploring all potential ways to enable it to do so.

Q. Given the federal government's shrinking resources and its meager record of recovering species, wouldn't it be better simply to return the responsibility of managing endangered species back to the states?

A. No, I believe it is essential that both the federal and state governments work together closely to identify and recover imperiled species. And by the way, together we are making some important progress. California condors, black-footed ferrets, and Mexican wolves were all completely gone from the wild only a few decades ago. All of them have now been restored to the wild, where they are successfully reproducing. They are still endangered, but their prospects for a secure future have never been stronger. As for the number of species that have been recovered and taken off the list, yes that number is still small, but is growing. Already in the Obama administration, more species have taken off the list due to recovery than in any prior administration.

Q. You have been accused of being party to "sue and settle" tactics in which you agree to list hundreds of new species at the behest of litigious environmental groups in closed door negotiations. What do you say in response?

A. Congress gave citizens the right to petition us to list species, and Congress directed us to make findings on those petitions within specified time frames. When the Obama administration took office, there were hundreds of species for which the statutory deadlines had already passed. We took the initiative to consolidate the many lawsuits that had been filed in response to those missed deadlines, and hammered out agreements that set an orderly schedule for working through that backlog over a period of years. We did not agree to list any of the species covered by those agreements; we simply agreed to a schedule upon which we would make our decisions. Most importantly, in making those decisions, the right of the public to comment and to participate in our decision-making process was fully preserved.

Q. Success in recovering endangered species often depends upon voluntary actions, particularly by private landowners. Your Fish and Wildlife Service seems to be unwilling to recognize and credit such voluntary measures when it decides whether to list species. Shouldn't it do so?

A. Actually, the Service does recognize and encourage voluntary actions by private landowners and others. The decision last year not to list the dunes sagebrush lizard in New Mexico and Texas was in direct response to the many voluntary landowner agreements that had been developed for that species. More recently, the decision not to list the Arctic grayling fish in Montana was based in large part on the voluntary conservation measures put in place for it. Progress in conserving species like the Oregon chub – currently proposed for delisting – is being made through voluntary Safe Harbor Agreements with private landowners. Ranchers in Oregon and Wyoming are enrolling in Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances to help conserve the greater sage-grouse, and those agreements will be fully taken into account when the Service decides next year whether to propose that species for listing.

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

WGA WINTER MEETING – WESTERN LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

DATE: December 5-7, 2014
FROM: BLM
SUBJECT: Western Land Management Issues

This Information Memorandum serves to inform the Secretary of Western Land Management issues in preparation for the Western Governors Association meeting in Las Vegas, NV, December 5 – 7, 2014.

BACKGROUND

The BLM has been at the forefront of several western land management challenges including drought, grazing, wild horses and burros, transmission, hydraulic fracturing and other energy-related rulemakings. States and their respective Governors' offices have been integrally involved in many of these issues.

DISCUSSION

Drought

The west has been suffering from a drought that is expected to persist or intensify across many of the public land grazing allotments that support traditional livestock production. Drought continues to be a serious condition with portions of California, Nevada and Oregon particularly affected. Recent rainfall has ameliorated the drought somewhat in Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado, while Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and eastern Nevada show mild improvement in overall condition. Drought can adversely affect the livelihood and enjoyment of all public land users, as well as many of the BLM's programs, including recreation, fire management, forestry, and mining. Additionally, drought has serious impacts on the habitat supporting sage grouse and wild horses and burros. Steps taken by the BLM include:

- Development and implementation of a landscape-scale approach to managing the public lands that focuses on landscape change agents including drought, fire, invasive species, energy development, and legacy disturbances from historic land use practices.
- Updating its national policy on drought in 2013 and some BLM State and District Offices, including several in Nevada, developed handbooks and drought management plans to ensure consistency in developing responsive actions.
- Partnering with USGS to initiate an interagency collaborative on the Human Dimensions of Climate Change to inform management decisions.

Grazing

Ranchers have experienced particular hardship as a result of the prolonged drought. The BLM continues to work closely with grazing permittees to seek voluntary changes in grazing practices, which may include temporary removals, grazing rotations as well as requiring water hauling or allowing temporary use of rest pastures. For example, in Nevada the BLM permits

almost 2.1 million Animal Unit Months annually and to date over 480,000 AUMS have been voluntarily not used by permittees in response to site-specific resource conditions.

Wild Horses and Burros

The Wild Horse and Burro Program has reached a crisis point due to

- Rapid population growth of herds on the range,
- Limited pasture and corral space for animals taken off the range,
- Decreased adoption demand and
- Spiraling program costs.

The BLM is working on long-term solutions to address this crisis. Key steps include:

- Using aggressive population growth suppression methods to suppress the rapid expansion of on-range populations;
- Seeking additional holding space to address short-term needs; and
- Conducting priority gathers only.

Quick facts:

- Wild horses and burros have no predators; their populations increase about 20% per year, can double every 4 years and triple every 6 years.
- 50,000 animals on the range in Herd Management Areas (22,000 animals over Appropriate Management Level)
- 48,000 animals in long-term open pastures and short-term corrals.
- FY14 the BLM paid more than \$43 million for off-range care.

Transmission Overview and Rapid Response Transmission Team

The BLM oversees the largest portfolio of transmission projects among the nine Federal agencies on the Rapid Response Team for Transmission (RRTT). The BLM is lead agency on four of seven transmission pilot projects identified as priorities by the Administration in October 2011. In 2011, Chair Sutley (CEQ), Secretary Salazar, Secretary Chu (DOE), and Secretary Vilsack (USDA) selected seven pilot transmission projects for the Rapid Response Team for Transmission (RRTT) to apply new concepts of collaboration and accountability.

Since January 2009, the BLM has also approved 75 major transmission projects (100 kV and larger), totaling over 2,300 miles, with 1,300 miles on BLM-administered lands. Currently, there are 20 pending major transmission projects and the BLM is the lead or co-lead for 17. Pending projects total nearly 5,000 miles with approximately 1,700 miles on BLM-administered lands. These projects involve over 50 field offices in 11 states. The BLM has undertaken a variety of efforts to improve coordination and expedite environmental reviews and permitting actions. This includes holding recurring calls with headquarters, state office and field office personnel; expanding staffing; revising training; and issuing updated policy and guidance.

The BLM is in the process of permitting four of the seven RRTT transmission lines:

- *Gateway West*, a joint project of Idaho Power and Rocky Mountain Power. This proposed 1,150 mile, 500kV AC transmission line starts at the Windstar, WY. Substation and terminates at the Hemingway, ID Substation. (Glenrock, WY; Melba, ID)

- *SunZia*, a project of SunZia Transmission, LLC. This proposed 460 mile double 500kV AC transmission line starts at the SunZia East, NM Substation and terminates at the Pinal Central, AZ substation. (Corona, NM; Coolidge, AZ)
- *Boardman-Hemingway*, a project of Idaho Power. This 300 mile, 500kV AC transmission line starts at the Grassland, OR substation and terminates at the Hemingway, ID substation (Boardman, OR; Melba, ID)
- *TransWest Express*, a project of TransWest Express, LLC. This 765 mile, 600kV DC transmission line starts at the Aeolus, WY substation and terminates at the Marketplace, NV substation. (Rawlins, WY; Las Vegas, NV)

Hydraulic Fracturing

The BLM published a proposed hydraulic fracturing rule in August 2013, on which more than 1.35 million comments were received. Based on the analysis of the comments received, the BLM modified the regulatory text and the preamble of the final rule for consideration. The proposed rules have focused on addressing chemical disclosure, wellbore integrity and flowback fluid management as the key issues for sound hydraulic fracturing development. Most of these issues are not adequately addressed in the BLM's existing, 30-year-old regulations. The BLM intends to submit to OMB a final version, ready for publication in the *Federal Register*, by end of December, 2014.

Venting and Flaring

The BLM is working to develop rules on venting and flaring that should be published in 2015. Current regulations date back 30 years and do not reflect the technologies that have led to this proliferation of domestic energy production. Guided by existing Federal, tribal and state rules along with industry best practices, this regulatory effort will set an environmental baseline standard across Federal and Indian trust lands. Natural gas that is vented into the atmosphere or burned – or flared – during oil and gas development represents a natural resource that is lost without generating royalties for the public and without being used as a productive fuel source. The purpose of new regulations would be to establish appropriate standards to reduce waste and to promote the conservation of produced oil and gas. DOI and BLM have undertaken outreach to tribal and state governments, stakeholders and the public to discuss and help shape the regulation of venting and flaring from oil and gas development.

In addition to the venting and flaring issue, there is also an issue with the on-lease use of gas. In 2009, the Office of the Inspector General issued a report that expressed concern that there is inadequate accountability or verification of this on-lease use of the natural gas (called beneficial use deductions) by oil and gas operators. A year later, in 2010, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommended that specific steps be taken to reduce the amount of vented and flared natural gas. The GAO estimated that 9 to 10 percent of the gas currently being vented or flared could be conserved. At the time, the GAO estimated the lost royalties from public lands amounted to about \$23 million per year, based on its conclusion that approximately 126 billion cubic feet (Bcf) was vented or flared from all sources on Federal onshore leases annually.

There are environmental benefits to reducing venting and flaring as well. The practice of flaring produces carbon dioxide, a known greenhouse gas. And when natural gas is vented, and simply released into the air, it's an even more potent greenhouse gas – by some estimates 20 times more

effective of retaining heat than carbon dioxide. According to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates, methane – the main component of natural gas – accounts for 9 percent of all domestic greenhouse gas emissions, and that almost a third of that volume comes from oil and gas operations. The BLM is looking at the various points along the production chain for oil and natural gas to see where some of this loss is occurring and if it is reasonable to require that the loss be minimized.

Onshore Orders

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is updating and improving the current versions of Onshore Oil and Gas Orders (Order) for:

- Site Security (Order 3);
- Oil Measurement (Order 4); and
- Gas Measurement (Order 5);

The primary purpose for these updates is to keep pace with changing industry practices and emerging and new technologies, and respond to recommendations from the Government Accountability Office, the U.S. Department of the Interior (Department) Office of the Inspector General, and the Department's Subcommittee on Royalty Management. In 1989, the BLM last updated the Orders which regulate site security for production accountability and the measurement of oil and gas. The Orders will be combined into a single regulatory package for codification in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and published as a proposed rule.

On April 24-25, 2013, the BLM held a tribal and public forum to inform industry, tribal members, and the public, of some of the possible revisions to Onshore Orders 3, 4, and 5. In addition to the verbal comments expressed at the forum, the BLM received 13 comment letters from producers, purchasers, and equipment vendors. The BLM is currently reviewing and analyzing those comments to further refine the proposed rule.

The BLM intends the proposed revisions to strengthen the requirements of the BLM and to update BLM regulations to reflect changes in technology and industry practices.

Order 3 establishes minimum standards for ensuring that oil and gas produced from Federal and Indian (except the Osage Tribe) oil and gas leases is properly and securely handled, so as to prevent theft and loss and to enable accurate measurement and production accountability. The revised Order would address the use of seals, by-passes around meters, documentation, reporting of incidents of unauthorized removal or mishandling of oil and condensate, facility diagrams, recordkeeping, facility measurement points, commingling, and off-lease measurement by operators, purchasers, and transporters.

Orders 4 and 5 establish minimum standards for accurate measurement and proper reporting of all oil and gas produced from Federal and Indian leases. These Orders include requirements for the measurement equipment and procedures needed to ensure accurate and verifiable measurement on which royalty is based. Industry measurement specialists and field technicians would primarily use these Orders, as well as BLM inspectors and engineers.

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

WGA WINTER MEETING - DRECP

DATE: December 5-7th, 2014
FROM: Jim Kenna, California State Director, Bureau of Land Management
SUBJECT: Desert Renewable Energy and Conservation Plan (DRECP)

The Desert Renewable Energy and Conservation Plan (DRECP) is a landscape-scale collaborative planning effort between state and federal agencies in California. The DRECP will advance conservation goals in the desert regions of California while also facilitating the timely permitting of renewable energy projects in appropriate areas. The DRECP planning area covers 22.5 million acres of public and private lands in Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego Counties, including 10 million public land acres. The plan covers solar, wind, and geothermal energy and transmission.

BACKGROUND

Renewable energy is a top priority for the Department of the Interior and the State of California. California has a 33 percent Renewable Portfolio Standard, the highest in the nation. The Energy Policy Act of 2005, Secretarial Order 3285, and the President's Climate Action Plan direct the Interior Department to prioritize renewable energy permitting on public lands. Building on this common priority, the BLM, US Fish and Wildlife Service, California Energy Commission, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife have been working together as the Renewable Energy Action Team (REAT) since 2008. The REAT agencies have successfully cooperated on renewable energy permitting, approving 17 solar and wind projects on public lands managed by the BLM in California over the past six years.

In 2008 the agencies agreed to prepare a plan to streamline renewable energy and transmission permitting while conserving biological and natural resources, recreation, cultural areas and other values in the southern California desert.

The DRECP has two broad sets of goals:

- Renewable Energy and Transmission Streamlining: The plan identifies specific Development Focus Areas with high-quality renewable energy potential, access to transmission, and where impacts can be managed and mitigated. These areas will:
 - o Provide more permitting certainty
 - o Have reduced survey and mitigation requirements in many cases
 - o Provide land sufficient to produce more than 20,000 megawatts
 - o Help California meet its renewable energy and climate change goals through 2040

- Desert Conservation: The DRECP is designed to:
 - o Meet federal General Conservation Plan standards
 - o Meet California Natural Community Conservation Plan standards
 - o Add between 1.6 and 5.3 million acres of BLM lands to the National Landscape Conservation System, meeting the requirements of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-11),
 - o Address species, ecosystem and climate adaptation requirements for more than 30 species and 30 natural communities covered by the plan
 - o Protect recreation areas, cultural areas, scenic values, and other desert resources
 - o Integrate public land mitigation actions (including grazing retirements) into landscape planning across multiple jurisdictions.

The DRECP includes three components that will combine to achieve these goals: a BLM Land Use Plan Amendment, a General Conservation Plan under the Endangered Species Act, and a Natural Communities Conservation Plan under the California Natural Communities Conservation Planning Act.

The BLM Land Use Plan Amendment would apply to the approximately 10 million acres of BLM-managed public lands in the DRECP Planning Area. The Land Use Plan Amendments would designate Development Focus Areas for solar, wind, and geothermal development on public lands; National Conservation Lands within the CDCA in accordance with the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009; existing, modified, and new Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; wildlife allocations; and existing, modified, and new Special Recreation Management Areas. The DRECP Land Use Plan Amendment also includes Conservation and Management Actions for the management of these designations.

Plan Alternatives

The DRECP's Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) analyzed the five action alternatives, plus No Action:

- *Preferred Alternative*. Renewable energy development distributed across the Plan Area; moderate development flexibility. Approximately 2 million acres of development focus areas (367,000 acres of BLM land), plus 183,000 acres of variance lands (106,000 acres on BLM land) needing more study for development suitability. Nearly 4 million acres identified as National Conservation Lands.

NEXT STEPS

The draft DRECP and associated draft EIS/EIR were released to the public on September 23, 2014. The Federal Register notice published on September 26 to begin a 90-day public comment period. Informational webinars and numerous in-person public meetings were held throughout the planning area and surrounding population centers. The next Tribal Federal Leadership Conference is scheduled for December 11, 2014. In response to public requests, the public comment period on the draft DRECP was extended an additional 45 day, through February 23, 2015.

ATTACHMENTS

DRECP Brochure [*attached separately*]