

can be found on the project Web site at <http://www.gunnison-gorge-eis.com>. In addition to the 16 Planning Criteria, The Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Act of 1999 (Pub. L. 106-76, October 21, 1999), the Wilderness Act, public land health standards, as well as other requirements to maintain scenic values, recreational values and meet public recreation demands are additional criteria applied during the process.

The DRMP/EIS recommends the retention of an existing Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and the designation of new ACECs in the various alternatives. Under all alternatives, the effects of retaining and/or recommending designations of ACECs regarding restrictions in surface disturbing activities will occur only to the degree necessary to prevent damage and disturbance to the features and resources for which the area was designated. ACEC recommendations are as follows:

In Alternative A (Continuation of Current Management): The existing designation of the 161-acre Fairview Research Natural Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern (RNA/ACEC) is retained.

In Alternative B (Conservation): (1) The existing designation of the 161-acres Fairview Research Natural Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern (RNA/ACEC) is retained; (2) The Gunnison Sage Grouse Important Bird Area/ACEC (IBA/ACEC—16,531 acres outside the NCA boundary) is recommended for designation. The nomination was made by the public collaboration group. The lands are currently being managed according to the existing *Gunnison Sage Grouse Conservation Plan, Crawford Area, Colorado*; (3) Mancos Shale ACEC/Research Natural Area (19,797 acres inside NCA) is recommended for designation by USGS and BLM; (4) Relic Tree ACEC/Outstanding Natural Area (387 acres inside the NCA) is nominated for designation by a public collaboration group and former Management Framework Plan; (5) Native Plant Community ACEC/Outstanding Natural Area (4,577 acres inside NCA) is nominated for designation by The Nature Conservancy, and (6) Gunnison and North Fork Rivers ACEC, 2,702 acres outside the NCA, nominated by the focus group and BLM.

In Alternative C (Mixed Use): The existing designation of the 161-acre Fairview Research Natural Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern (RNA/ACEC) is retained.

In Alternative D (Agency Preferred Alternative): (1) The existing designation of the 161-acre Fairview Research Natural Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern (RNA/ACEC) is retained; (2) The Gunnison Sage Grouse Important Bird Area/ACEC (IBA/ACEC—16,531 acres outside the NCA boundary and 5,669 acres inside the NCA boundary for 22,200 acres total) would be recommended for designation. The same values and features as described in Alternative B are contained in the area; and, (3) Native Plant Community ACEC/ACEC/Outstanding Natural Area (3,785 acres inside NCA) is nominated for designation by The Nature Conservancy.

Dated: December 19, 2002.

Allan J. Belt,

Manager, Uncompahgre Field Office.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

General Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement, Canyon De Chelly National Monument, Arizona

AGENCY: National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the general management plan, Canyon De Chelly National Monument.

SUMMARY: Under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Park Service is preparing an environmental impact statement for the general management plan for Canyon De Chelly National Monument. The environmental impact statement will be approved by the Director, Intermountain Region.

Canyon de Chelly National Monument is in Apache County, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation. The monument was authorized by Congress on February 14, 1931, following approval of the monument by the Navajo Tribal Council. Congress charged the National Park Service with the “* * * care, maintenance, preservation, and restoration of the prehistoric ruins, or other features of scientific or historical interest.” The National Park Service was also given the right to provide improvements for the “* * *. administration and protection of the monument * * *,” and for the “* * *. care and accommodation of visitors.”

The general management plan will prescribe the resource conditions,

visitor experiences, and the nature of the relationship with the Navajo Nation and canyon community that are to be achieved and maintained in the monument over the next 15 to 20 years. The clarification of what must be achieved according to law and policy will be based on review of the monument’s purpose, significance, special mandates, and the body of laws and policies directing monument management. Management decisions to be made where law, policy, or regulations do not provide clear guidance or limits will be based on the purposes of the monument, the range of public expectations and concerns, resource analysis, an evaluation of the natural, cultural, and social impacts of alternative courses of action, and consideration of long-term economic costs. Based on determinations of desired conditions, the general management plan will outline the kinds of resource management activities, visitor activities, and development that would be appropriate in the monument in the future. Alternatives will be developed through this planning process and will include, at a minimum, no-action and the preferred alternative.

Major issues include protection of natural and cultural resources; the adequacy of interpretive programs; and potential partnerships with the Navajo Nation and associated American Indian communities, as well as other agencies, organizations, and local interests.

DATES: The National Park Service will conduct public scoping for 60 days from the date of publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. Open house meetings regarding the general management plan will be held during the public scoping period. Specific dates, times, and locations will be announced in the local media and will also be available by contacting the Superintendent of Canyon De Chelly National Monument.

ADDRESSES: Throughout the scoping and planning process information will be available for public review and comment in the office of the superintendent (Scott Travis, Canyon De Chelly National Monument, PO Box 588, Chinle, AZ 86503).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Superintendent Scott Travis, Canyon De Chelly National Monument, PO Box 588, Chinle, AZ 86503; Tel: (928) 674-5500; FAX: (928) 674-5507; e-mail: scott_travis@nps.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: If you wish to comment on the general management planning process for Canyon de Chelly National Monument, or on any issues associated with the