

Request for Waiver of Time and Page Limits under S.O. 3355

To: Office of the Deputy Secretary

Through: Brian C. Steed
Deputy Director, Policy and Programs

From: Jamie Connell, BLM Colorado State Director

Date: October 30, 2019

- 1. Bureau or Office Name:** Bureau of Land Management
- 2. Title of Document:** Uncompahgre Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Colorado (Uncompahgre RMP/FEIS).
- 3. Description of Action:** The Uncompahgre RMP/FEIS will replace the 1989 Uncompahgre Basin RMP and portions of the 1985 San Juan and San Miguel RMP to address emerging resource issues and legislative changes. The Uncompahgre RMP/EIS proposes management actions and analyzes the effect of various resource uses on the human environment. The plan considers five alternatives and one sub-alternative for managing over 675,000 surface acres of public land and 971,220 acres of subsurface mineral estate administered by the BLM in parts of Delta, Gunnison, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel counties in southwestern Colorado. The BLM anticipates releasing the Proposed RMP/Final EIS on May 31, 2019 and the Record of Decision (ROD)/Approved RMP on August 27, 2019.
- 4. Time waiver:** **Page waiver:** *(check all that apply)*
- 5. Description of Reason for Request:** BLM Colorado requests a waiver for the time limit, because the Uncompahgre RMP/EIS analyzes particularly complex and controversial issues, such as management of public minerals including fluid, solid, and other resources; livestock grazing, big game migration corridors and significant recreation and wildlife issues. Since the start of the planning process in 2009, the document has been circulated to cooperating agencies, who now have an expectation of the breadth of the document as well as the information it will present. A briefing with BLM leadership resulted in the need to revise the preferred alternatives and analysis. Further discussions with BLM leadership resulted in additional changes to align the preferred alternative with administration priorities. To address the concerns identified, the Uncompahgre Field Office made changes to management actions including reducing fluid mineral stipulations and restrictions, reducing rights-of-way restrictions, reducing areas managed as lands with wilderness characteristics, and reducing areas of environmental concern.

The Final EIS package is in the final stages of review, with all analysis and supporting documentation complete. It will be concurrently reviewed by the BLM Colorado State Office, Office of the Regional Solicitor and submitted for Washington Office review in a couple weeks. While the BLM UFO is working to expedite the schedule for the plan's completion to comply with timelines for publishing, land use planning regulations require a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review and a 30-day protest period. These review periods alone would consume much of the remaining timeline.

6. **Need and deadline (if any) for issuance of waiver(s) decision:** A decision on this waiver request is required concurrent with the publication of the Final EIS.
7. **Positions of affected stakeholders:** Eighteen agencies are participating in the RMP process as designated cooperating agencies.
8. **Other relevant considerations:** The Uncompahgre planning process began in 2009, when the BLM published a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS and initiated public scoping. While the BLM originally anticipated publishing the ROD within five years, the planning process was paused in January 2014 to facilitate completion of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment and to incorporate a citizen's proposed partial alternative pertaining to oil and gas leasing in the North Fork Valley of the Gunnison River (Alternative B1-Citizen's Alternative for the North Fork area). The Uncompahgre RMP process officially resumed in February 2015 and has been ongoing since then.

BLM Colorado received more than 52,000 comments during the 150-day public comment period (including a 60-day extension) of the Draft RMP/EIS, which affected timing of the effort.

9. **Attachments:** Milestone Timeline

Concur: _____ **Date:** _____

Non-Concur: _____ **Date:** _____

Uncompahgre Resource Management Plan Milestone Schedule

| Milestone | Target Date |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Revise PRMP/FEIS with adjusted Alternative E (PRMP) | In Progress |
| FO/DO/SO/SOL review of revised FEIS/PRMP; response to review | Late March-early April 2019 |
| DOI Review Team briefing and permission to publish | Mid-May 2019 |
| BLM and EPA publish NOAs in Federal Register | Late May 2019 |
| 30-Day Public Protest Period/60-Day Governor's Consistency Review | June and July 2019 |
| Protest resolution; consistency review resolution | July;early August 2019 |
| ROD and NOA package to DOI Review Team | Mid-August 2019 |
| DOI Review Team approves ROD publication | Mid-August 2019 |
| Sign ROD | Mid-August 2019 |