



THE STATE OF ARIZONA
GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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July 8, 2007

Ms. Elaine Zielinski, Director
Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Office
One North Central Avenue, Suite 800
Phoenix, Arizona 85004

Dear Director Zielinski:

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) appreciates the opportunity to have worked cooperatively with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in statewide planning efforts for the past several years. The Department is committed to participating as a Cooperating Agency in partnership with the BLM to develop and implement Resource Management Plans (RMP) and associated Travel Management Plans (TMP). The Department, by and through the Arizona Game and Fish Commission (Commission), has jurisdictional authority (Arizona Revised Statutes) for management of the state's wildlife resources, as well as safe watercraft and off-highway vehicle recreation, for the enjoyment, appreciation, and use by present and future generations. In order to further our commitment to these resources, the Commission would like to reiterate our concerns regarding those areas of planning that continue to remain uncertain, and/or are of vital importance to the Department.

The BLM and the Department face similar management challenges of growing scope and complexity when considering how increasing human populations affect land-use and strategic planning for the future of Arizona's resources, including fish and wildlife management and wildlife-related recreation. However, the implementation of specific allocations, as currently described in the RMPs, may restrict the ability of the public to access or enjoy their existing public lands and may result in unnecessary impacts to the state's statutory authority to manage fish and wildlife resources on BLM lands. Restrictions that result from such proposed allocations should be clearly identified in each Plan.

Public participation is the cornerstone in determining the needs for the future of public lands in Arizona. The length, complexity, and readability of the planning documents released thus far for public review and comment may have a negative impact on public participation. Feedback from several interest groups expressing frustration in the lack of time and ability to research and comprehend BLM policy and decisions within the RMPs heightens the Commission's concern regarding the public's ability to provide substantive comments.

In light of these overarching concerns, the following specific comments on both RMPs and TMPs are provided for your consideration:

Ms. Elaine Zielinski

July 8, 2007

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Land Management Planning

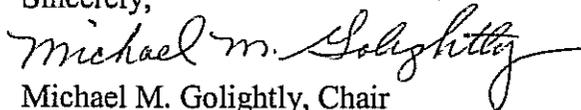
- On a statewide level, planning documents must be clear in their intent such that BLM personnel, as well as the general public, can interpret decisions or direction uniformly. Ensure clarifying language is included within plans of BLM terminology, policies, or direction to avoid misinterpretation in the future of how decisions or direction should be implemented on the ground, or how proposed actions may or may not be consistent with overarching RMPs.
- The Commission requests the ability of legally permitted hunters the use of motorized vehicles for the timely and efficient retrieval of downed big game to aid the Department in achieving management objectives and wildlife population goals, to avoid the unlawful waste of game meat, and to facilitate our Challenged Hunter Access/Mobility Permit (CHAMP) Program.
- The Commission does not support broadly limiting dispersed recreational uses, such as camping, firewood collection, recreational shooting, etc., but rather prefers site specific and/or enforcement remedies where multiple uses conflict.
- The Commission recognizes the authority and responsibility of the BLM to manage grazing and mineral resources, but does not support those activities conducted in a manner or to a degree which imperils local wildlife populations.

Travel Management Planning

- Coordination between the BLM and the Department is vital to ensure that route networks are evaluated and discussed to address wildlife management objectives, and to ensure reasonable public access.

The Commission appreciates your attention to these matters. Based on these comments and concerns, the Commission requests your commitment to ensure the Department is engaged, locally and statewide, in planning processes to the fullest extent possible. If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact Josh Avey, Habitat Branch Chief, at 602-789-3605.

Sincerely,



Michael M. Golightly, Chair
Arizona Game and Fish Commission

cc: Duane L. Shroufe, Director
BLM District Managers