

Transfer of Federally Managed Lands Study Committee  
Survey of Counties Land Management and Conditions

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This survey is being promulgated by the Transfer of Federally managed Lands Study Committee to gather information to evaluate the management of certain federal lands in Arizona, assessing risks, and identifying solutions.

**Please return your survey by March 22, 2016 to:**

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## COCHISE COUNTY

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS RESPONSE MARCH 21, 2016

Cochise County is located in the Southeastern corner of the State of Arizona, bordering both the Country of Mexico and the State of New Mexico. The County covers 6,219 square miles and is home to almost 130,000 residents. It is a destination tourist location, with over 200,000 visitors each year. We have two international Ports of Entry in the County, and it is estimated nearly 2,000,000 people legally enter the United States each year just between those two Ports to shop and work. \$7.3 million dollars per day on average is spent by Mexican visitors in Arizona. The tourism, agriculture, ranching and international trade dollar is critical to our region.

###

**A. PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)**

1. Do current wildfire conditions on federally managed lands within your county pose a significant threat to: [Check all that apply add percent or comments]

X Public Health and Safety  Public Property  Private Property

In recent years the county has experienced catastrophic wildfires that severely affected both public and private property, e.g., the Monument Fire in the Huachuca Mountains and the Horseshoe Fire in the Chiricahua Mountains. Factors contributing to these wildfires (drought conditions and unhealthy/excessive vegetation on both national forest and other public lands) still exist today and pose a continuing threat. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

The property of many private residential neighborhoods and businesses abut federally managed lands (i.e.; Coronado National Forest). The high fuel loads that have built up in areas of federally managed lands pose a significant life-safety and property threat to residents and businesses. **(Emergency Services Coordinator)**

Many of the federally managed lands preclude any fire management due to special designations, federal laws or regulations (i.e. National Parks, Fort Huachuca, designated Wilderness areas). In some instances, particularly around Sierra Vista, these properties form a barrier to providing protection for residential and businesses. On lands outside of these special designated lands, federal and state fire agencies have reduced fuel loads in and around Wildland Urban Interfaces. State, Federal, County and State entities have developed Firescape programs to educate landowners on reducing fuels. Fuel reduction projects have been ongoing for at least 10 years on the east side of the Huachuca Mts. In more recent years along the western edge of the Huachuca Mts. Some landowners have bought into these programs, while others decline and allow their properties to remain in an undisturbed state. As should be noted, local Forest Service protocol and funding is primarily dependent on Regional or National policy and funding availability. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

2. Do you believe fire hazard on federally managed lands should be reduced to protect public health and safety within your county? [Check all that apply add percent or comments]

X Yes

In my view there is a pressing need to treat both Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed public lands for reduction of hazardous fuel loads and to establish a more fire resilient landscape. This would not only better protect public health and safety but also contribute to improved watershed function. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

As mentioned above, the fuel current and future fuel loads in Wildland-Urban Interface (WIU) areas pose an increased hazard for large-scale wildfires. We've had this experience in the County previously with the Monument and Horseshoe Fires. **(Emergency Services Coordinator)**

Within the Sierra Vista area, those special designated lands mentioned above prevent adequate protection due to the immense amount of land that has been removed from fire. Once a fire such as the Monument Fire takes off and runs through lands that have not practiced, nor are off limits, to fire management practices it makes protection of Urban interfaces very difficult. Additionally, many of our catastrophic or very large fires have begun in Mexico during extremely windy periods and have jumped the border directly adjacent to non-fire managed lands such as National Park Service or Wilderness areas. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

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3. Regarding the water supply your citizens use, does current federal land management of watersheds:  
[Check all that apply add percent or comments]

X Optimize water yield  Diminish water yield  Have no impact

Fort Huachuca has undertaken extreme conservation measures and has decreased groundwater pumping on the fort by 67%. They have helped to optimize the water supply in the Sierra Vista Subwatershed. The US Forest Service (Coronado National Forest) and the National Park Service (Coronado National Monument and Chiricahua National Monument) have had no significant impact on water supply. **(Water Consultant)**

The Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has significantly impacted the water supply in the Sierra Vista Subwatershed (SVS), primarily with its management and/or failure to manage the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA). Since the designation of the NCA, BLM has increased riparian vegetation approximately 250% and then complains that the surface water levels in the San Pedro River are decreasing. The impact to surface water levels is caused by their water use for riparian vegetation that has increased by 250%. They are involved in litigation to limit development in the SVS even though they are the ones who have significantly impacted surface water levels. Research by the US Geological Survey shows that the cone of depression from pumping in the regional aquifer has yet to have measurable impact on surface water flows. **(Water Consultant)**

While there have been some good initiatives by federal agencies in support of healthy watersheds, they pale in comparison to the vast acres of unhealthy, eroded landscapes that reflect the long term cumulative effects of mismanagement and neglect. On balance, federal land management practices in the county have not adequately promoted on-the-ground treatments necessary to support and improve healthy watersheds. As an example, on March 21, 2014, a field trip was conducted by the BLM to review rangeland conditions and grazing allotments as part of the development of alternatives for the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) Resource Management Plan. It was possible to view BLM managed lands that were adjacent to lands managed by a grazing permittee. The BLM managed lands were heavily overgrown with invasive weeds such as whitethorn and had spotty grass cover. In contrast, the permittee managed lands across the road had healthy grass cover due to the permittee's use of herbicides to eliminate invasive weeds and to foster growth of native grasses. In my view, the permittee managed lands were far superior in terms of supporting healthy watershed function. This was also seen on several other allotments during the field trip. In fact, on the Babocamari Allotment, the private landowner's management practices resulted in recovery of spring flow and a much improved riparian area. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

4. How important is it for people of your county to have motorized access to public lands for sustenance activities such as gathering wood, picking mushrooms and berries, hiking, harvesting wild game, CAMPING OR PICNICING etc.?

X Very Important

Federal public lands comprise a large portion of Cochise County real estate. Included are forest lands in four ranger districts of the Coronado National Forest (Sierra Vista, Douglas, Safford, and Santa Catalina Ranger Districts), BLM managed lands within the Tucson Field Office, three units managed by the National Park Service (Coronado National Memorial, Fort Bowie National Historic Site, and Chiricahua National Monument), and the San Bernadino National Wildlife Refuge managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

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These lands are very important to county residents and visitors for their diverse range of recreational opportunities and multiple uses. Motorized access is critical to the public's ability to enjoy these lands, particularly considering the far ranging, remote locations of destinations used by the public. A robust system of transportation routes on federal public lands is a necessary foundation for the public's ability to visit the many recreational attractions, historic sites, and scenic landscapes of Cochise County. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

Public access to the natural amenities of Cochise County is a major attraction to residents, tourists, and businesses. Restricting motorized access (especially off-road vehicles) will negatively impact the County and overall quality of life. **(Emergency Services Coordinator)**

5. Is there an adequate supply of motorized roads on federally managed lands in your county to accommodate emergency ingress/egress for search and rescue, facility maintenance, public access, and resource management? [Check all that apply add percent or comments]

X No

In recent years, both the Forest Service and BLM have embarked on developing travel management plans for public lands within the county. Draft plans have been published by the Coronado National Forest that propose dramatic reductions in National Forest System Roads, many of which have provided historic access to existing and previous generations of forest users for a wide range of recreational activities, e.g., hunting, camping, hiking, wildlife viewing, backcountry touring, etc. Of major concern is that in many cases, the existing system of forest roads is already inadequate and would be further reduced by proposed travel management plans. In the Whetstone Mountains unit of the Coronado National Forest, there is only one legal access road that provides public access to the forest (Dry Canyon). Virtually all of this mountain range is landlocked by state or private lands and lacks adequate motorized access for resource management including fuels reduction, emergency ingress/egress for search and rescue, and public access for recreation. When the public is unable to access federal lands, it is most probable that those lands become the haven for drug smugglers and other illegal activities. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

Public Safety access must not be compromised by further restricting access routes. This was researched significantly in the County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This is currently being discussed under the proposed Traffic Management Plan for the Douglas Ranger District of the Coronado National Forest. **(Emergency Services Coordinator)**

I am in complete agreement that motorized travel on federally managed lands is vital and, in some areas such as the Whetstone Mts, are very limited due to the reasons mentioned by another PLAC Member above. On the other hand, some public lands are becoming decimated due to the illegal use of off road vehicles. These roads were not historical roads utilized for emergency response, maintenance, public access or recreation. Closure of roads that produce severe resource damage, are a hindrance to public safety, recreation or travel, and have no long term standing have been designated for closure and, by doing so, benefit those wanting to enjoy the beauty and health of our public lands. Developing roads up every canyon and on top of every ridge is not responsible, nor will it benefit multi-use recreational access which has become, and needs to become, a primary concern and point of emphasis. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

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6. Regarding multiple-use recreational access routes on federally managed lands, does your county desire: [Check all that apply add percent or comments]

X  Increased Multi-Use Access

There are distinct benefits the county could derive from increased multi-use access. Inadequate motorized access limits the potential for tourism and recreation and constrains the economic productivity of public lands. In other areas of the country, a system of motorized recreational trails on national forest lands has boosted the economies of nearby rural communities. Examples are the Paiute Trail in Utah and the Hatfield–McCoy off-highway vehicle trail system in West Virginia. With abundant federal lands and a year round favorable climate, Cochise County could easily attract more tourism from the development of motorized trails in appropriate locations on federal lands. Motorized trails would also benefit other users who value recreational access for hunting, camping, hiking, wildlife viewing, etc. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

Better recreational and public safety access to federal lands is always preferred. **(Emergency Services Coordinator)**

7. Do you know the quantity of federally manages acres in your county? What agency administers policies over that land and what percentage is that of your county?

X  Yes

**Office of the Cochise County Assessor** 6219 Sq.  
Miles  
**Cochise County-Total Acreage as of 10/03/2013** 3,980,538

Entity	Percentage	Acreage	Totals
State Trust Land	34.66%	1,379,654	ac
National Forest	12.33%	490,800	ac
BLM	9.94%	395,665	ac
Ft Huachuca	2.16%	85,980	ac
Willcox Bombing	0.55%	21,893	ac
National Park Service	0.44%	17,514	ac
San Bernadino Land Grant	0.05%	1,990	ac
Private Land	39.87%	1,587,041	ac 3,980,538

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**B. ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)**

1. Do you believe current fuel loads on any of the federally managed lands within your county could result in severe, uncontrollable, or catastrophic wildfires? (If so, provide, if practicable, geographic location and approximate acreage in an attachment) [Add percent or comments]

X  Yes

The Forest Service and Ft. Huachuca conduct regular controlled burns on their lands. The BLM has not had a controlled burn in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) in years, and should do those regularly. A fire on BLM land could cause catastrophic damage to homes and businesses in our County. **(Water Consultant)**

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See also the response to A1 and A2. In my view, the following locations harbor excessive fuel loads and pose a danger for severe wildfires: Huachuca Mountains, Chiricahua Mountains, Whetstone Mountains, and the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

Any specially designated lands that prohibit fuel and fire management result in the potential for uncontrollable, catastrophic wildfires (i.e. Wilderness areas, National Parks, higher elevations of Fort Huachuca which are not designated Wilderness, but are not utilized for regular or high intensity training, SPRNCA). **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

2. Is a high intensity wildfire on federally managed lands likely to cause a loss of important fish & wildlife habitat or harm to Threatened or Endangered Species in your county (e.g. Apache Trout, Spiked Dace, Loach Minnows, black-footed ferret)? [Check all that apply add percent or comments]

X Yes

I believe it is likely that high intensity wildfires on federal public lands could harm Threatened or Endangered Species given the presence of such species throughout the county. For example, Mexican Spotted Owl habitat within national forest lands in the county is vulnerable to severe wildfires. The Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Revision of the Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (October 2013) states the following on p. 235: "Southwestern forests have experienced larger and more severe wildfires from 1995 to present. Climate variability combined with dense forest conditions may also synergistically result in increased negative effects to habitat from fire. The intensification of natural drought cycles and the ensuing stress placed upon overstocked forested habitats could result in even larger and more severe fires in Mexican spotted owl habitat." **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

In many instances, the listing of various species of flora and fauna as Threatened/Endangered or with special designations prevents fire management due to NEPA regulations, USFWS protocol, air quality standards or litigation from environmental groups. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

3. Are environmental threats such as noxious weeds, invasive species and bark beetle adequately controlled on federal lands within your county?

X No

I believe that noxious weeds and invasive species are a growing menace to the health of federal public lands in Cochise County. See also the response to A3. In addition, there is an increased vulnerability to bark beetle damage on federal lands due to the cumulative effects of excessive tree density, high fuel loading, drought, warmer temperatures, and tree damage from severe wildfires. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

Private lands (ranchers/farmers) have done a good job controlling or attempting to control invasive weeds off of their property, but it's a serious problem on Federal land specifically BLM managed land. **(Cochise County Survey Group)**

4. Does the air quality in your county fall below acceptable health standards due to smoke originating from wild fires and/or prescribed burns on federally managed lands?

X Yes

Although fires and controlled burns have a significant impact where/when they occur locally, County air quality monitoring does not indicate this is a huge problem on a regular basis. This is only due to the fact that there are very few controlled burns on Federal lands and our air is not impacted negatively on a

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consistent basis by automobile or other commercial pollution. **(Health Director and Environmental Consultant joint comment)**

I believe that air quality is usually within acceptable limits. However, high levels of smoke from prescribed burns or wildfires could pose localized impacts to health. The Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Revision of the Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (October 2013) states the following on p. 201: "PM2.5 in smoke is of paramount importance because these fine particles are known to lodge deep in the human respiratory system and are quite difficult to expel (USDA FS 2002). Consequently, they can have significant impacts on the health and well-being of sensitive populations, such as the elderly, young children, and persons with lung disease or compromised immune systems." **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

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**C. ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY AND SUSTAINABILITY: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)**

1. Is the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT revenues) your county derives from federally managed lands equivalent to the amount that actual land taxation of that these lands would bring? (Present Current fall 2015 revenue)

Yes Please provide actual amount received and estimate PILT as a percentage of your county budget.

2015 federal year PILT funds \$2,117,677 which is 4% of the FY15 County General Fund Budget and 1.5% of the total County Budget. **(Deputy Finance Director)**

2. Are there any federally managed lands in your county for which you do not receive PILT payments? Please be specific: acreage name of facility etc. (e.g. Indian reservations, National Parks)

Yes

The PILT acreage of 901,148 does not include Ft. Huachcua or Willcox Bombing (Military establishments). **(Deputy Finance Director)**

3. Is the amount your county derives from the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funds equivalent to the amount that your county could derive from responsible harvest or extraction of natural resources?

No Please provide actual amount received and estimate SRS as a percentage of county budget (include present short fall).

2015 Secure Rural Schools funds was \$372,598, which is split evenly between Highways and a Special Revenue Schools' Fund. This is 1.6% of the County highway budget and the Schools Fund is passed through to various rural schools outside the county budget. The total is .25% of the total County Budget. **(Deputy Finance Director)**

4. Is the economic productivity and number of related private sector jobs commensurate with the resource production capacity of the federally managed lands within your county? (Forestry, mining, ranching, recreation management)

No

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5. Are federal policies for Threatened or Endangered Species adversely impacting private land owners, businesses, industries, or citizens within your county? (Species details and / or details where possible)

Yes  
 No

As noted in A.3. above, the BLM is in litigation against development in the SVS. They are attempting to use the Endangered Species Act and federal reserve water rights as the basis for limiting development. In addition, they are using the Assured Water Supply requirements of the State of Arizona as another factor in the desire to limit development in the SVS. They are stating that, due to federal reserve water rights for the SPRNCA, there is not a 100 year assured water supply, even though the aquifer has 100s if not 1000s of years of supply available. This litigation has halted all significant development in the SVS while it is fought in the courts. **(Water Consultant)**

Due to pressure from environmental organizations that want to see US military bases, including Huachuca, closed, several petitions to list threatened and endangered species and designate critical habitat on or near Fort Huachuca are generated yearly. These petitions are not based on science. Normally the species petitioned for listing are plants, springsnails, tree frogs, insects, birds or mammals that are rare and unstudied. Lack of data results in listing too many species. Many of the species listed are common in Mexico and rarely travel north into the USA. The species are not threatened or endangered in their core area. Our County is at the northern fringe of the range for many species from Mexico. Examples include but are not limited to the jaguar, Mexican garter snake, lesser long-nosed bat, ocelot, water umbel, and numerous small cyprinid fish. **(Environmental Consultant)**

Federal policies for Threatened or Endangered Species seem to be largely driven and influenced by special interest groups outside of the county. Impacts to private landowners and citizens are frequently not fully considered. For example, the proposed introduction of a Mexican wolf population to Cochise County would very likely result in cattle depredation and economic losses to ranchers due to an inadequate prey base in the county. Designation of critical habitat for the jaguar along the east side of the Huachuca Mountains within Cochise County did not fully consider the high level of human use and recreation that occurs along the east side canyons (e.g. Ramsey Canyon, Carr Canyon, and Brown Canyon). **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

6. Has federally managed land management resulted in adverse impacts to your county's economy? (details where possible)

Yes  
 No

The Horseshoe II and Monument fires denuded hundreds of thousands of acres of steep upper watersheds, causing vastly increased floods and sediment transport OFF the forest, onto private property and public infrastructure. Since the damage occurred outside federal lands, the forest took no responsibility for any damage and contributed nothing to repair/mitigation costs or damages caused. Over \$1million dollars in County infrastructure damage has been documented in 2014 as a direct result of still denuded Chiricahua watersheds within National Forest and damaged land's response to heavy tropical storm rains in September 2015. Other instances can be claimed. **(Director of Highways and Floodplains, P.E.)**

The Horseshoe II fire burned 222,954 acres and destroyed over 20 buildings at a cost of \$52,000,000. The Monument Fire burned more than 32,000 acres and destroyed more than 80 buildings at a cost of \$20,411,500. **(Cochise County)**

The City of Sierra Vista, Cochise County and Fort Huachuca spend considerable time and money

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coordinating with various federal land management agencies. However, the federal agencies do not put enough weight on coordination with local government. Instead they tend to weigh the possibility of a lawsuit from an environmental organization more in their decision making. **(Environmental Consultant)**

Federal land management policies have constrained the economic potential of the county's natural resources. Policies tend to promote an over emphasis on expanding habitat for threatened and endangered species or protecting natural resources from human uses. Federal public lands within the county have good potential to attract additional tourism and recreation but federal policies are limiting that potential by continued lack of visitor friendly infrastructure and recreational opportunities. For example, visitors to the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) are limited to day use due to the lack of campgrounds. Campgrounds could encourage visitors to stay longer in the community. In addition, some roads in the SPRNCA were closed by the BLM but could serve as backcountry byways to offer visitors a way to visit scenic portions of the SPRNCA "backcountry". Not all visitors can hike for long distances and motorized access would support additional tourism opportunities. As another example, the Forest Service has over the years closed areas used for recreational target shooting (e.g., Miller Canyon and Hunter Canyon in the Sierra Vista Ranger District). A suitable, designated shooting area (consistent with Forest Service standards) on the east side of the Huachuca Mountains would enhance responsible opportunities for target shooting and provide a destination for local residents and visitors to enjoy their sport. Also, despite the growing popularity of off-highway vehicles (OHV) in the county, neither the Forest Service nor the BLM have designated any motorized recreational trails on public lands in the county. Other Arizona national forests such as the Apache-Sitgreaves have designated long distance motorized trails (Maverick Trail, about 50 miles; Long Draw Trail, 30 miles; and Saffel Canyon Trail, 25 miles) that have given local communities both a recreational and economic boost. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

The economic conditions are not being enhanced like they could be – additional campgrounds, specifically at the San Pedro House and to encourage tourism and educational benefits. The impact to ranchers who practice responsible grazing could be enhanced as well on Federal Land. The Federal focus is more on conservation and endangered species and less on recreation and tourism use. **(Cochise County Survey Group)**

Tourism provides a significant amount of income to Cochise County. According to the Arizona Office of Tourism, in 2014, total direct spending of tourism alone accounted for 349.5 million dollars in our County. This accounted for Local and State tax receipts of \$27.9 million dollars. Closing roads on Federal land, wildfires, preventing access to public lands because of conservation efforts that are politically motivated instead of based on science hurts the County as well as the State of Arizona when it comes to tourism dollars. **(Community Relations Administrator)**

The County has a strong and vibrant agricultural economy that continues to be threatened by Federal regulations. Cochise County is an important agricultural area. Specialty crops like pistachios and pecans play an important role in the local economy. 80% of the grapes used in Arizona wines are grown in the Willcox area. A 2014 Economic Report from the University of Arizona shows that in 2011, 30% of Cochise County's farms specialize in beef cattle ranching with more than 324 having 50% or more of their income coming from livestock. Cochise County ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state when it comes to the cattle industry. With 6% of the State of Arizona's livestock inventory, the cattle industry had a \$59 million impact in 2011 on the County's economy with 289 employees. This figure taken on a State scale isn't that impressive – but to our rural County, that figure is a significant amount of money we can't afford to lose. **(Supervisor)**

7. Do you believe changes in federally managed land management is necessary to increase positively impact your county's economy, employment opportunities, or tax base?

X  Yes

Changes to federal land management policies are needed to provide more emphasis on multiple use, recreation, and public enjoyment of federal lands. This could lay the foundation for improved tourism, economic productivity, and revenue producing activities. See also the response to C6. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

###

**D. CONSISTENCY WITH STATE AND LOCAL OBJECTIVES: (Attach explanation for each response as needed)**

1. Are federally managed land management actions consistent with your county's objectives? (specifics sectors where possible)

  X   No

Article 1 101-Title, Purpose and Background – Cochise County Comprehensive Plan states: **“The actions of other governmental agencies that impact the people, land, and resources within Cochise County must be carried out in a manner consistent with, or implemented in coordination with, the goals and policies expressed in this Comprehensive Plan.”** **See Cochise County Comprehensive Plan attachment**

Link to Plan on website:

[https://www.cochise.az.gov/sites/default/files/planning\\_and\\_zoning/Cochise%20County%20Comprehensive%20Plan%202015%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.cochise.az.gov/sites/default/files/planning_and_zoning/Cochise%20County%20Comprehensive%20Plan%202015%20FINAL.pdf)

Example: The Proposed Changes to the Motorized Travel System in the Douglas Ranger District. This could result in possible access closures to camping and recreational areas that are currently accessible. Federal (BLM, USDA, and Forest Service) actions need to take existing local plans into consideration before final decisions are made.

In particular, the **Economic Development Goal: Support the preservation and expansion of the Cochise County tourism sector.** Any reduction in access to public lands would hamper tourism and marketing efforts in these recreational areas. **The Renewable Energy Element Goal: To protect the culture, history, economy, environment, and lifestyles of Cochise County residents by requiring federal agencies to coordinate land use plans with Cochise County and to establish plans that provide for continued multiple land use plans consistent with the following policies: d. Public Access f. Recreation and Tourism.** Again reduced access to public lands would have a negative impact on County residents who have historical utilized these areas for recreational purposes and on visitors seeking out new recreation opportunities within Cochise County. **(Planning and Zoning Director)**

The Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service frequently fail to do consistency reviews of county policy. It is incumbent on the County to review every document produced and submit comments noting that a consistency review was not completed or even addressed in the document. Even when the County comments, the policies in the County’s plan are consistently written off in the final document. **(Water Consultant)**

Section F (Federal Government Coordination Element, pages 14 - 19) of the 2015 Cochise County

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Comprehensive Plan lays out goals, policies, and objectives pertaining to federal land management of public lands within the county. The Plan includes policies that seek to ensure that the Federal Government provides Cochise County the opportunity to participate in the development of land use plans, to cooperate and coordinate with Cochise County in developing such plans, and to ensure that federal policies are consistent with local or regional policies. The Plan's rationale is as follows: "Approximately 26% of land in Cochise County is administered by federal agencies. Policies for managing these lands significantly impact Cochise County's culture, history, economy, environment, and lifestyles. Therefore, it is extremely important for Cochise County to participate in making these policies, with opportunities for the public to be heard." The Plan stresses the importance of grazing, recreation, public access, and tourism to the county's economy and rural character; the need for careful collaboration and cooperation regarding wilderness and other designations; and that designations or reintroductions of threatened or endangered species be supported by scientific data, have the full coordination and cooperation of the county, and have full public disclosure.

Here are some examples of Federal agency actions that are not consistent with the county's objectives.

1. In my view, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has failed to fully consider the county's concerns regarding Mexican wolf reintroduction plans as well as concerns over designation of critical habitat for species such as the jaguar.
2. Also, proposed or actual road closures by the Forest Service and the BLM have been counter to policies and objectives in the county's Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, Draft Travel Management Plans have failed to consider the following policies and objectives in the county's Comprehensive Plan: page 17, paragraph d(i): "Access across and to public lands is critical to the use, management, and development of those lands and adjoining private lands.", and on page 19, paragraph i(iv): "Federal Travel Management Plans should consider the growing popularity of OHV recreation and provide reasonable and responsible opportunities for OHV uses."
3. Within the SPRNCA, the BLM has failed to provide a timely decision on reauthorizing grazing on lands that were temporarily set aside (10 year moratorium). Plus the BLM is considering draft alternatives that would either further reduce grazing or fail to authorize suitable additional grazing allotments. This is contrary to policies and objectives in the county's Comprehensive Plan, specifically page 19, paragraph h, subparagraphs i, ii, and iii which state the following:

"i. The proper management and allocation of forage on public lands is critical to the viability of the Cochise County's agriculture, recreation, and tourism industry."

"ii. The viability of a large number of agriculture and livestock operations is dependent on access to grazing on public lands."

"iii. Forage allocated to livestock should not be reduced for allocation to other uses. Current livestock allocation should be maintained and can be increased when resource conditions warrant additional livestock." **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

2. Would your county like state assistance incorporating local government objectives into Federally managed land management actions?

\_\_\_  \_\_\_ Unsure

It would depend on the type of assistance along with the mutual benefit to all parties. We currently have Cooperating Agency Status and partnerships with several Federal agencies.

###

**E. OWNERSHIP AND JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. Has your county experienced conflicts with federally managed or federal claimed ownership or jurisdictional responsibilities?

Yes (Please attach detailed description of conflicts)

The San Pedro River Riparian National Conservation Area management has resulted in legal claims of federal reserved water rights. Those claims may go beyond the intent of Congress. (Environmental Consultant)

2. How much influence do you believe special interests have on the ability of federal agencies to develop and implement effective land and resource management plans on federal lands in your county?

Significant (please explain)

In regards to endangered species, I believe special interests have moderate influence on the ability for federal agencies to develop or implement effective land and resource management plans on federal lands in Cochise County. **(Planning and Zoning Director)**

There are a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that frequently comment and/or litigate actions contemplated by federal agencies. To avoid litigation with the NGOs, federal agencies (especially the US Fish and Wildlife Service) agree to requirements that are not supported by science or consistent with the County's plans. A prime example of this is the latest decision with regards to the Mexican Gray Wolf. There is insufficient prey base in Cochise County for introduction of an additional predator. Large predatory species (especially bear) already are intruding onto urban and suburban areas to obtain food. With the introduction of MGWs, the primary prey base required to support another predator in Cochise County will be livestock and pets. **(Water Consultant)**

Special interest groups have been very active in the review and development of Federal land use plans that affect Cochise County. The Coronado National Forest (CNF) Draft Land and Resource Management Plan (October 2013) has attracted considerable interest and participation by numerous special interest groups. Many of these groups are located in Tucson, Arizona, which gives them easy access to the CNF Supervisor's Office that is also located there. It was very evident at a workshop hosted by the Coronado National Forest on Wilderness and Draft Land Management Plan (May 17, 2014 in Tucson, Arizona) that numerous special interest groups were pushing for additional wilderness proposals in the Draft Resource Management Plan. These groups and likeminded individuals easily outnumbered residents attending from Cochise County. It seems that these special interest groups have more influence over forest policies affecting rural areas in Cochise County than county residents. This was also observed during the development of Draft Travel Management Plans for the Coronado National Forest. This problem is compounded by the fact that management decisions affecting rural areas in Cochise County are made by federal officials based in Tucson, Arizona (i.e., the Coronado National Forest Supervisor's Office and the BLM Tucson Field Office) who are geographically removed from Cochise County and thus are not as familiar with the county's unique challenges and concerns. **(Public Lands Advisory Committee Member)**

Transfer of Federally Managed Lands Study Committee  
Survey of Counties Land Management and Conditions

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3. **On a separate sheet**, please describe your county's most significant concerns with federal land management, including current and past relations and communications with federal agencies and other relevant factors you believe legislators should be aware of. Provide any ideas that may help reduce risks or resolve concerns in these areas. Please be as specific as possible. **See Attachment**

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**Submitted by: Cochise County Board of Supervisors**

Signature:   
**Richard R. Searle, Chairman, District 3**

Signature:   
**Patrick G. Call, Vice-Chair, District 1**

Signature:   
**Ann English, Supervisor, District 2**

Date: March 21, 2016

**CONTACT:** Arlethe G. Rios, Clerk of the Board  
520-432-9200  
Arios@cochise.az.gov

**Attested by:**   
**James E. Vlahovich, County Administrator**

- Attachments:**
- Survey – This form
  - Cochise County Comments
  - Cochise County Comprehensive Plan
  - Federal Issues Impacting Cochise County

**Transfer of Federally Managed Lands Study Committee – Additional Information  
Cochise County  
March 21, 2016**

**E. Ownership and Jurisdictional Responsibilities**

**3.**

**Cochise County Comments:** Some Federal agencies, along with the County, have made great strides in creating and continuing good working relationships. The County is officially a cooperating agency and partner with several Federal entities.

Cochise County initiated quarterly meetings with the Forest Service and BLM. These meetings have enhanced the working relationship with all agencies participating.

Fort Huachuca is an incredible partner and an example of how the Federal gov't can play an integral part in relationships when it comes to local government. For years the Fort has partnered with Cochise County in regards to water conservation. By working together, we have funded the Palominas Recharge Project which benefits the San Pedro River, a BLM riparian habitat protected by Congress. When Federal and local government work together for the sole benefit of what is best for the public, everyone wins. Although there is turnover at times with command staff, the projects never get left behind because their goal is consistent with ours – develop the best plans, fund the projects, implement and monitor the success.

We have regular attendance by the Forest Service and BLM at our Public Lands Advisory Council meetings where they are encouraged to share information and updates regarding plans and updates and it's been very successful, when they attend.

Transition in federal agencies has a huge impact on relationships. We develop contacts, they attend meetings and share information, and then they get promoted and relocated, often very quickly before a successor is put in place. We are then assigned someone new to take over who needs time to learn their system as well as get up to speed on our joint issues. There is a huge learning curve whenever new people are brought into a new job in a new region.

Local branches of Federal gov't often times do not get adequate funding to do the land management actions they have planned and so desperately need. If they are mandated to do something, they must be funded in order to make that action happen.

**Local Government and Public Participation:**

It's critical to get effective local government input and comment as well as the public when Federal plans impact a County.

For example: There are two separate electric transmission lines impacting Cochise County – The Southline Transmission Line and the SunZia Transmission Line. Both had serious challenges when it came to Federal oversight and implementing public/private comment.

The Southline Transmission Line EIS did not adequately consider wildlife and vineyard issues (local wine producers/growers) in the Willcox Valley until several agencies and landowners protested loudly. It seemed as though local government input and public comments were ignored until people threatened court action. Now, the project proponents are taking the comments more seriously and attempting to appease Arizona Game and Fish Department and local landowners.

The SunZia Transmission Line EIS had more environmental issues that the NEPA team overlooked. The Winkelman NRC, Cascabel Working Group, Sierra Club, Tucson Audubon and others are filing law suits to stop the project from impacting the San Pedro River corridor. SunZia ignored all comments from the County (and many, many others). There were good alternative routes outside the Buffalo Soldier Electronic Test Range and avoiding the San Pedro River valley. However, BLM and the federal Energy Department chose the route anyway. The Department of Defense strongly

opposed the SunZia project until the NEPA team reluctantly developed an alternative to avoid adverse impact White Sands Missile Range.

Fort Huachuca opposed having SunZia pass through its Buffalo Soldier Electronic Proving Ground and Cochise County supported the Fort's position. The project proponents made some concessions to the Fort to reduce impacts to the Proving Ground, but there will still be impacts. Besides the impacts to the military and the San Pedro River Valley, environmental groups are concerned about the SunZia line's impact on wilderness areas in the Galiuro and Santa Teresa mountains and Aravaipa Canyon east of Tucson. The Nature Conservancy has stated that the power line would split the landscape in half and introduce roads into a roadless area.

The oversight agency, BLM, ran the Southline and Sunzia Projects from a distance, which isolated them from direct relationships and limited their interaction with affected federal, state and local government personnel as well as the local affected public.

**Public Lands Advisory Committee Member:** Based on my observations from participating in federal land management plans over the past 20+ years, I would like to offer the following concerns and suggestions.

1. **Lack of Accountability.** It seems that federal officials are frequently not held accountable for complying with established land use plans and/or existing Congressional legislation. Frequent personnel turnover and lack of institutional knowledge are continuing challenges. Plus it appears on occasion that personal opinions and biases of federal employees lack balance and objectivity regarding agency policies and priorities.

2. **Transparency and Public Involvement.** In my view, special interest groups (many of which are well organized and well funded) have exercised undue influence on Federal land use plans and decisions. Members of the general public typically do not have the time nor geographical proximity to federal agencies. Development and implementation of Federal land use plans must be more transparent and enable a robust level of public involvement. Too frequently federal agencies work closely with special interest groups to achieve certain policies and objectives. However, lack of transparency and public involvement breeds mistrust and suspicion over the fairness and objectivity of federal actions. It also seems that federal agencies are influenced by the threat of litigation from special interest groups instead standing up for the public interest.

3. **Land Use Priorities.** In my reviews of both Forest Service and BLM resource management plans, I have observed that federal agencies have placed excessive emphasis on promoting threatened and endangered species, resource conservation, and wilderness restrictions at the expense of policies that support multiple use, public access, and recreation. There is a lack of balance and fairness. These federal decisions impact the county's economy, lifestyles, and rural character. Rural communities depend on adjacent public lands to enable viable ranching and grazing operations and to enable residents and visitors to access and enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities. Rural communities, unlike large metropolitan areas, do not have a "parks and recreation department", but rely on adjacent public lands for access to recreational opportunities. Federal decisions and land use plan priorities are frequently inconsistent with county policies and objectives and thus adversely affect rural communities and lifestyles. Considering that both the Coronado National Forest Supervisor's Office and the BLM Tucson Field Office are both located in Tucson, it is not surprising that decisions by these agencies do not always reflect the needs of Cochise County communities and residents. Policies that are influenced by proximity to a major metropolitan area such as Tucson are not necessarily consistent with policies appropriate to rural communities.

4. **In summary,** perhaps a mechanism should be established to enable county governments (who have elected and accountable officials) to have more influence on federal decisions regarding the development and implementation of federal land use plans. As a minimum, there should be a more collaborative, cooperative, and public process for federal agency decisions given the large scope and impacts they have on affected counties, rural communities, and the general public. In

2005, the White House Council on Environmental Quality hosted a conference on "Cooperative Conservation" which was attended by a broad cross section of individuals, groups, and government organizations throughout the country. See the attached press release below. This conference showcased numerous success stories involving the cooperation of agencies, partners, and private landowners working together to solve conservation issues. Given the continuing conflicts and concerns created by federal land management decisions, it seems that federal agencies should renew their commitment to the proven success of the 4 C's philosophy - conservation through communication, consultation and cooperation.

Attachment:

Copy of Press Release Text from:

[https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/archive/news/archive/05\\_News\\_Releases/050407c.htm](https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/archive/news/archive/05_News_Releases/050407c.htm)

Department of the Interior

DOI News Header

Office of the Secretary CONTACT: Joan Moody

April 7, 2005 202-208-6416

MEDIA ADVISORY:

Scheduled for Aug. 29-31 in St. Louis: 2005 White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation

The Bush Administration announced today that invitations to the 2005 White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation have been distributed to a broad cross-section of private individuals; agricultural and forestry organizations; local community groups; businesses; outdoor organizations, conservation groups; local, state and tribal governments; heritage groups; philanthropic foundations; members of Congress and state governors.

Federal participants include the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, and the Interior, as well as the White House Council on Environmental Quality and Environmental Protection Agency.

From Aug. 29 - 31, 2005, these representatives will convene in St. Louis, Mo., to consider President Bush's cooperative conservation vision defined in his Executive Order issued on Aug. 26, 2004.

The White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation seeks to:

- Broaden cooperative conservation with state, tribal and local governments, communities, private for profit and non-profit organizations, and private citizens;
- Enhance and integrate public and private land stewardship;
- Bring together interested participants and decision makers who can advance cooperative conservation;
- Identify ideas for future conservation and environmental policies and initiatives;
- Facilitate the exchange of information and advice for successful partnerships; and
- Institutionalize cooperative conservation to enhance on-the-ground conservation results and progress.

Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, a leader in cooperative conservation, will be a keynote speaker at the conference. To foster a nation of citizen stewards, Secretary Norton is advancing a 4 C's philosophy - conservation through communication, consultation and cooperation. Many of the case stories and issues at the conference will showcase Interior agencies and partners. Department of the Interior is expanding the conservation tools available to private land owners and federal land managers. These tools include conservation grants, the Cooperative Conservation Initiative (CCI), which includes funds for the highly successful Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, DOI Coastal Program, and cooperative conservation challenge cost-share grants. The DOI Private Stewardship Grant program and Landowner Incentive Program, founded on initiatives envisioned by President

Bush when he was Governor of Texas, provide assistance to private land owners in their voluntary efforts to protect threatened, imperiled and endangered species.

The text of President Bush's Executive Order can be viewed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/08/20040826-11.html>. More information on the Department of the Interior's cooperative conservation activities can be viewed at <http://www.doi.gov/initiatives/conservation.html>. DOI-Selected News Releases

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