Carrizo Plain National Monument Preliminary Alternatives Discussion

Carrizo Plain National Monument Advisory Committee September 22, 2007

Why consider alternatives?

- Forces us to think broadly fully consider different approaches & views
- Strengthens analysis and selection of the best course of action by allowing comparison of various approaches, their affects on the environment and how they meet purpose of plan

NEPA Requires us to:

- Rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives
- Briefly discuss the reasons eliminating alternatives from detailed study

What makes up an RMP alternative?

- Package of:
- Goals

Objectives
 Management actions
 Allowable uses

- Special designations
- Land tenure

 -Each alternative is a "complete" bundle of these & could serve as its own Land Use Plan providing a different approach to managing Carrizo

Today's presentation format:

For each program we will discuss:

- How proclamation addresses resource program.
 Range of views and concerns addressed in scoping
 Specific BLM planning requirements related to program
 Goals objectives and actions common across alternatives
 Range of alternatives just showing both ands of the
- Range of alternatives –just showing both ends of the spectrum & examples of objectives, actions etc. to illustrate concepts – more to come!

Questions to consider:

- Have we captured range of concerns from scoping?
- Is our range of approaches (alternatives) reasonable and broad enough given monument proclamation and other factors?
- Do our examples of potential objectives and actions illustrate the spectrum of approaches we should consider?

Where will we go after this meeting?

- Fully flesh out alternatives
- Complete environmental impact analysis comparing affects of alternatives
- Select a preliminary preferred alternative that we feel best meets NM proclamation, agency policy and public needs (come back to the MAC to get advice on this)
 - Preferred alternative may include aspects of several alternatives
- Publish draft plan that includes preferred & other alternatives – Public can comment and agree or disagree.

Vegetation & Wildlife

Acronyms

- SJV San Joaquin Valley
- **T**&E Threatened & Endangered
- gkr giant kangaroo rat
- bnll blunt-nosed leopard lizard
- sjkf San Joaquin kit fox
- sjas San Joaquin antelope squirrel

Sub regions

- PHEP Panorama Hills/Elkhorn Plain
- CPC Carrizo Plain Central
- SL Soda Lake
- CFN Caliente Foothills North
- CPN Carrizo Plain North

Vegetation & Wildlife

Scoping Comments

Protect ecosystems and species

Maintain and restore habitats

Proclamation

Long-term conservation of San Joaquin Valley flora and fauna as well as indigenous flora and fauna

Protect special plant & animal species

Protect Soda Lake

Vegetation & Wildlife

Goals

- Enhance value as significant, unique, undeveloped remnant of SJV ecosystem
- Restore and maintain natural communities and processes to benefit biodiversity and native species
- Emphasize importance for T&E species, rare communities, regional landscape conservation
- Identify and manage T&E core areas

Vegetation

Common to All Alternatives

- Objective: Increase native and indigenous species through a variety of restoration techniques
 - Action: Identify suitable sites for restoration
 - Action: Pretreat sites by mowing, burning and/or herbicide application
 - Action: Plant grass seed by hand or by mechanical means (range drill)

Vegetation Alternative Range

 Objective : Maintain viable populations of T&E plants. Allow other rare plant population sizes to be dictated by natural processes

■ Actions:

- No livestock grazing of any rare plant habitat
- If T & E populations diminish, take action to protect

 Objective: Maintain and enhance viable populations of T&E plants and all other rare plants

■ Actions:

- Allow livestock to graze in rare plant habitat for the benefit of rare plants and their habitat
- Remove competing weeds (burn, hand pull, herbicides)
- Add to seed bank & establish new pops.

Wildlife

Common to All Alternatives

- Objectives : Maintain habitat for migratory and nesting birds. Control the spread of invasive plants and animals. Maintain saltbush stringers
 - Action: Provide or maintain suitable roosting and drinking areas for birds
 - Action: Take actions to eradicate noxious weeds
 - Action: Protect saltbush stringers from fire

Wildlife Alternative Range

 Objective: Maintain viable populations of gkr, bnll, sjkf and sjas in core areas-PHEP & CPC

Actions:

 Allow populations to fluctuate up & down/disappear and reappear naturally

- Objective: Maintain and enhance viable populations of gkr, bnll, sjkf and sjas in core areas-PHEP & CPC
- Actions:
 - Use all available tools to maintain suitable habitat to prevent declines

Wildlife Alternative Range

- Objective: Maintain suitable habitat for wintering mountain plover
- Actions:
 - Monitor historic locations-PHEP, CPC, SL
 - No tools (such as livestock grazing or fire) to manage vegetation, rely on gkr as tool

 Objective: Maintain suitable habitat for wintering mountain plover

- Actions:
 - Monitor historic locations-PHEP, CPC, SL
 - Use tools such as livestock grazing and prescribed fire to provide suitable habitat

Wildlife Alternative Range

- Objective: Maintain and enhance habitat for pronghorn fawning and foraging habitat in CFN&CPN sub regions (250 animals)
 Actions:
 - Allow natural conditions to determine #s and distribution
 - Natural water sources

- Objective: Maintain and enhance pronghorn fawning and foraging habitat to support herd target (250 animals)
 - Actions:

- Improve habitat with shrubs/tall forbs & grasses for structure
- Ensure adequate water
- Provide supplemental feed

Scoping Comments

Protect Native American cultural sites

Preserve historic ranches and landscapes

Collaborate with Native Americans

Proclamation

- Protect historic/prehistoric structures & objects
- Proper care and management of the rich human history....world class rock painting....historic ranches

Planning Requirements

 Consistency with national programmatic and state protocol between BLM and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

Goals

- Identify, protect and preserve prehistoric and historic resources
- Provide opportunities for Native American traditional practice and access
- Enhance opportunities for research, public education and awareness of sensitivity of heritage resources

Common to All Alternatives

- Objective: Protect and preserve significant cultural resources from natural and human-caused disturbances
 - Action: Monitor, identify and take corrective action where cultural sites are threatened by vandalism, bird excretion on rock paintings or wind impact on unstable buildings
 - Action: Identify and evaluate sites for eligibility to the National Register

Common to All Alternatives

Objective: Encourage opportunities for Native American traditional plant gathering, native plant restoration, cultural activities and ceremonial rites

- Action: Provide open access for ceremonial rites and safeguard privacy during the vigil
- Action: Develop protocol with Native Americans pertinent to traditional plant gathering

Common to All Alternatives

Objective: Encourage partnerships, research, interpretive and educational opportunities

- Action: Implement volunteer site stewardship program to monitor cultural resources
- Action: Develop interpretive and educational kiosk, signage and brochures
- Action: Research to determine the appropriate conservation measures to preserve rock paintings

Restrict access to El Saucito via guided tours

Action: Provide necessary staff as tour guides

Alternative Range

- Protect and preserve significant cultural resources
 - Restore or stabilize selected historic buildings and structures



- Raze hazardous buildings and structures not eligible for the National Register
 - Demolish and remove selected buildings and structures

Alternative Range

- Open Painted Rock to public access via guided tours or permit with required conditions
 - Provide necessary staff as tour guides and means for public to acquire permits

- Close Painted Rock to public access
 - Use law enforcement patrol and monitoring to deter unauthorized access and vandalism

Scoping Comments

Unique geological formations and the San Andreas Fault

Education and interpretation important to the public

Proclamation

- World famous geologic processes that formed the San Andreas as a preserved natural landscape.
- Protect significant fossil assemblages of scientific interest

Planning Requirements

 Be consistent with the Paleontological Resource Management Guidance (8270 Manual-Handbook)

Goals

- Identify, protect and preserve significant paleontological resources and geological formations
- Enhance scientific, educational, and recreational opportunities for paleontological and geological resources

Common to All Alternatives

- Objective: Protect and preserve significant fossil resources and geological landscape
 - Action: Identify baseline, monitor and patrol sensitive areas to detect natural and human-caused disturbances (e.g., erosion or unauthorized collection) of fossil resources and take corrective action

Objective: Encourage educational and recreational opportunities.

- Action: Develop partnerships to conduct field research studies to identify fossil localities and significance evaluations
- Action: Develop interpretive brochures and field guides for educational and recreational opportunities

Alternative Range

- Interpret geological and fossil resources for recreation and education at a level that does not compromise resource integrity
 - Develop interpretive kiosk, trail panels, and brochures.
 - Restrict access to delineated roads and trails for points of interest

Minimize visitation to geological and fossil resource points of interest

- Maintain geology road tour and Wallace Creek interpretive trail
- Select fossil formation as point of interest at roadside interpretive panel or exhibit at Goodwin Education Center

Scoping Comments

- Manage visitor use to minimize disturbance on T&E habitat/species and maintain undeveloped character of CPNM
- Facilities should focus on interpreting the unique features of CPNM and should not be a dominant part of the landscape

Proclamation

- Language in proclamation provides direction for appropriate types of opportunities and settings.
-the largest undeveloped remnant of this ecosystem....
- Despite past human use, the size, isolation and relatively undeveloped nature...

Planning Requirements

Conduct Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) inventory
 Identify Recreation Management Zones (RMZ) that define types of opportunities, and settings, and type of management

Goals

- Provide recreation opportunities that enhance appreciation of CPNM resources
- Educate and promote proper use ethics
- Manage public uses to protect objects of geological, archaeological, historical and biological value within the monument

Common to All Alternatives

- Objective: Foster within the visitor a sense of stewardship
 - Action: Provide programs/facilities that focus on the value of the unique CPNM resources
 - Action: Develop partnerships with organized user groups to promote responsible use, volunteerism and self-policing

Alternative Range

Improve accessibility at facilities

- Action:
 - Develop a 10-year plan to retrofit all recreation facilities to full accessibility standards



Improve accessibility at facilities

Action:

 Develop a 5-year plan to retrofit all recreation facilities to full accessibility standards

Recreation/Interpretation Alternative Range

- Provide opportunities for self-discovery and exploration of unique CPNM resources
- Action:
 - Re-evaluate appropriately reducing dispersed camping areas throughout the monument
 - Maintain public potable water source at Selby Campground
 - Maintain existing interpretive facilities

Provide focused and structured recreation and interpretive opportunities to help visitors enjoy unique CPNM resource

Action:

- Allow dispersed camping in all currently designated areas
- Develop 10 -12 backcountry campsites
- Develop public potable water sources at KCL, Selby and the Ed. Center
- Develop new scenic overlooks/vistas

Scoping Comments

- Protection of undeveloped character identified as a top concern by many
- Open, undeveloped, wild, remote, pristine and breathtaking expansive views were used to describe landscape character. Concern that undeveloped landscapes are mostly gone in southern California
- The ability to escape from city lights to view night skies was also highlighted

Proclamation

- "Full of natural splendor . . . the majestic grasslands and stark ridges . . . spectacular exposures of fault-generated land forms . . . numerous artifacts and historic ranch properties . . . "
- Proclamation illustrates the importance of protecting the diversity of scenic attributes

BLM Planning Requirements

- Establish VRM Management Classes for planning area. Classes include:
- Class 1: Preserve the landscape's existing character. Reserved for Congressionally designated areas whose management is focused on strict retention of natural and scenic values (wilderness, wild and scenic rivers etc.)
- Class II: Retain the landscape's existing character. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities and uses can be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer





- Class III: Partially retain the landscape's existing character. Management activities and uses may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements of the predominant natural features of the landscape
- Class IV: Allow for management activities and uses requiring major modifications to the natural landscape --These may dominate the view and be a major focus of viewer attention. However, mitigate impacts through careful location and design. E. G. Windfarms, communication sites, surface O&G development





Visual contd.

Common to All Alternatives

Goals

- Protect and restore scenic qualities, expansive vistas, including natural scenery and cultural features from the agricultural use period
- Manage the landscape to enhance the Carrizo Plain as a significant unique and undeveloped portion of the once vast San Joaquin Valley ecosystem

Common to all alternatives contd.

Objectives

- Enhance opportunities for visitors to appreciate the outstanding scenic landscapes characteristic of the Carrizo (see recreation program for detailed actions)
- Reduce existing visual impacts from fences, structures and other non-historic human impacts.
- Complete all management activities and new facility developments in a manner that minimizes impacts to the visual qualities of the area.

Visual

Common to all alternatives contd.

Actions:

- Complete visual contrast ratings for all proposed surface disturbing projects to ensure they meet VRM Class Objectives.
- Complete visual contrast ratings for existing roads and facilities and identify opportunities to reduce existing visual impacts through modifications (e.g., removing road berms, painting water tanks etc.)
- Complete an inventory of existing and potential key scenic vista points along road corridors within the monument and identify opportunities to improve these locations as overlooks and interpretive sites

Visual

Alternative Range

VRM Classes (objectives)

- Moderate acreage of VRM Class I (WSA and areas with wilderness character)
- Large acreage of VRM Class II in all other undeveloped areas of CPNM
- Narrow corridors of VRM Class III on main roads and existing public facilities
- VRM Class IV limited to existing utility corridors, O&G leases, communication sites
- Objective: Restore naturally appearing landscape
- Action: Remove all non-essential non-historic structures

VRM Classes (Objectives)

- Smaller acreage class I (Caliente WSA)
- Small-moderate acreage class II (areas without proposed restoration actions)
- Large acreage class III
- Class IV limited to existing utility corridors, O&G leases, communication sites. Same acreage Class IV
- Objective: Protect cultural landscape attributes.
- Action: Retain & stabilize old farm facilities – focus on pastoral attributes of old farms & homesteads

Scoping Comments

 Inventory and manage areas with wilderness characteristics to maintain wilderness qualities

Proclamation

Despite past human use, the size, isolation and relatively undeveloped nature of the area make it ideal for long-term conservation

Planning Requirements

- Identify decisions to protect or preserve wilderness characteristics
- Include goals and objectives to protect the resource and management actions to achieve these goals and objectives

Goals

- Preserve wilderness characteristics
- Enhance value as a significant, unique, undeveloped remnant of SJV ecosystem

Common to All Alternatives

- Objective: Manage the Caliente Mtn. WSA so as not to impair the area's suitability for wilderness protection
- Action: Continue to manage the WSA under current agency guidelines

Alternative Range

Inventory/manage areas with wilderness characteristics

Action:

Manage Caliente Mtn. WSA for wilderness characteristics



Inventory and manage other areas with wilderness characteristics
 Action:

 Manage Caliente Mtn. WSA and up to six additional areas identified as having wilderness characteristics

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)

Background

- Areas of public land where special management is required to protect important natural or cultural values
- Entire Carrizo was designated as an ACEC in Caliente Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Planning requirements

- RMP's must consider/analyze potential ACECs
- ACEC's can be determined by planning team or nominated by public
 - Must have a significant cultural, historic, scenic, wildlife, fish or other natural system or process
 - Value must be distinctive and of greater than local significance
 - Areas with significant natural hazards may also be designated as ACECs

ACECs

Common to All Alternatives

- Current monument-wide ACEC designation would not be carried forward.
- No subunits of the monument that would benefit from ACEC designation have been identified. Members of the public can nominate areas – none nominated to date

Rationale

- With National Monument protection, original ACEC now unnecessary
- Parts of the monument requiring specific protection are identified in proclamation (e. g. Soda Lake) and/or already have an additional designation (Caliente WSA, National Historic Register District)

Wild and Scenic River Evaluation

Background

- Wild & Scenic Rivers Act Protect rivers in freeflowing condition
- "Rivers" considered broadly under act -- can include small streams and even intermittent streams that are significant within the context of surrounding region

Planning Direction

- Section 5 D of Act requires federal agencies to evaluate potential additions to the system during planning process
- Formal designation as a Wild and Scenic River requires Congressional legislation

Wild and Scenic

Study Process – three phases

- Eligibility -- Is stream free flowing and does it have one or more "outstandingly remarkable" values (fishery, cultural, geologic, scenic etc.).
- Tentative Classification Based on level of development (Wild, scenic or recreational)
- Suitability In-depth analysis of values and impacts of designation.

Status: Currently in early stages of eligibility evaluation (Wallace Creek, Soda Lake Tribs. Etc.)

Fire

Scoping Comments

- Many native plants and animals adapted to low intensity fire
- Use naturally occurring fire and prescribed fire to help restore ecosystems
- Implement fuel reduction to reduce wildfire intensity
- Fire suppression protocols must be consistent with protection of Monument's resources

Proclamation

Protect objects of interest susceptible to loss from wildfire, such as historic structures

Fire

Planning Requirements

Identify areas suitable or not suitable for wildland fire use

 Identify allowable uses and management actions for both wildfire suppression and fuels management

Goals

- Avoid resource damage from catastrophic fire
- Restore natural role of fire

Fire

Common to All Alternatives

- Objective: Firefighter and public safety is the first priority in every fire management activity
 - Action: Determine the appropriate response to fire based on the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety, natural and cultural resources, and values to be protected
- Objective: Recognize the role of fire as an essential ecological process and natural change agent
 - Action: Where appropriate, use fire to restore and/or sustain ecosystem health, improve the ecological condition of ecosystems and maintain natural plant communities



Alternative Range

Take a "hands-off" approach to fire management

Action:

- Manage naturally occurring ignitions for wildland fire use, where appropriate
- Utilize "confine" suppression strategies, where fires are allowed to burn to nearest existing control features, such as roads
- Conduct prescribed fire only as necessary to mimic natural fire occurrence for resource benefit

 Take an active role in managing fire on the landscape

Action:

- Actively suppress ignitions to keep fires small
- Rely on more prescribed fire to return fire to its natural role in ecosystem function
- Perform fuel treatments to minimize fire spread and intensity

Grazing

Scoping Comments

- Continue grazing as a means to control invasive species and to continue historic use
- Grazing is "subordinate" to natural resource protection and only used if it actively benefits native species
- Utilize free use permits rather than traditional leases to allow greater responsiveness to annual conditions
- Eliminate or phase out all grazing

Proclamation

"Laws, regulations, and policies followed by the Bureau of Land Management in issuing and administering grazing permits or leases on all lands under its jurisdiction shall continue to apply with regard to the lands in the monument."

Grazing

Planning Requirements

Identify lands available or not available for livestock grazing
 Identify guidelines and criteria for future allotment-specific adjustments in grazing management practices

Goals

Manage livestock grazing as an "allowable use" or livestock grazing as a "vegetation management tool" in a manner that protects the objects of the proclamation

Grazing

Common to All Alternatives

- Objective: Manage the public lands to meet the minimum standards of Rangeland Health
 - Action: Assess all grazing allotments to determine if they are meeting the minimum Rangeland Health standards



Alternative Range

- Maintain the existing level of livestock grazing as an allowable use and as a vegetation management tool
 - Maintain the existing designations as available and unavailable
 - Authorize grazing according to designation
 - Remove livestock grazing as an allowable use or as a vegetation management tool.
 - Designate lands
 - Cancel grazing authorizations according to designation

Continue the existing livestock grazing as an allowable use, but **redesignate** the lands after any voluntary relinquishments of Section 15 leases based upon new criteria

- Designate lands. Re-designate after relinquishments
- Authorize grazing according to designation



- Increase opportunities for livestock grazing as an allowable use
 - Designate lands
 - Authorize grazing according to designation



Convert Section 15 Leases to Free Use Permits
Alternative to be dismissed
Conflicts with policy and regulation
Issuing a different type of authorization for grazing would conflict with the allowable reasons for cancelling an existing grazing lease

Scoping Comments

Minimize the number of roads in the Monument

- Address illegal off-road use
- Pave/improve Soda Lake Road and certain other roads

Proclamation

In the Secretary shall prohibit all motorized and mechanized vehicle use off road, except for emergency or authorized administrative purposes

Planning Requirements

- Delineate travel management areas
- Complete a defined travel management network

Goals

Provide a safe travel network which supports administrative use and the general enjoyment of the monument, while protecting the sensitive resources for which the monument was created

Common to All Alternatives

- Objective: Eliminate redundant roads
 - Action: Identify and close all redundant roads

Objective: Prohibit unauthorized off-road travel

- Action: Sign popular off-road sites
- Action: Rehabilitate user-made travelways
- Action: Educate and enforce

Alternative Range

Provide a safe and effective travel network

- Action:
 - Close redundant roads
 - Maintain existing surface of popular travel routes
 - Maintain existing trail network
 - Allow equestrian use ONLY on designated travelways



Provide a safe and effective travel network

- Action:
 - Close redundant and unnecessary roads
 - Improve the surface of popular travel routes
 - Extend the trail network
 - Allow equestrian use anywhere on Monument (including cross-country) except areas specifically closed to that use

Scoping Comments

- Oil & Gas Concern with potential environmental damage from drilling on private mineral estate
- Acquire private mineral rights when possible

Proclamation

- No new mineral leasing within CPNM, including oil and gas, geothermal, hardrock
- Existing leases may continue (exploration, drilling, production)

Goals

- Manage the exploration and development of oil and gas on existing federal leases in a manner that protects the objects of the proclamation
- Work with state, county and local agencies to ensure that the mission and purpose of the CPNM are furthered and only reasonable uses of public lands are allowed to access and develop private mineral estate
- Manage the development of mineral material borrow pits on federal mineral estate for emergency and/or administrative use in a manner compatible with the mission of the CPNM

Common to All Alternatives

- Objective: Manage existing leases to ensure timely lease restoration
- Objective: Manage leases to minimize fragmentation of habitat (including removal of redundant roads)
- Objective: Enforce good housekeeping requirements
- Objective: Process permits in a timely fashion as required by the Leasing Reform Act of 1987, Onshore Orders and Notices to Lessees, the Energy Act of 2005, and other laws, regulations and policies

Common to All Alternatives (Other Minerals)

- Objective: Provide for small volumes of administrative/emergency sand/gravel materials (for road maintenance, etc.)
- Objective: Encourage educational and recreational opportunities

Alternative Range

- Minimum material pit in monument for limited monument use
- Lease inspections same as other areas: every 3 years
- Allow access for geophysical with minimum protection of resources (T&E legal mandate)

All materials imported from outside of Monument Inspect more frequently (annually) Restrict access for geophysical across monument to protect resources (all monument values) or access with restrictions

Scoping Comments

- Acquire all private lands inside the monument boundaries
- Continue to recognize and protect in-holdings, coordinating management of public and private holdings on a cooperative basis, so that "all could be part of the Carrizo," but land holders' rights would be respected
- Provide clearer indications of the boundaries between public and private land

Proclamation

- All Federal lands and interests in lands are withdrawn from entry, location, selection, sale, or leasing under the public land laws, other than by exchange that furthers the protective purposes of the monument
- Lands not owned by the United States shall be reserved as a part of the monument upon acquisition of title thereto by the United States
- Valid existing rights are protected

Goals

- Secure non-Federal land and interests in lands to further natural and cultural resource and public administrative access goals for the monument
- Manage all realty actions within the monument in keeping with the overall purposes of the Proclamation
- Eliminate unauthorized use of public lands

Common to All Alternatives

- Objective: Acquire non-Federal land or interests in land within the boundaries of the CPNM
 - Action: Acquire from willing sellers by purchase, exchange, or donation, as opportunities arise
- Objective: Maintain all realty actions on the CPNM consistent with protection of the monument resources
 - Action: Valid rights-of-way or easements in existence when lands will be or have been acquired will be honored through their expiration date. All new applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis

Alternative Range

Retain, consolidate and/or acquire land or interest in lands and conservation easements

Action:

 Acquire non-Federal land or interests in land within the boundaries of the CPNM from willing sellers by purchase, exchange, or donation as opportunities arise

- Acquire non-Federal land and interests in lands to further natural and cultural resources to further the goals of the monument
- Action:
 - Identify, prioritize, and seek acquisitions of special status species habitat, cultural resources, unique natural and geologic features