

Notes from assumptions and significance criteria Q & A
Monday, October 17, 2005

Attending: Jeremy C, Tim N, Reed M, Jeff C, Marianna R, Jane Y, Rick H, Stephen F, Vanessa C.

Q: Isn't Booz Allen looking for *beneficial* as well as *adverse* impacts?

A: Most of the current significance criteria are focused on adverse impacts. For example, the opposite of the first significance criterion for grazing would read, "A substantial increase in forage levels that lead to an increase in permitted AUMs across the RMPPA." We are looking for beneficial impacts as well, so lets give that some thought Wednesday.

Q: Re: the 4th Livestock Grazing assumption, isn't BLM focusing too much on small, localized impacts?

A: Yes, the impacts of localized loss of vegetation because of range improvements would be quite a minor impact in the big picture. Some of these assumptions might in fact result in showing small, non-significant impacts. Although the more intense and wide-ranging where the impacts we really want to show in the effects analysis, the small ones also add some depth and add more detail to the analysis. However, it is more help to BLM to provide input on the larger-scale assumptions.

Q: Why is there not a socio-economic section?

A: CSU will be doing the socio-economic impact analysis, not Booz Allen. That's why there are not any significance criteria or assumptions related to socio-economic impacts. CSU will be providing their own assumptions for their analysis in Nov.

Q: How does BLM assess the time needed for reclamation/restoration?

A: Jeremy and Tim explained that we used numbers appropriate for NW Colorado. We intentionally lengthened the recovery time of cold desert communities.

Q: How were the assumptions for oil and gas development and seismic surveys developed?

A: The Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD) scenario developed by the BLM forecasted oil and gas development and seismic activity.

Q: How specific will impacts from oil and gas development be?

A: We can give the total number of wells and acres disturbed from the RFD. We can infer certain impacts from the acres disturbed, but it is difficult to be very specific in an EIS, especially when we don't know exactly where the development will occur.

Q: Where are the assumptions for Desired Plant Communities?

A: We do not have currently have any, but we would welcome ideas. We would have craft an assumption that is broad enough to capture many different types of DPCs. For example, we could not say "DPCs will benefit livestock" because if we decided DPC objectives for a particular area were to encourage pinyon/juniper development for a bird species, this doesn't necessarily benefit livestock. It depends on the DPC objectives developed after the RMP for each particular site.

Q: In SC #2 in Energy and Minerals, what does BLM mean by “not economically viable.”

A: BLM agreed this is a very subjective term. In fact, most, if not all of these assumptions and SC have some subjectivity to them. In this instance, we try to define what we mean by giving the examples of shortened drilling period or restricting access. There was much discomfort from some participants about this SC and further discussion was delayed until Wednesday.

Q: In SC #4, why do we only mention wind energy instead of all renewables, such as solar?

A: In order to analyze the impacts to or from a resource, we need baseline data. We have baseline data on wind potential, but none on solar. So how would we be able to judge what would limit access to sites with solar potential? Doesn't the whole planning area have potential for solar energy?

Q: What does “reclaimed” mean to BLM?

A: In several SC and assumptions, we differentiate between when a site would regain adequate cover and composition and when a site would return to a state similar to adjacent lands. BLM will try to make these clear in the assumptions if they are not clear already.

Q: Why isn't BLM including BMPs?

A: Since the use of BMPs is optional, we did not include them as assumptions.

Q: Page 4, line 4 (2nd bullet of Wildlife assumptions on the page): wouldn't there be impacts to recreation (and therefore economy) if a population would above its carrying capacity would be impacted?

A: Yes, although BLM wouldn't consider that to be a significant impact to the population, it could impact recreation. We'll consider adding another assumption to recreation.

Q: Page 4, line 7, last wildlife assumption: Wouldn't the disruption to wildlife vary by species and action? What about situations where disruption would be beneficial, such as prairie dogs?

A: We could add some language to make this clear.

Q: Will different benefits and trade-offs be explained in the analysis?

A: Yes, the analysis will show benefits to different uses/resources and the different degree of trade-offs by alternatives. Again, we will get as specific as we can given the knowledge we have about the effects and the broad RMP-level scope.