

Dear NWCOS:

Here are the alternative documents that are being forwarded to the BLM State Office for the briefing next week. We have done quite a bit of tying up loose ends on these alternatives in the last three weeks since NWCOS put their pencils down. Here are a few items that you might want to look at:

- ACECs: After guidance from State Office and Washington, we took a closer look at the 83 Colorado Natural Heritage Program sites. We grouped several of the sites into one ACEC. We were instructed to run the ACECs through the analysis to determine whether they warrant special management. Upon a fresh look at all ACECs, the 4 current ACECs do meet Relevance and Importance and are now included in Alternative D. BLM is working on mapping these areas this week, so you will be able to see them on a map soon. We also still intend to try to complete a Draft ACEC Report, possibly to be completed sometime next month.
- A few changes in big game and sage grouse stipulations in Alternatives C and D
- Change to wild horse section: No change in AML through alternatives—it was arbitrary and capricious for us to pull 25% out of nowhere.
- A few changes in the livestock goals and objectives
- Work done on criteria for land tenure adjustments and objectives in Lands and Realty section
- Lots of work done on the coal section, but a lot of work remains to be done still. See the section in the alternatives as well as the Coal Appendix.
- Developed management actions for the suitable Wild and Scenic River segments
- Changes in the Social and Economic Values section, integrating comments from Moffat County and the conservation consortium.
- There is a note/marker about phased leasing and development in the Vermillion Basin section strictly to garner comments from the State Office. We still have not incorporated phased leasing or development into any alternative, but we wanted to make sure we heard more people's views on the issue.
- A "Lands with Backcountry Characteristics" section was added to protect the additional 10,000+/- acres of CWP lands in Alternative D. We will define "backcountry characteristics."

There are lots of other minor changes that might not be "minor" to some of you, but I've outlined what we would consider to be the major changes. Give me a call if you have any questions. We do intend to notify NWCOS of any changes State Office asks us to make to the draft alternatives.

#### Other Documents

1. Coal appendix. This is only partly complete.
2. Appendix X (no changes made since July)
3. Appendix XX (some more work was done here)
4. Wilderness Character determinations
5. Supplementary documents on VRM. The first document describes the objectives of the VRM management classes, the criteria used to determine the visual contrast of the proposed action, factors in applying the criteria, and determining if VRM objectives are

met. Remember VRM is not a black and white issue! It depends on the details of the activity being permitted and many details of the landscape described in the document. The second VRM document, “example of form 8400-4” is an example of a Visual Contrast Rating Worksheet which was prepared as part of an application to drill a well in a VRM Class II area. As you can see, the well was permitted with two additional mitigating measures to reduce the visual contrast.