

## Talking Points for BLM Preliminary Draft Alternatives Meetings

Eastern Colorado RMP – Conservation Coalition

Preliminary Draft Alternatives Meetings – April 2017

### **“I support the BLM’s efforts to engage the public in the Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan.”**

- The Royal Gorge Field Office has done a tremendous job of engaging the public on the Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan (RMP) through stakeholder meetings, research and studies, making data available online, and providing multiple opportunities for public input. We strongly support and appreciate these efforts.
- By gathering input from collaborators, local communities, stakeholder groups, and the public early in the process—BLM has positioned Eastern Colorado RMP to be a potentially more efficient and more successful plan.
- We encourage BLM to use preliminary alternatives and public input to make adjustments in advance of a draft RMP. BLM should use these preliminary draft alternatives and input from the public to develop a plan that fully incorporates conservation.
- This plan has been driven by local input, including from the counties, and Washington shouldn’t derail this plan by taking a new, top-down approach.

### **“I support an Eastern Colorado RMP that protects resources on public lands, such as wildlands and wildlife habitat, by closing public lands to oil and gas leasing”**

- BLM’s preliminary alternatives would open more than 80% of public lands to oil and gas leasing. By opening lands to oil and gas leasing, BLM jeopardizes the health of our public lands. BLM should consider significant closures to oil and gas development to protect sensitive resources, including lands along the Arkansas River and other important landscapes.
- I support the inclusion of a South Park Master Leasing Plan that responsibly manages oil and gas, while protecting sensitive and important resources.

### ***“I support the protection of lands with wilderness characteristics and ecologically-important lands in the Royal Gorge Field Office”***

- I support protections of lands with wilderness characteristics in the Eastern Colorado RMP. I’m concerned that if these areas are not managed for naturalness and wilderness qualities, wildlife habitat and quiet use recreation opportunities will be threatened.
- Badger Creek is an outstanding landscape for some of Colorado’s favorite pastimes, such as camping, hiking, and fishing. In addition, the wildlands of Badger Creek provide critical habitat for species and the intact landscape serves as migration corridor for wildlife.
- I support protections for the Sands Gulch landscape north of Cotopaxi. This rugged canyon country next to the Arkansas River provides important habitat for bighorn sheep. I treasure the outstanding opportunities of Sands Gulch for self-exploration and peace of mind, and am concerned that these experiences could be lost.
- BLM should protect Bear Mountain in the RMP. The steep canyons and scenic vistas provide for a top-notch recreation experience along the Arkansas River. Bear Mountain has critical habitat for elk and deer, which underlines the importance of the watershed for local communities and wildlife alike.
- BLM should also protect these other areas that are places of exceptional natural values: Echo Canyon, Table Mountain along the Arkansas Canyon; Cooper Mountain, north of Canon City; Upper Red Canyon, adjacent to the popular Shelf Road climbing area; Eightmile Mountain - Thompson, Gribble, and Twin Mountains off of Highway 9; Cucharas Canyon, northeast of Walsenburg on the plains; and Reinecker Ridge in South Park.

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### ***“I support the retention, protection, and enhancement of opportunities for quiet and non-motorized recreation in the Royal Gorge Field Office”***

- There were more than seven million visits to BLM land in Colorado in 2014. Not protecting lands along the Arkansas River will be detrimental to our community and our state. Businesses in Chaffee and Fremont county depend on the revenue from visitors.
- An important part of the local economy is the recreation that Colorado offers. Our public lands provide thousands of jobs to our economy. When we don't protect our mountain ranges, prairies, rivers, and parks we aren't protecting our economy.
- I am proud to live in Colorado where we value the adventure offered by our public lands. Hiking, backpacking, hunting, fishing, bird watching, wildlife viewing, rock-climbing, scenic viewing, and photography in place like Echo Canyon, Table Mountain and Gold Belt are all contributing to the Colorado economy.
- BLM should designate areas specifically for their quiet recreation focus, such as backcountry conservation areas and lands with wilderness characteristics. BLM should show a strong commitment to quiet recreation and conservation in the Eastern Colorado RMP.

### ***“I support an Eastern Colorado RMP that reflects the needs and complexities of 21<sup>st</sup> century land management”***

- Public lands are a living organism that stretches across the country. It is responsible for preserving the life of the lands and everything that lives inside of it. It is irresponsible to disturb or damage it.
- BLM should evaluate a range of options for protecting ecologically important lands in the Royal Gorge Field Office, including the designation of new Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.
- BLM should evaluate the impacts of climate change to the planning area and from decisions made in the RMP.
- There are hundreds of miles of outstanding rivers and streams in the Royal Gorge Field Office. We need to protect these waterways to safeguard the health of the American people. BLM should consider protecting these rivers in the RMP, including Beaver Creek.