

Gila Lower Box RAMP/EA Virtual Public Scoping Meeting Transcript

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Good evening, everybody. Now that i'm off mute I'd like to welcome you to the virtual scoping meeting for the Gila Lower Box recreation area management plan.

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My name is Katie Patterson, and I work for environmental management and planning solutions or empsi.

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We're nationwide consulting firm working with the BLM to prepare the plan, and i'm the project manager for EMPSi and our other staff present will be helping facilitate this meeting and manage the

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zoom application before beginning today's presentation we're gonna briefly review the meeting agenda and introduce the blm specialists who will be presenting and responding to questions i'd like to remind everyone that this meeting is being

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recorded. we'll post the recording and a transcript on a virtual public meeting website, and the Blms E planning site after the meeting, and we'll post the links to both of these websites in the chat we

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also have closed captioning available for this meeting, So, to enable the use of closed captions, you can click the live transcript button icon on your zoom toolbar, and then select show subtitles for the next slide

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please,

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After we finish the introductions tonight, the Blm will provide a presentation information about the project.

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This will be followed by a question and answer session for up to 30 min you may submit your questions, using the Q.

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A box at the bottom of your zoom window. feel free. to Submit a question at any time during the meeting.

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We'll begin answering the questions after the presentation is finished Blm.

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Will answer as many questions as possible during that time, focusing on questions that are specifically related to the recreation area management plan and the Nepa process.

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If you have a additional questions, you can send them to the las cruces district office, public email box at any time, and we'll paste that email address in the chat

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Now as well. You may also see that chat icon at the bottom of your screen.

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We're not accepting questions or comments, through the chat box today, But if you have an urgent technical question, you can use this icon to reach this for assistance.

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You can also email William Penner, for assistance using the email address that we will also face into the meeting Chat. After the question and answer sessions Tonight we'll have an opportunity for you to provide verbal comments this meeting is

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scheduled to run until 8 o'clock mountain time and we'll provide opportunity to comment for as many attendees as possible until that time to ensure we get to as many commentators as possible we'll be asking you to limit your comments to 2

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minutes. of course, if we're, able to get through everyone and have time remaining, we'll welcome additional verbal comments from people who've already commented once, and you can also submit written comments at any time until the end

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of the scoping period on May fifth at the Blm e planning website.

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Link to that website is in the meeting Chat and comments from the public are really vital to this process.

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So we hope you will take the time to provide your input now and in future phases of the project.

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So i'm gonna turn it over now, to allie bettinger with the blm for some more welcoming remarks and introductions.

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Allie. Thank you, Katie. Hi! my name is

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Allie Bettinger, and I am one of the outdoor Recreation Planners with the Bureau of Land Management here in Las Cruces I'm.

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Also joined by my colleague stephen Haynes, and he's going to introduce himself as well.

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Hi! everyone welcome. Thank you for coming my name is stephen Haynes.

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I'm an outdoor. recreation Planner as well here in the Las Cruces district office, and next i'll go back to Allie.

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Thank you. thank you all for attending today's virtual public meeting, and we really appreciate your participants comments and ideas.

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Before we get started with this meeting. I wanted to introduce the rest of the team joining us today.

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We have 3 facilitators from the contracting firm.

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EmPsi, and I will let them introduce themselves.

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Katie already introduced herself. so we'll start with Noelle, hey, good evening, everyone.

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My Name's Noelle Crowley i'm a project Planner and facilitator empsi I good evening. everyone.

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My name is William Penner, and I'm. a public affairs specialist with EM.

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Psi: awesome thanks, guys. We also have a specialists and members of the management team from the Blm office ready to answer all of your questions and concerns.

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We will start with our district manager, William Childress, and let him introduce ourselves.

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Let him introduce himself. Good evening, everybody appreciate everybody's participation in today's public meeting.

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My name is Bill Childress and I'm the district manager for the Las Cruces office.

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I've been here since about 2008 and looking at an opportunity here tonight to gain some ideas from from the public on how to improve our recreational opportunities along the Gila.

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River. Thank you.

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I'm sorry next we'll have William White

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My name is William White. I go by Bill I am the public affairs specialist for the Las Cruces district office for the BLM.

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And I'm monitored your emails when you send them to the public website to make sure that they actually get a response.

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And I look forward to hearing your comments, and how we can further improve.

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The Gila lower box area

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Thank you for joining us we're really, or to , please to happy join us here.

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Thank you for spending your time with us.

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Awesome. Next we have Cody Howard from the BLM.

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Hello, everyone! My name is Cody Howard. I'm a wildlife biologist for Las Cruces district office

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And i'm steven torrez i'm next on the list I'm.

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The planning and environmental coordinator for the Las Cruces District office.

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Hello! my name's Cody Dalpra I'm a district archaeologist for the Las Cruces district office

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We also have Greg Bateman from the Blm.

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Good evening my name's Greg Bateman and I supervise the range staff here at the Las Cruces district office.

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Hello! my name is Tim Frey i'm next on the list I'm.

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The fisheries and aquatic habitat management specialist here at Las Cruces

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Good evening. My name is Paula Montez I'm a realty specialist here in the Las Cruces district office.

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Awesome thanks, guys, that's our team here to answer your questions and comments tonight.

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I will now pass the presentation off to Stephen Haynes to give some more information about the Gila lower box

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Alright, William if you'll go to the next slide please thank you so we'll start with a quick little presentation overview of what we're gonna talk about tonight. first we'll go over a map of our planning

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area, so that we can orient ourselves so where we're talking about next we'll look at going over the purpose and need of this recreation area management plan.

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Then we'll go over the steps in developing or the process towards developing that recreation area management plan.

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After that we'll talk a bit about the kind of the guiding principles of the gila lower box recreation area management plan, and and how those along with proposed management themes will kind of help us in the development of

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the goals for the area as well as strategies and final decisions.

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And then, finally, we will talk about the development of alternatives and present some tentative alternatives to help kind of start the conversation on what the public wants to see done in this area.

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These alternatives that we present are just ideas that we've come up with.

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To begin the conversation, and and are not set in stone at this time.

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So if you'll go to the next slide will you excellent So here we see an overview map of the planning area.

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That area focused in this case will be the highlighted areas.

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Except for the area That's on the Northern part of the map, the Blue Creek Wsa.

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That was included in the map just because of its close proximity, the planning area, but is not part of the planning area at this time.

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On the map. for surface ownership. we have the yellow areas indicate blm public lands.

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The blue areas indicate New Mexico State Trust lands, and the Gray is privately owned lands.

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You can also see, based on all the different colors of highlighted areas we have here.

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There are several different special designations being managed for in the gila lower box at this time.

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So the blue area that William is circling now is the Gila Lower Box Special recreation management area.

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The green area is going to be the the gila, lower box area of critical environmental concern.

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And then, finally, the pink area is going to be the gila lower box wilderness study area.

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The only area that isn't actually does not appear on this map that's especially designated area is the gila lower box, wild and scenic river study area which essentially follows the Blue River corridor.

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That you see there. I will also note that this ramp only applies to blm. lands, as the blm has no jurisdiction on state trust or private lands.

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For a quick overview of those special designated areas and special recreation management area is designated to be managed for primitive recreation.

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Opportunities the wilderness study area was designated to manage it as to not impair the area.

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Suitability for inclusion into the national wilderness preservation system. And then the area of critical environmental concern was designated to protect and improve the riparian values of the area and finally the the wild and scenic

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river study area was designated, for the river to be studied for its suitability for inclusion into the national, wild, and scenic river system.

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So lots of different areas that were kind of overlapping here and looking at and considering in in our planning area.

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Special designations. I will also note, since this plan specifically deals with recreation, the bulk of the planning efforts will be localized to the 3 public access points into the Lower Box Canyon These are going

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to be Nichols canyon road which is far this to the east.

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Then fisherman's Point Road and then finally spring on the bluff, also called Spring Bluff Road.

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So again, these are the the 3 kind of main public access points into the lower box.

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Can you so, William, if you'll go to the next slide, please?

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So why is the blm looking at developing a recreation area management plan for the gila?

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Lower box. One of the reasons is our previous management Documents call for this plan to be developed.

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This includes the Gila River coordinated management plan, as well as the Mimbres Resource management plan, which is our current management plan for the area.

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Also, since this area is designated a special recreation management area, a plan must be developed for SRMAs or special recreation management areas to provide the blm direction and give direction on how to manage the areas to meet the

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goals of that SRMA, so in addition to these management directives the blm has been seeing an increase in use at the gila lower box.

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There's more evidence of vehicle use off of designated routes, more trash and increasing impacts from dispersed camping.

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So this recreation plans goal is to look at ways to limit these impacts of this increased use as well as plan for the future visitation.

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Use continues to increase the gila lower box is incredibly special place to the local communities in the area.

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To us at the BLM and to the unique wildlife and plant species that exist there riparian areas or areas that occur along rivers make up less than 1% of the land here in the Las Cruces district office. But can have as many as

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half the wildlife species that occur in the State so clearly very important.

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So if we go to the next slide there. So this slide kind of talks about preliminary issues that we're seeing kind of mentioned a few before, here this picture, we can see some vehicle tracks

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going off the road into the wilderness study area. and kind of as we spoke about before, we're dealing with a lot of these overlapping special designations in the planning area.

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These designations have management prescriptions that the BLM.

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is responsible for upholding. An example of that is that there is no motor vehicle use off of designated routes in the WSA or the ACEC.

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The actions proposed in this recreation area management plan will help bringing the Gila Lower Box into compliance with the special designations.

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Also with the increase in visitation. Impacts is specifically to the public access.

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Points are becoming worse. there's more trash and there's more evidence of use than ever before.

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We believe that it is. we believe part of this is lack of information and infrastructure in the area.

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There are no good maps for knowing which routes are open, no kiosk to provide information about what are the allowed uses in the area, and where, So we think it's important that we come up with a good plan to

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solve these issues provide outstanding, primitive recreation opportunities, and ensure the utmost protection for the sensitive biological and cultural resources of the gila.

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Lower box. so we'll move on to the next slide there This slide kind of lays out kind of the process for developing the ramp.

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So we start there in the upper left hand corner with the Blm.

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And contractor gathering information which we've done then.

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We move on to drafting kind, of tentative alternatives which we part of. a large part of the reason why we're here to meet tonight is to talk about those, and currently you can see here in the green we're in that

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public comment period, looking for The public's comment towards the development of those alternatives.

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After that comment period ends. the contractor will draft the environmental assessment and the recreation area management plan.

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Then we will go out again for a second public comment on that drafted environmental assessment and recreation area management plan.

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And then, finally, the blm. will find it Finalize that Ea.

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And ramp, and it will be published, and a decision will be made.

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One of the things I just really wanted to reiterate as we said to get tonight these these alternatives that we were presenting, and kind of the the place we're in right now.

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Nothing is set in stone it's just kind of ideas that the blm come up with to kind of get conversation started.

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We'll move on to the next slide so this slide kind of lays out small little graphic on kind of how we go through the process of developing our goals as well as strategies and decisions to help implement those goals So you'll see that

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first box at the top is gila lower box, guiding principles.

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In this case this is going to be any previous management documents as well as any of those special designations that we talked about, and the kind of main themes that come from those are resource protection and primitive recreation.

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So with those guiding principles, we move into development of the ramp goals which is looking at what types of W.

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What's the outcome we're looking from for this area what are our main goals in the area that align with those guiding principles? and there's kind of 2 main themes for that that's going to

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be the recreation of recreation, uses experiences and settings, and then the infrastructure and administration. and then, finally, we move into building of ramp strategies and decisions.

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These are kind of the on the ground decisions that we that we hope to make in order to help us reach those goals that we set out for a new plan

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So as a quick example for that you know one of the ramp's goals might be to limit the off-road driving into the Wsa.

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At the end of fisherman's point and spring on the bluff road, a strategy that could be implemented from that would be to install kiosk near the entrances of those roads to provide maps and information to

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the visitors about where those boundaries are and where they're allowed to drive.

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In addition, establishing trail heads and parking areas at the end of both of those roads.

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For the 2 trails that currently exist. provide visitors at designated place to park, so that the impacts will be concentrated to those parking areas.

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Only those parking areas which currently we're seeing kind of dispersed camp parking all along those roads in the wilderness study area.

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So that's kind of an example. of how goals might inform strategies, decisions which would then help us reach our goals.

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So we'll move on to the next slide William

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We kind of touched on this before, but these are our kind of 2 main themes.

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First name there recreation, use experiences and settings this focuses on visitor experiences and incorporate steams from outcome focus management approaches in the blm handbook 8300 and

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20 which is planning for recreation and visitor services.

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So this considers characteristics that would contribute to positive recreational outcomes.

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Visitor, safety, natural resource, and and natural resource protection.

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The second theme is administration and infrastructure.

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This see theme is more geared towards site, utilization, administration, accessibility, safety, and includes topics, as you see around the slide, such as visitation management facilities, infrastructure, roads and parking and

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partnerships, and next slide, William. so this slide we kind of break down these these 2 themes into kind of proposed management themes within the theme.

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So this is kind of a list of some of the proposed management themes within the recreational uses, user experience and settings goal, so that first one, their resource protection of course, protecting wildlife threatened endangered species and cultural

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resources the next one primitive recreation. These are again like we talked about the management directives prescribed by the the special recreation management area and acec designations.

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Then also compatible recreational uses it's important that we plan for recreation uses that are compatible with these special designations, as well as other uses occurring in the area such as

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grazing trails and access improving trails currently on the ground, and looking for opportunities to provide more a better access where appropriate just could also include creating a official trail heads and parking which don't exist

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at this time. public safety always doing our best to limit the inherent risks that come with outdoor recreation, and always in prioritizing human life over all other management actions.

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Special designations management, which is the management of a recreation to eliminate eliminate conflicts with the Wsa.

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and area of critical environmental concern. and finally, education, interpretation.

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This is providing education, interpretation to the public about the area, including information about geology, archaeology, biology, paleontology, essentially, so that they might learn and grow greater appreciation for the lower box.

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And if you go to the next slide there, William, so just like before, this is more proposed management themes for the in this case the administration and infrastructure goal.

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So that first one there partnerships and key stakeholders ensuring, we work with local communities, organizations and permit holders to help monitor and make improvements to the area as well as solve complex facilities maintenance

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and improvements. making sure we maintain existing facilities and look for opportunities to provide improved facilities for visitors, such as creating trail heads, dispersed camping areas.

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This improves this improves visitor experience, while also protecting resources roads and parking which is properly communicating condition of roads and providing established, parking areas.

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And then, finally, visitation management, which is the development developing a monitoring plan to look at visitation trends and ensuring areas do not exceed their capacity or cause resource damage.

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Which we are seeing now, so that in my section of the presentation and i'll pass it on to Allie to talk a little bit about the tentative alternatives that we've kind of come up with to talk about today awesome

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thanks. Steven again. Hello, everyone! My name is Allie, and I will be presenting some of the tentative alternatives with maps.

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If the quality of the maps is poor in your view on your screen.

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We have a virtual public meeting website that you can find the link for the.

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So put that in the chat So we have developed 3 different alternatives for each area in the gila lower box.

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There are 5 different areas in the gila lower box planning area that are along the different access routes that Stephen mentioned.

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These alternatives include an alternative, a no action alternative which basically shows what is existing on the ground in present day.

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Alternative B or a proposed action it's kind of our best case scenario right now again, these are tentative and alternative c.

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Or a more minimal disturbance alternative with less infrastructure to be proposed.

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The first area We're going to look at is the Nichols Canyon flood plain, which is the most popular area in the gila lower box, and most of the flood plain is in an area of critical environmental concern

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which has certain stipulations, such as no new roads and trails.

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We are now going to go through each tentative alternative. for the Nichols Canyon flood plain.

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Next, slide, please,

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So this is the No action alternative. The map shows the current road into Nicholas Canyon.

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The purple portion of the road has partially washed out, and new routes are being created by public recreation is all throughout the flood plain.

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In this area. Okay, next slide, please. the proposed action Alternative includes a few different infrastructure projects the blm would fix washed out road and add a water diversion to protect the road in the future add

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a boating takeout for folks that decide to float into the campsites, add a parking area that would have a post in cable around it to kind of keep people in the parking area 4 to 6 primitive walk-in

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camping sites that would only have a fire ring, and those would fall somewhere within that brown area, and then a trail leading to the boating takeout and camping sites and signs would be added to an existing electric cattle sense

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that spans across the river that would allow folks to know that it is electrified.

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Okay, next slide, and then the minimal disturbance alternative.

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A gate would be installed at the beginning of Nichols Canyon Road, to limit all motorized access for administrative use.

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The public would still be able to access 4 to 6 primitive camp areas and a small interpretive area down on the Nichols Canyon flood plain by hiking in along the old Nichols Canyon Road

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or by floating in when the rivers running. there would be no further road reclamation.

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This alternative would also include signs on the electric fence.

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Not seen on this map. It has been proposed also, and preliminary discussion.

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To put a parking area near a spring that is off of Nichols Canyon Road.

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Then the public would park at that parking area and be able to hike down to the flood plain, and it would allow them to get a little closer.

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Okay, next slide, please. the second area and the gila Lower box is the gauging station area which involves a road that drops down to the United States Geological Service gauging station.

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There is also a wilderness study area to the south of the road.

00:26:37.000 --> 00:26:46.000

On the map. You can see that in purple next slide, please.

00:26:46.000 --> 00:27:00.000

So this no action alternative. This map shows the existing gauging station road on the left, and an old mining road on the right, and both of these roads are in pretty poor shape.

00:27:00.000 --> 00:27:08.000

And you cannot drive down them at this time. next slide, please.

00:27:08.000 --> 00:27:18.000

So for the proposed action alternative. This includes a new primitive campground in brown, with very little infrastructure.

00:27:18.000 --> 00:27:28.000

It would basically be a flat parking area where you could just come and park your vehicle, and there would be no water or trash cans or restrooms at this time.

00:27:28.000 --> 00:27:33.000

There would be a new trail down to the Nichols Canyon flood plain.

00:27:33.000 --> 00:27:39.000

You can see that green line and a post in cable fence on the south side of the road.

00:27:39.000 --> 00:27:44.000

The gauging Station road protect the boundary of the the wilderness study areas.

00:27:44.000 --> 00:27:58.000

The folks wouldn't come out of the campground and drive into the wilderness study area, and then there also would be a gate somewhere along the staging station road that would keep motorized access off of that road

00:27:58.000 --> 00:28:04.000

and it could still be used for administrative use. Okay?

00:28:04.000 --> 00:28:14.000

Next slide again. If these maps are really poor again they will be on the virtual public meeting website.

00:28:14.000 --> 00:28:27.000

William, can you go back one slide real quick? So for the all minimal disturbance, alternative primitive campground would still be proposed.

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But there would be no new trail down to the Nichols Canyon flood plain like you saw on the last slide.

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We had that green trail, and there would still be a post and cable fence to protect the wilderness study area and a gate to close the gauging station road to motorized traffic for administrative

00:28:49.000 --> 00:29:06.000

use next slide. So the third area includes the Fisherman's Point overlook which borders the gila lower Box wilderness study area.

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Again. you can see that in purple, and it is at the end of a maintained Hidalgo County road,

00:29:17.000 --> 00:29:26.000

Okay, and existing on the ground here. there is also a trail and it's It's kind of hard to see it from the green and the red.

00:29:26.000 --> 00:29:39.000

Okay, next slide, please. So the no action alternative the map shows the current road that jets off the county road and heads northwest.

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It's. kind of that purple color This road is very rough and leads to the Fisherman's Point Trail Head.

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This trail is non motorized and existing and leads down to the river it's pretty good condition, and it would really not need much maintenance to get it back in shape.

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Okay, next slide. So the proposed action alternative includes closing a portion of that existing road to motorize access, and we would extend 2 parking areas where the public has already been parking.

00:30:18.000 --> 00:30:23.000

Currently we have a small parking area to the left it's a small tail.

00:30:23.000 --> 00:30:28.000

Yeah. And then we also have a parking area in blue at the end of the county road.

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Those would be made a little bit larger, and then on a primitive walk in campground and trail head would be established, and the per excuse me and the brown the public is currently driving down there and parking and

00:30:42.000 --> 00:30:54.000

camping anyways. Okay, next slide. So in the minimal disturbance alternative, the whole road would be closed.

00:30:54.000 --> 00:30:58.000

You can see in the teal in blue, and no new parking areas

00:30:58.000 --> 00:31:10.000

Camp grounds or trail heads would be established the public would continue to park at the end of the county road, and they would have to hike down to the pedestrian trail.

00:31:10.000 --> 00:31:16.000

So hike back down the county road and then down that existing road to reach the trail.

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Awesome. Okay, next slide. So the fourth is area include the spring on the bluff overlook, which also borders the gila lower boxed wilderness study area.

00:31:29.000 --> 00:31:34.000

You can see that the county road is cherry stemmed in on each side by the

00:31:34.000 --> 00:31:43.000

wilderness study area. Okay, next slide.

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So the no action alternative for this map shows the current area of the teal where the public is parking right Now, that's the whole area and the existing pedestrian trail.

00:31:58.000 --> 00:32:08.000

This trail is in really poor shaped, and needs quite a bit of maintenance, and is not very hikable at this time.

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Next slide, please,

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So for the proposed action alternative. This includes establishing a trail head with signage and a parking area with post and cable.

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You can see that in the blue and then it's hard to see but the red outlines, the the parking area kind of wrangle folks and keep them out of the wilderness study area and give them a place to park so that

00:32:33.000 --> 00:32:41.000

they can hike the trail, and then we would also look at reestablishing the trail and maintaining it.

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And this trail does. I forgot to mention. It does take you down to the to the river as well, and provides nice access.

00:32:49.000 --> 00:32:56.000

Okay, next slide. So in the minimal disturbance alternative.

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We would only add signage, and no trail, head or post and cable fence, would be established, and the pedestrian trail would, would still be reestablished.

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So folks could still get down to the river. Okay, next slide, please.

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So this is the fifth and final area, and it is the proposed CapRock campground.

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It is off a maintained county road near Caprock Mountain on the way to both Fishermen's Point and the spring on the bluff.

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This would be the most accessible campground, and would probably allow Rvs and vehicles like that to visit

00:33:42.000 --> 00:33:52.000

The campground would only be established once visitor monitoring data demonstrates a need for further infrastructure based on increased visitor use.

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Just. I just want to note that there is no alternative

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A or no, no action alternative, because there is no existing infrastructure on the ground.

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There next slide. So the proposed action alternative includes a campground area in the purple with infrastructure, including kiosk, toilet fire pits water and potential site. host location camp area would be outside of the

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Acec and Wsa as you can see, those are to the north.

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And again, as I mentioned earlier, we would only establish it.

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Once we saw the the visitor use demands that we establish a larger campground.

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We're the blm is trying to be forward thinking with this alternative.

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So that more unnecessary planning does not have to be in completed in the future.

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Okay, next slide. So the minimal disturbance alternative is similar to the proposed action alternative, and includes a smaller campground area.

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As we have mentioned a few times, these are tentative alternatives, and based on the feedback.

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We receive they could be altered. I will now pass the presentation to Katie Patterson from em.

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Psi, and she will explain some logistics for the questions and answer portion of the meeting.

00:35:26.000 --> 00:35:34.000

Thank you.

00:35:34.000 --> 00:35:42.000

Thanks for that presentation. Allie and Steven

00:35:42.000 --> 00:35:48.000

So now we're going to move to the 30 min question answer portion of the meeting.

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This slide provides additional guidance for how you use the zoom.

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Q. A feature. you can click on the Q. A. icon at the bottom of your screen type in your question, and press the send button.

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I will then read the questions allowed and blm staff members will respond to them just as a reminder we'll be focusing on questions related to the recreation area management plan and the need for process please be respectful of

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others, and refrain from profanity and your questions, questions that are unrelated to this project, or are inappropriate, will be dismissed and not answered. If you see that your question is not answered.

00:36:24.000 --> 00:36:27.000

Please try rephrasing it and submitting it again.

00:36:27.000 --> 00:36:36.000

blm will answer questions as quickly as possible. However, you may hear brief pauses as they can to consider their answer, and just a reminder.

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Please don't use the chat Button to submit a question Only use the Q. A.

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Icon Doesn't look like we Have any phone attendees at this time, but we will provide an opportunity. phone attendees to ask questions during this period, too.

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If any join, and again the blm is going to answer as many questions as possible.

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During this 30 min period. After that we'll move to the verbal commenting portion of the meeting, we have a additional time at the

end of the verbal commenting period, and There's still more questions
We'll be

00:37:08.000 --> 00:37:26.000

happy to answer additional questions then, and if you have additional
questions after the meeting again, you can send them to that las
cruces district office public email box at any time that link that
email addresses in the chat So with that we will

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go ahead and begin with our first question as it comes in

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Our first question is from Tom Phillips, and it is what kind of
visitor monitoring has been done, and if so, what are the numbers,
Stephen?

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Would you like to answer this one, Stephen Haynes?

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Sure. Thanks for your question, Tom. currently the bulk of our
monitoring comes from when we go out to the heel lower box to do
wilderness study area monitoring for the wilderness study

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area. There we always record numbers for how many visitors we see on
that day that we do those monitoring days.

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Those are more less frequently than we would like.

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We also receive reports from other blm members that got other blm
staff that go out there whenever they see visitation as well as the
grazing permittee he picks up about a barrel of trash each month
specifically from

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nichols canyon so that's kind of how we've been gauging things lately
as how much trash is occurring in nichols canyon getting how much
visitation But one of the things we have

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discussed is the need for vehicle counters or trail counters in order
to start to gather more hard, hard data on visitation numbers, so that
we can start to kind of further develop a better monitoring plan for

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the gila lower box

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Great. Thank you, Steven. Our next question is from Jay Brandon, and this question is, What are the costs associated with the various alternatives?

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And Allie, would you like to take a crack at that?

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Or Kendra, I see. you indicated you'd be interested in talking to that one.

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Yes, yeah, thank you for that question so we're in the planning part process.

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That management plan and I did that one topic classes will be pretty out turn against is it?

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No, you know coming up with a plan, and then, as

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Plan out at this time

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That will be

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Thanks, Kendra. One other thing I should note, too, is that just a reminder that these alternatives are preliminary as well.

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And so haven't been fully fleshed out yet of course, that will continue after as part of the scoping process.

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I see. Tom noted that it was pretty hard to hear.

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You can just maybe try leading closer to your microphone for the next time that you are speaking, our next question is from Donna Stevens, and it's do any of the alternatives in the 5 areas plan to reduce or change the level

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of grazing and greg would you like to take this one.

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Yes, i'd be happy to no there are not any discussions at this time on on changes to grazing on the Cap Rock allotment

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Thanks. Greg,

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We'll wait a moment for other questions to come in

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Looks like we got another one here from Alison I apologize. If I miss pronounce your last name, it's Sewick.

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For the minimal disturbance alternatives. Will there be funding for enforcement to ensure no motorized vehicles?

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Stephen, would you like to take this one? sure?

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Thank you for your question, Allison. I think when we we went through the alternatives, one of the things we always try and consider is we.

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Our boundaries are I think you'll one of the ones we talked about the gauging station campground or dispersed campground camp parking area is right across from the Wsa in an instances like

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that. we thought it was really important to to go ahead. and put a post and cable on the boundary of the wsa, because we're gonna be drawing public there.

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There's more of a chance for you know for them to be driving into the Wsa.

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Where they shouldn't so we're the plan is to look for for cases like that where we can kind of do our best to control where the public can go and not drive into the wsa but Yes, enforcement

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is, is a big problem for us. us. being our district office being in Las Cruces, you know that's 2 and a half hours away from the gila lower box.

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So it can be difficult, with only with only 3 3 law enforcement Ranger positions to to monitor areas like that.

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One of the one of the hopes is that we can also develop a a monitoring program that would include volunteer monitors, volunteers from the area local citizens who enjoy recreating themselves.

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At the Gila Lower Box. we now have a volunteer coordinator here at the district office who has been doing a really good job of reaching out to communities and trying to kind of recruit more volunteers for

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protection on of things on public land and So again, that's a it's a program we're looking to help hopefully develop in the area of the gila lower box.

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Yes, with with with the development of more of this infrastructure could potentially become more visitation.

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And we'll be looking to you know increase law enforcement which controls as we see fit as it as needed.

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Yes, thank you for your question.

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Thanks. Steven.

00:44:01.000 --> 00:44:09.000

Give a minute here. see if anybody else has questions. We have kind of a small group tonight.

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So feel free to ask multiple different questions if you have them.

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So William just posted that email address again. if you think of other questions after tonight's meeting as well

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Maybe while we're waiting for to see if there are any additional questions, I can just tell you all briefly about the virtual public meeting website that we referenced a few times during the meeting.

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So far Then there's a separate link to that website you may have gone and checked it out already.

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It's a single web page that has some background information about the project and about the NEPA process.

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It has information on how to provide comments both through the BLM e planning website. Your Us.

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Mail for tonight during the meeting, and then it has information on the preliminary alternatives, including those maps that Allie was walking through during the presentation as well as a single interactive web app where you can really zoom in

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and travel around on the map virtually to see specific areas.

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You might be interested in, and you can toggle on different facilities by alternative to yourself.

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Visualize what's in the preliminary alternatives. now.

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So we encourage folks to that website to learn more about the project as well

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Don't see any more questions right now. so we've still got plenty of time devoted for questions, but maybe we'll go ahead and move to the public commenting portion of the meeting allow folks who are interested to provide

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your verbal public comments, and then we can come back to more questions, if you like.

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So I'm gonna turn it over to noelle Crowley now to guide us through this commenting portion of the meeting.

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Well, thank you, Katie. We are now going to move into our verbal public concession before we get started.

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I'm going to provide some brief guidance on how to provide substantive comments, substantive comments are the most useful for the blm, and could take a number of forms substantive comments may provide new information about the

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preliminary alternatives or the issues to be analyzed, such as new studies evaluating the effectiveness of limiting trail use.

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Another example of a substantive comment is identifying a different way to meet the need of the ramp.

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Ea. Substantive comments may also suggest alternative methodologies for the Ramp Ea analysis and the reasons why they should be used.

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A substantive comment may also identify additional issues concerning or opportunities that the Bm.

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Should should consider finally a substantive comment may identify sources of credible research or data that the blm should consider in developing the gila lower box ramp.

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Ea. i'm now going to read through the instructions for those participants who indicated they want to offer a verbal public comment when they pre registered for Tonight's meeting.

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William, can you go to the next slide? please?

00:47:32.000 --> 00:47:40.000

Thank you. We have a list of these participants. comments will be accepted in the order that people registered again.

00:47:40.000 --> 00:47:47.000

If you registered before the start time of today's meeting you are on our pre registered comment to list.

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If you are on the commenter list, when it is your turn to provide a comment? you will read your name aloud from the list When you hear your name called out.

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Please use the raise hand feature so that we know you are available and ready to offer your comment.

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You can access the raise hand feature by clicking on either the reactions icon or the participants list.

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Icon, which are both located the bottom of your zoom screen.

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If you move your mouse back and forth across the bottom of your screen, these icons should appear.

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You may want, you may need to exit out of your full screen zoom, full screen, zoom, view to see these icons.

00:48:20.000 --> 00:48:33.000

You can then select the raise hand feature, located either in the reactions icon, or the bottom of your participants list, or if you're calling in through the phone, please press star 9 to access the raise hand feature, once you have raised your

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hand. You will then be unmuted, so that you can provide your verbal comment.

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You may be double muted. If that is the case, we will prompt you to unmute yourself on your end, so that we can hear you please spell out your first and last name for the record before providing a verbal public

00:48:48.000 --> 00:49:00.000

comment, and if you're representing an organization or group please say so during your comment. to ensure we get to as many commenters as possible, we are asking you to limit your comments to 2 min. after you have provided your comment.

00:49:00.000 --> 00:49:03.000

We will mute you and move on to our next commenter.

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If we are able to get through everyone and still have time remaining, we will welcome additional verbal comments from people who have already commented once.

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You can also submit written comments anytime until the end of the scoping period.

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On May the fifth at the Blm's E planning website.

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The link to that website is in the meeting chat next slide, please

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We are now going to officially start. Sorry sorry katie i'm sorry to interrupt, but we did just get one more question before that.

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We can just address before the public commenting starts okay excellent Let's go back to that.

00:49:43.000 --> 00:49:50.000

Thanks. So that question is from Alison Sewick again. and the question is for the boating takeout at Nicholas Canyon.

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Where are the boaters putting in I think Allie's gonna Take that question?

00:49:54.000 --> 00:50:10.000

Yes, thanks, Allison, for the question. So most folks are either floating down from the Gila middle box, which is a little bit further north, or they are putting in on a piece of State land near red rock There's a bridge there

00:50:10.000 --> 00:50:15.000

that they're kind of putting in at

00:50:15.000 --> 00:50:19.000

Thanks, Allie, and thanks again for letting us jump back in.

00:50:19.000 --> 00:50:24.000

Noelle, we can get back to the commenting side now. Yes, of course.

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Okay, so that's zoom we're gonna officially Start the verbal comment portion of tonight's meeting to receive comments related to the proposed gila lower Box Ramp ea.

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It is now 6:50 mountain time so let's get started again.

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This verbal public comment Portion of the meeting, along with your comments is being recorded as part of the official record.

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As a reminder. Your camera and mic control settings are restricted during this time.

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You will only be able to talk if and when you're unmuted.

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So please remember to speak so when prompted. the Blm.

00:51:00.000 --> 00:51:12.000

Wants to hear from all members of the public so we'll be using the following guidelines today: First, Please be mindful the length of your comments, so that everyone who wants to speak has an opportunity to do so again to ensure we get to as

00:51:12.000 --> 00:51:23.000

many commenters as possible. We'll we're asking you to limit your comments to 2 min or less after you provided your comment, and we'll mute you and move on to our next commenter.

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So. second, please be respectful of others in their viewpoints.

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Third, please refrain from using profanity while passion is welcome in your comment.

00:51:30.000 --> 00:51:34.000

Policy requires that we mute anyone who use inappropriate language.

00:51:34.000 --> 00:51:39.000

So please avoid doing so. If that does happen we'll provide a reminder before un

00:51:39.000 --> 00:51:46.000

muting the person to try again, using words. acceptable to all ages, and I did notice that look like we had another question.

00:51:46.000 --> 00:51:53.000

Come in, Let's see. Okay, Sorry that was just a a comment from Tom.

00:51:53.000 --> 00:52:06.000

Thank you, Tom. for your comment so with that we're gonna begin with our pre registered commenter list. and so it looks like the first pre registered commenter is Cindy Tuell.

00:52:06.000 --> 00:52:26.000

Well, I apologize if I have pronounced your last name incorrectly. I am not seeing them on our attendees list, but will provide them an opportunity to raise their hand if perhaps they're on as a different name

00:52:26.000 --> 00:52:30.000

Okay, i'm not seeing cindy raise their hand.

00:52:30.000 --> 00:52:37.000

So I will move on to our next pre registered commenter, and that is Tom Phillips.

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Tom, if you're here, let's see Tom let's see. Yes, So Tom indicated in the question, and answer that he does not intend to add verbal comments. so thank you Tom our next pre registered

00:52:51.000 --> 00:53:01.000

commenter is Ben Luxenberg and let's see I'm not seeing Ben's name in our attendees list.

00:53:01.000 --> 00:53:11.000

I will provide them an opportunity to raise their hand if they are here

00:53:11.000 --> 00:53:19.000

Okay, I'm not seeing Ben raise their hand. so we will move on to Allyson Siwik.

00:53:19.000 --> 00:53:23.000

I apologize if I have pronounced your last name incorrectly.

00:53:23.000 --> 00:53:32.000

Allyson, if you're here and interested in providing a verbal comment, please raise your hand.

00:53:32.000 --> 00:53:40.000

Okay. Looks like Allyson has raised their hand. So, Allyson, I will go ahead and unmute you.

00:53:40.000 --> 00:53:44.000

Hi there. This is Allyson Siwik with the Gila Conservation coalition.

00:53:44.000 --> 00:53:55.000

Sorry I Couldn't figure out how to type this out directly to you, but we will be submitting comments on behalf of the Gila Conservation Coalition by the deadline.

00:53:55.000 --> 00:54:09.000

But I actually don't have anything. prepared for this evening and thank you for a really enlightening virtual public meeting that I think cleared up some questions for me.

00:54:09.000 --> 00:54:17.000

So, thank you, excellent Allyson glad to hear from you and i'm glad that this presentation has been helpful thus far.

00:54:17.000 --> 00:54:31.000

So we'll go ahead and mute you Okay, So, moving on to our last pre registered Commenter Todd Schulke or Schulky again, I apologize. If I have pronounced your last name

00:54:31.000 --> 00:54:51.000

correctly. i'm not seeing todd appear in our attendees list, but I will provide them a moment to raise their hand if they are here

00:54:51.000 --> 00:55:07.000

Okay, It does not look like todd is here so with that i'm going to jump back to the top of our pre-registered commentary list in case anyone has appeared since we started the verbal comment period and wants

00:55:07.000 --> 00:55:20.000
to provide a comment. We'll go back to cindy Tuell, still not seeing
Cindy in our attendees list

00:55:20.000 --> 00:55:27.000
And then Tom's already indicated that he does not or that they do not
need to provide a verbal comments.

00:55:27.000 --> 00:55:35.000
Ben Luxenberg, still not seeing ben's name appear on our attendees
list.

00:55:35.000 --> 00:55:46.000
Allyson has already provided their comments, and then back to Todd
Schulke, who does not appear to be on our attendees list.

00:55:46.000 --> 00:55:51.000
So with that that takes us to the end of our pre registered
commenters.

00:55:51.000 --> 00:55:58.000
And we will now open up the comment portion to anyone who would like
to provide a verbal comment irregardless.

00:55:58.000 --> 00:56:10.000
If you have pre- registered to do so so again. to indicate that you
would like to offer a comment, Please use the raise hand feature, or
if you're calling through the phone which it does not look like we
have any phone

00:56:10.000 --> 00:56:39.000
callers. Please press Star 9,

00:56:39.000 --> 00:56:46.000
Doesn't appear that anyone is indicating that they want to provide a
comment.

00:56:46.000 --> 00:56:51.000
Again. there are we the blm's accepting comments in written form.

00:56:51.000 --> 00:57:05.000
Until the end of the scoping period William if you want to go to the
next slide while we're waiting, you can go ahead and do so. so.

00:57:05.000 --> 00:57:09.000
Here's some instructions on how to submit further comments.

00:57:09.000 --> 00:57:13.000
If you want to go home, and perhaps consider all this information.

00:57:13.000 --> 00:57:18.000

You can find more information available at the heel lower box ramp ea websites.

00:57:18.000 --> 00:57:28.000

The link for that is indicated here. you can make a comment on our using the Blms E planning websites.

00:57:28.000 --> 00:57:37.000

You could submit a comment by email, you could also submit a comment in written form by mail at the address indicated on the screen.

00:57:37.000 --> 00:57:45.000

And just as a reminder, the end of the scoping period is May fifth,

00:57:45.000 --> 00:57:50.000

It looks like we have another question that came through in our Q. A.

00:57:50.000 --> 00:57:55.000

Feature. Well, the recording of this virtual public meeting be on the website at some point.

00:57:55.000 --> 00:58:25.000

Thanks, Allyson for your question. Yes. The recording and the transcript will both be available on the VPM website and on E planning

00:58:33.000 --> 00:59:03.000

Give a couple more minutes for people to indicate if they have any more questions or comments

00:59:35.000 --> 00:59:39.000

Wanted to thank everyone who has participated. In the meantime.

00:59:39.000 --> 00:59:53.000

Your comments are super important to this entire process. and it's essential to ensuring that these plans trapped, or use the most public participation in information as possible.

00:59:53.000 --> 01:00:23.000

So thank you. Everyone for attending and participating

01:00:49.000 --> 01:01:07.000

Maybe we'll get another minute for anyone who wants who is thinking of a comment and wants the opportunity to do so, and then I can pass it along to Bill Childress to close this out right will give us another minute for anyone to raise

01:01:07.000 --> 01:01:30.000

their hand. If they want to submit a comment or ask a question,

01:01:30.000 --> 01:01:36.000

Okay, So with that. that is the conclusion of our comment portion.

01:01:36.000 --> 01:01:47.000

Thank you all for those who participated and with that i'll turn it over to Bill Childress now to conclude tonight's meeting.

01:01:47.000 --> 01:01:56.000

Yeah. So I would like to express my appreciation for those who were able to attend Today's public meeting via Zoom.

01:01:56.000 --> 01:02:03.000

Please consider and think about the alternatives that were presented to you.

01:02:03.000 --> 01:02:19.000

The tentative alternatives we want to make sure we get the public's input to improve those and to get us to a part where we can have a final range of alternatives for further processing in the in this effort to

01:02:19.000 --> 01:02:33.000

do what we're hoping to do which is to improve access to the the Gila river area, while at same time protecting our resources in our our communities.

01:02:33.000 --> 01:02:58.000

That utilize our public lands so give it some additional thought you've been exposed to the tentative alternatives and we hope to see some comments from the public and interest groups by May