



FACT SHEET

Introduction

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is preparing a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to evaluate potential environmental impacts of the proposed Draft Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP) for the Former Bennett Freeze Area (FBFA). The PEA will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The twin aims of NEPA are to ensure that the federal agency, in this case the BIA, considered every significant aspect of the environmental impact of a proposed action, and to ensure that the agency will inform the public that it has considered environmental concerns through the decision-making process.

The PEA NEPA process is now beginning, with a 45-day public scoping period beginning November 16 and ending December 30, 2020. This fact sheet summarizes the project and publishes the virtual public meeting dates where the public can attend and learn more. BIA is requesting that the public consider the Draft IRMP and any environmental impacts it may have. The BIA welcomes the public to share any concerns or issues. More information on how and where to provide input is noted on page 3 or visit the project website at <https://www.bia.gov/FBFA-EA>.

What is the Integrated Resource Management Plan?

The BIA, in close consultation with the Navajo Nation, developed the IRMP in accordance with the American Indian Agricultural Resource Management Act (AIARMA), 25 United States Code Chapter 39, and other applicable laws and regulation. The Draft IRMP is a strategic, vision-based, long-range management plan based on Navajo Nation members' interests, needs, and concerns for their lands, and natural and cultural resources. The Navajo Nation Division of Community Development, Design, and Engineering Services obtained funding and led the development of the Recovery Plan for the FBFA, which was completed in 2008. The Draft IRMP was prepared to update the 2008 Recovery Plan and was developed with assistance from the FBFA interdisciplinary Task Force and Core Teams comprising representatives from the BIA and the Navajo Nation. The draft document was completed in May 2020. The purpose of the Draft IRMP is to meet the social, cultural, economic, and long-term sustainability needs of the residents of the FBFA. The Draft IRMP is a guide for decision-making by the Navajo Nation to manage existing Navajo Nation resources and to provide a framework for development in the future. In October 2020, the Navajo Nation Resources Development Committee, and the Navajo Hopi Land Commission both approved the Draft IRMP.

Why is a PEA Being Written?

The BIA has determined that a “programmatic” environmental assessment is the best choice for evaluating the Draft IRMP under NEPA. An EA that is “programmatic” evaluates the effect of a broad range of issues or planning-level decisions that may include a wide range of individual projects; implementation of projects over a long timeframe; and/or implementation of projects over a large geographic area, such as the FBFA.

The PEA does not evaluate project-level issues such as a specific development or project footprint or design details— instead, it examines how potential projects interact with the Draft IRMP. After the PEA is final, it is followed by those project-level environmental reviews outlined in the Draft IRMP using the information in the PEA.

What is the Project? What is the Purpose and Need for it?

The proposed federal action is the approval of the Draft IRMP for the FBFA as prepared by the BIA Navajo Region and Navajo Nation. The purpose of the Draft IRMP is to meet the social, cultural, economic, and long-term sustainable development needs of the residents of the FBFA.

The need for the IRMP is to provide a framework for more effective and efficient agency coordination when tackling important management issues on the FBFA. This agency coordination will reduce duplication of effort; provide more consistency directives to agency staff; require more transparency between agencies, Tribal members, and the general public; enhance values-driven resource management decisions based on public input; focus management on priority issues; and improve communication. BIA has a regulatory and fiduciary responsibility for the management of Indian agricultural lands under the AIARMA. AIARMA gives the BIA responsibility to develop and ensure proper management of Indian agricultural lands which includes an increase in economic returns, enhance Indian self-determination, promote employment opportunities, and improve the social and economic well-being of Indian and surrounding communities.

Planning Process

There are several opportunities to participate in the PEA process. The public scoping period for the PEA will begin on November 16, 2020 and end on December 30, 2020. You may submit comments during the scoping period, but the BIA must receive all comments by December 30, 2020. Five virtual public scoping meetings will be held to present information to the public and obtain input. Dates and locations for the public scoping meetings are provided in this newsletter and will be announced on local radio stations and in local newspapers.



There will be an informational presentation in English and Navajo for the first 45 minutes of each meeting. An opportunity for questions, answers, and oral comments will be given after the presentation. Comments may be submitted during the virtual public scoping meetings orally in English or Navajo, or written comments can be mailed, emailed, or faxed. More information about submitting comments is noted on page 3 of this Fact Sheet. Your comments are very important, particularly at this early stage of the process—comments received during the scoping period will be reviewed and incorporated, as applicable, into the Draft PEA.

Once the Draft PEA is complete, the document will be released to the public for a period of 30 days. During that review period, BIA will conduct additional public meetings to accept comments on the Draft PEA document. The Final PEA will be issued with any revisions to the IRMP after the public comment period on the Draft PEA and the associated IRMP. The Navajo Nation Resources and Development Committee, in consultation with the Navajo Hopi Land Commission, will select the preferred management alternative through Tribal resolution and recommend to the BIA Regional Director for approval and implementation of the IRMP. The BIA Regional Director will then issue a decision based on the Navajo Nation Resources and Development Committee's recommendation, upon which the IRMP will be approved and adopted.

BIA will maintain a mailing list throughout the process. You can sign up to be on the project mailing list on the project website or by completing the enclosed form and either mailing or faxing it to the BIA.

If you need additional information about the project or have any questions please contact Renee Benally, Natural Resource Specialist, BIA – Navajo Region: renee.benally@bia.gov or (928) 283-2252.

BIA Wants to Hear from You!

Public meetings, called “scoping” meetings, will be held to gather input from all interested parties concerning the use of natural and cultural resources in the FBFA, the impacts to those resources, and any concerns or issues. The meetings are part of the “scoping” process because public comments help BIA determine the “scope” or breadth of the environmental review. Five scoping meetings will be held. The virtual meetings will have information about the Draft IRMP, the NEPA process, and how to submit comments. Translation services will be provided

The public scoping meetings will be held virtually on the internet using the Zoom meeting program. Please visit the “Public Meetings Dates and Time” Web page from <https://www.bia.gov/FBFA-EA> for instructions on how to register for any of the Zoom meetings. You can also call in to each meeting with the following phone number and meeting codes:

This toll-free phone number will be used for all meetings (346) 248-7799		
Date	Meeting Time	Meeting Code
December 1, 2020	10:00 a.m.	947 5547 6073
	6:00 p.m.	941 4401 5700
December 2, 2020	10:00 a.m.	936 5766 8352
December 3, 2020	10:00 a.m.	929 9950 6369
	4:00 p.m.	952 7511 7477

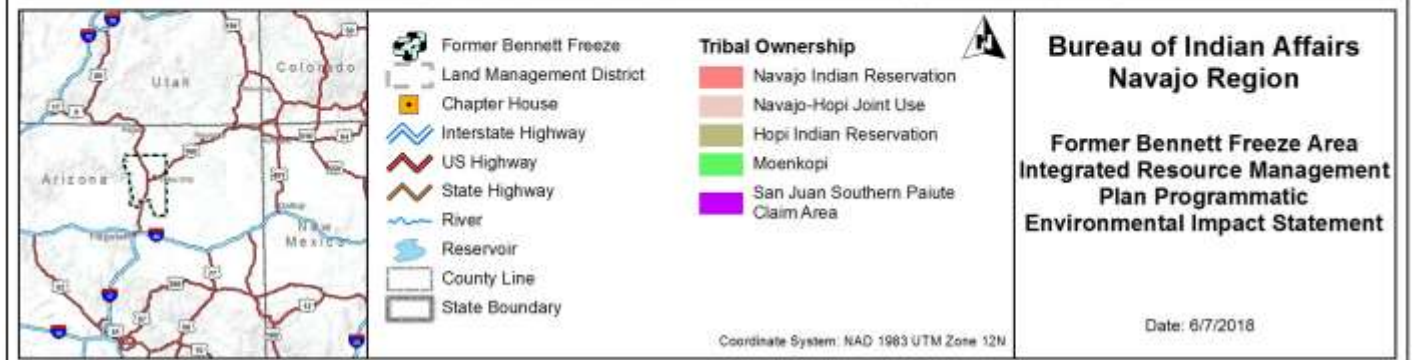
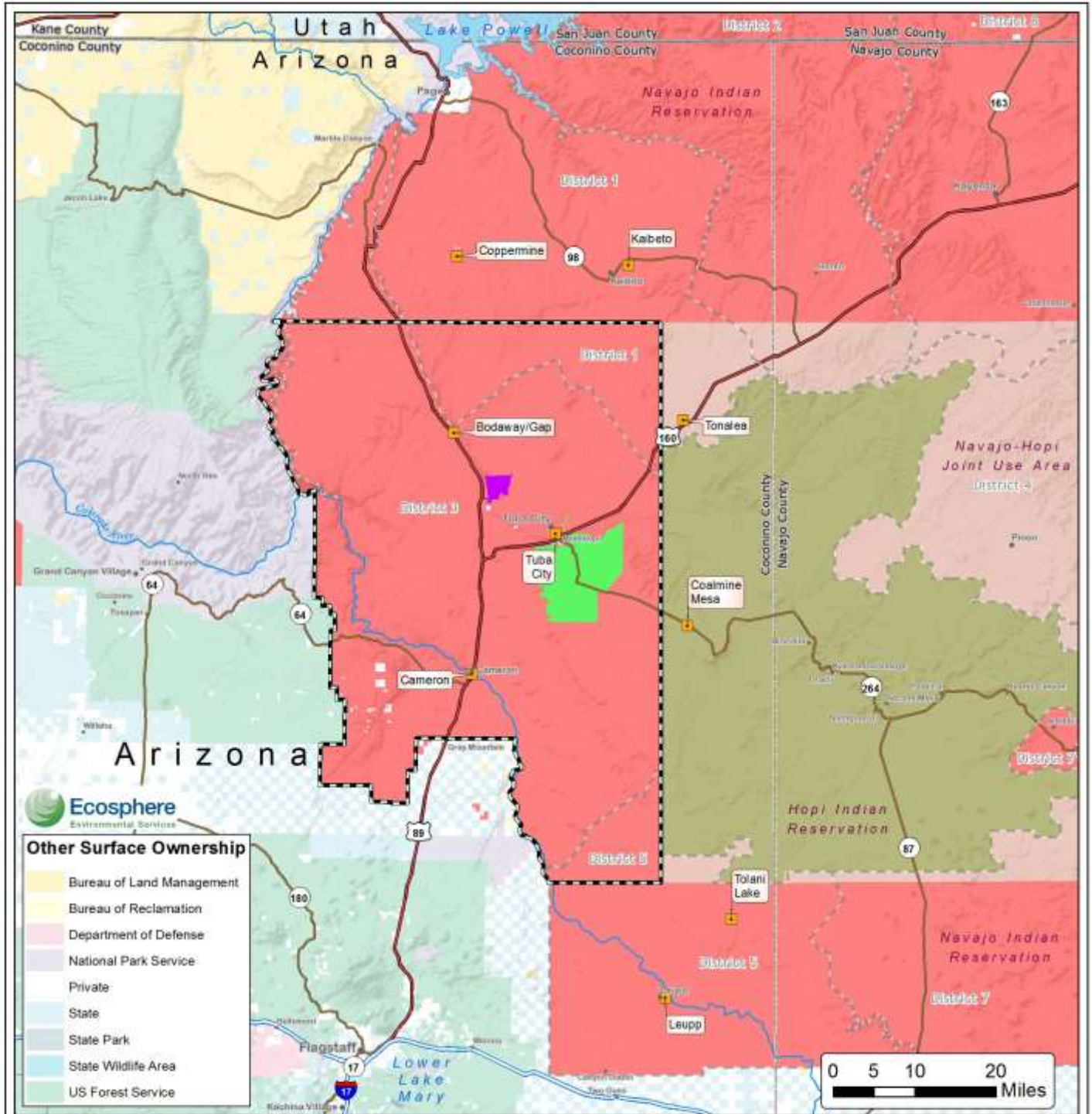
You may also follow the PEA progress and updates through Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/BureauIndAffrs>) or Twitter (<https://twitter.com/BureauIndAffrs>).

How to Submit Comments

The public scoping period will begin on November 16, 2020 and will close on December 30, 2020. If you cannot make it to one of the meetings to share your concerns or comments, please submit written comments via email, fax, or mail by December 30, 2020. In the subject line of your mail, fax, or email, please address as “Comments for the FBFA PEA”.

Email: FBFA-Comments@bia.gov | **Fax:** (928) 283-2215 or **Mail:**

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**Bureau of Indian Affairs
Navajo Region**

**Former Bennett Freeze Area
Integrated Resource Management
Plan Programmatic
Environmental Impact Statement**

Date: 6/7/2018

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N