

Arizona: BLM Releases Draft Target Shooting Plan for Sonoran Desert National Monument – Public Meeting Scheduled



The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has released for public comment a plan that will determine what lands within the Sonoran Desert National Monument (SDNM) will be closed to target shooting. Currently, the nearly 500,000-acre SDNM is open to target shooting, with the exception of 10,599 acres temporarily closed by a court order in a lawsuit filed against an earlier BLM plan that would have kept the entire SDNM open to shooting. The lands closed are on the north side of the SDNM along the El Paso Natural Gas Pipeline right-of-way that parallels BLM Road 8000. It also extends along both sides of BLM Road 8001, adjacent to the wilderness boundary, before terminating at BLM Road 8006. The court order also requires the BLM to complete the management plan by September 2017.

The draft plan presents five alternatives as follows:

- Alternative A - the “no action” alternative continues the 1988 Lower Gila South Resource Management Plan without change, which means that target shooting would be allowed anywhere within the SDNM.
- Alternative B - the court order closure would become permanent, affecting 10,599 acres or 2.1 % of the SDNM.
- Alternative C – the BLM’s preferred alternative would allow target shooting in the Desert Back Country Recreation Management Zone only and partially lift the court order closure as addressed in Alternative B. The effect is that 54,817 acres or 11% of the SDNM would be closed to target shooting.
- Alternative D - target shooting would not be allowed in designated wilderness, lands managed to protect wilderness characteristics, and the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail Recreation Management Zone, which would close 320,317 acres or 66% of the SDNM to target shooting.
- Alternative E – the SDNM would be entirely closed to target shooting.

The plan with its five alternatives can be found at <http://1.usa.gov/1ZPyFSA>. The public has 90 days or until March 15th to submit comments and comments may be emailed to blm_az_sdnmtargetshooting@blm.gov or faxed to 623-580-5580.

The BLM will be hosting public meetings as follows:

- **Thursday, January 19:** 5-8 p.m., BLM National Training Center, 9828 N. 31st Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85051.
- **Friday, January 20:** 5-8 p.m., Arizona Game and Fish Department, 5000 W. Carefree Highway, Phoenix, AZ 85086.
- **Saturday, January 21:** Noon-4 p.m., Dorothy Powell Senior Adult Center, 405 E. 6th St., Casa Grande, AZ 85122.

Everyone who enjoys recreational target shooting on the SDNM is strongly encouraged to review the alternatives and submit comments to the BLM. You can be assured that those groups and individuals who are anti-gun will be flooding the BLM with comments supporting Alternative E, which would close the entire SDNM to shooting.

It was BLM’s intent through an earlier management plan to close the SDNM to target shooting. If it had not been for the intervention of the NRA, the SDNM would already be closed to shooters. The BLM was encouraged to revise the management plan and in an about-face, it proposed that the entire SDNM be open to shooting. But, the proposal lacked the required documentation to support that recommendation and the BLM was

promptly sued. This is the third and likely final round over the future of target shooting in the SDNM. **It is imperative that all sportsmen and women who find it important to keep our Federal lands open to hunting and shooting take this draft plan seriously by reading it and submitting individual comments.**