

**Nominee:** San Juan Public Lands Center and Ranger District/Field Offices (for integrated planning on BLM and FS lands in Southwest Colorado)

**Contribution to Service First in FY 2007:** The Draft Land Management Plan (DLMP) and accompanying Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the San Juan Public Lands was released for public comment on December 14, 2007. The joint plan for two agencies was developed by an integrated team composed of both BLM and FS employees.

The Draft Land Management Plan for the San Juan Public Lands represents an important milestone in the evolution of Service First. The DLMP covers approximately 2.4 million acres, in eleven counties, administered by the BLM and FS. It covers a very diverse area, ranging in elevation from 4,900 feet in the Colorado Plateau to over 14,000 feet in the Southern Rockies. The joint plan will help provide seamless direction for both agencies. The DLMP and DEIS were developed by an integrated team, comprised of employees of from both agencies.

Under the Service First Interagency Agreement (June 5, 2005), employees of the San Juan Public Lands Center and its Ranger District/Field Offices are working together as a single team in order to provide leadership in all aspects of land management. The employees have responsibility (dual-designation) for both BLM and National Forest System lands.

The Colorado State Office (BLM) and Rocky Mountain Regional Office R-2 (USFS) also collaborated to provide staff support, consistency, and guidance in the joint planning process. Regional and State Office planners, specialists, and managers worked with the San Juan Public Lands Center staffs to incorporate both of the agencies' policies and procedures resulting in an integrated plan. These offices provided planning staff, subject matter specialist support, and writer/editor skills to the effort. The combined efforts of State, Regional, Forest, and Field Office personnel enabled the publication of the draft joint plan.

Even though the BLM and the USFS share similar missions, partners, issues and constituents; the two old plans, one for each agency, were very different in terminology and in level of detail. The new integrated plan will be easier for land managers to use because it provides consistent direction across both agencies lands. Where the agencies regulations, policies and directives are not consistent, the joint plan clearly demonstrates the authorities each agency operates under. It will also be easier for local governments, organizations, and individuals that deal with both agencies.

The Land Management Plan for the San Juan Public Lands meets the legal requirements for both agencies (the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) and 36 CFR 219 for the FS and the Federal Land Policy Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and 43 CFR 1600 for the BLM). This required a non-traditional approach to the format of the DLMP and increased coordination with State, Regional, and Washington Offices. The Planning Team discovered that traditional ways of doing business were more of a hurdle to

overcome than legal requirements. The San Juan's efforts could potentially open doors for other Service First units in joint planning.

The plan was developed using a place-based community involvement process. The 2.4 million acres of San Juan Public Lands were broken into 33 smaller landscapes that were meaningful to people. Each landscape included both BLM and FS lands if both were found in the area. At meetings in local communities, BLM and FS employees and community members worked with neutral facilitators to identify outstanding features and primary uses of the landscapes, plus concerns with current management and opportunities for the future. Many participants commented that this approach both provided a better context for resources and issues that crossed agency boundaries. With this approach, the interested public only needed to participate in one public involvement processes for both agencies.

The joint planning process utilized strengths from both agencies. The Forest Service provided skills in areas such as hydrology, visual resource management, designated wilderness areas, and GIS while the BLM provided expertise in air modeling, minerals management, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wilderness Study Areas, land-use planning, and NEPA.

A useful side benefit to developing a joint plan was that it will result in a geodatabase that spans both agencies with consistent data. Work completed for the plan revision include: extending the vegetation coverage across BLM and National Forest System Lands; seamless air modeling; structure recreation management areas, travel management planning; and, mapping and planning for many of the physical resources.

**Summary:** The joint plan revision meets all three of the award criteria. Customer service was improved during development of the plan by allowing interested people, organizations, and governments to focus on one planning effort rather than two separate ones. Customer service will also be improved by having consistent plan direction because many local people deal with both agencies. Operational efficiency will be improved by employees that routinely deal with both lands not having to deal with conflicting direction. Developing the joint plan has not been easy, but the San Juan's efforts may help lay the groundwork for future units to do it more efficiently. Resource management is improved by looking at things in the larger context of the San Juan Public Lands Center rather than the BLM and FS separately. This is especially true for resources such as wildlife, ecology, and recreation that span the jurisdictional boundaries.