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Public comment opportunity: Bureau of Land Management Proposed Public Lands Rule

Below is a sample letter to customize and submit on behalf of your local organization. While IMBA's Government Affairs team has been analyzing the Proposed Rule, the team has been in ongoing contact with Bureau of Land Management staff as well as key partners and stakeholders, and has attended all public meetings on the Proposed Rule. Through this engagement many questions have been clarified, but many still remain. The draft letter below represents what's most important to better clarify for mountain bike organizations. IMBA's technical comment will expand on these and other details within the Proposed Rule.

Comments can be submitted via [this portal](#) through Monday June 20, 2023. A more simplified comment option can be found at imba.com to share with your membership network.

[Customize the opening paragraph]

- Introduce yourself, your organization, membership base and mission
- Summarize the trails you oversee (total miles, networks) and their BLM office regions
- Include volunteer highlights like number of hours, days, specific trails

I'm writing in regard to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Proposed Public Lands Rule, 1004-AE92. I am encouraged by the BLM's effort to better focus on conservation amid its mission to manage and protect multiple land uses.

However, the rule as written lacks the specificity needed to protect against a wide range of interpretations and applications. Interpretations of vague language could hinder public land access and stall recreation developments that conserve land while serving the public. In order to explicitly support the new BLM Public Lands rule, mountain bikers need clarification.

In particular, I hope a revised rule will ensure that:

- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) do not unnecessarily or inadvertently curtail recreation access and that areas with recreation value are also prioritized for conservation;
- Conservation leases can allow for projects with both a restoration and a recreation enhancement component and that recreation access on conservation leases is not inappropriately constrained;

- The definitions section includes proper detail, including defining “casual use” to include how recreation is and is not considered a casual use; clarifying what qualifies as acceptable or unacceptable “disturbance;” and defining the scale of an “Intact Landscape;” and
- The rule includes a strong public engagement component, particularly for conservation leases.

A revised rule should also include much more detail on implementation:

- How will this Proposed Rule improve on-the-ground resource health and at what scale is this needed?
 - Will there be a massive increase in Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) over time?
 - Will Conservation Leases dominate the field office landscape or be applied in a checkerboard manner, crippling adjacent land management flexibility?
- With BLM struggling with staff shortages and budget shortfalls, How will the BLM afford the regulatory burden of new analysis, inventory, and administrative management this Proposed Rule establishes around ACEC identification, designation and facilitation of the Conservation Lease program this rule proposes?
- Will conservation leases focused on sustainable trail building and maintenance activities be considered? What actions do conservation leases allow and prohibit? The rule needs to clarify this and it needs to include recreation.
- Where will the Conservation Lease revenue go and how will bonded stipulations be enforced?
- What activities will be prohibited in the process of restoring degraded habitats?
- If and how would “Compensatory Mitigation” affect new recreation developments?

With major clarifications needed, the public should have the opportunity to provide comments on a supplemental draft rule, rather than the rule being finalized from only one initial public feedback session. The rule as written includes more than a dozen questions—citizens should have the opportunity to ensure the agency interpreted public answers and feedback correctly.

Thank you for your consideration.

[Signature]