

Connecting Night Skies to Healthy Public Lands

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A new Proposed Rule announced by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)...

in the [Federal Register](#) (dated 3 April 2023) was made to designate “conservation” as a formal use of public lands across all 245 million acres of BLM-managed lands, putting it on par with energy development, grazing, and recreation. The [Proposed Public Lands Rule](#) builds upon the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the agency’s multiple-use mission, to improve the conservation tools the BLM could use to:

- Restore critical wildlife habitat and clean water
- Protect healthy public lands in the face of increasing drought, wildfire, and climate impacts
- Ensure responsible development is backed by science and data.



Moon reflecting over the Colorado River, Photo credit: Pixabay (sos8)

What Is The Concern?

While the Proposed Rule covers many critical conservation needs, **it does NOT include dark night skies as a natural resource** which we believe deserves equal protection and management alongside land, water, and air. Although the BLM did recently publish [Technical Note 457: Night Sky and Dark Environments: Best Management Practices for Artificial Light at Night on BLM-Managed Lands](#), this information was not included in the Proposed

Rule. The Tech Note provides suggestions for best management practices but is not a dark sky policy.

What Can We Do?

As night sky advocates and representatives of a regional dark sky collaborative, **we invite you to submit your comments to the BLM** on the importance of dark skies as a critical resource for humans, wildlife, and healthy landscapes that requires the necessary management of Artificial Light at Night (ALAN). The BLM is accepting public comments on the Proposed Rule through **July 5, 2023** ([recently extended from June 20](#)).

How To Submit Your Comments?

1. **Writing Tips: public comments are generally more effective when they are:**
 - Substantive - include a clear statement or request, rather than an opinion
 - Factual - provide information that backs up the statement or request
 - Unique - in your own words
 - Specific - simply asking for “improved lighting on BLM lands” would be too vague
2. **Where To Submit: go to the page for the Proposed Rule in the Federal Register**
 - At the top of the page, click the green box that says: “Submit A Formal Comment”
 - Complete the form and at the bottom of the page, click “Submit Comment”

Important Points to Consider:

1. To be sure ecosystem resiliency is achieved, it is imperative the protection and restoration of the natural night sky and nocturnal environment are explicitly stated in the Proposed Rule.
 - The nocturnal environment should be included as a critical service along with clean air, water, and lands.
 - The definition of “intact land” should consider and avoid the fragmenting effects of artificial light at night on ecosystems and habitat.
2. [BLM Technical Note 457](#) provides state-of-the-art Best Management Practices (BMPs) to minimize Artificial Light at Night. It would be a wise management strategy for the Proposed Rule to apply these BMPs across all BLM-managed lands and uses.

3. The Proposed Rule should include the protection of the night sky and the nocturnal environment as a valid resource when new Conservation Leases are established, and should be prioritized in [Areas of Critical Environmental Concern \(ACECs\)](#).

For More Information:

BLM “Public Lands Rule”: A Plan to Guide the Balanced Management of Public Lands

- [Press Releases: 30 Mar 2023, 15 June 2023](#)
- [Fact Sheet](#)
- [Federal Notice](#)

Relevant Science:

- [Artificial Light at Night: State of the Science 2022 Report](#)
- [BLM Tech Note 457: Night Sky and Dark Environments: Best Management Practices for Artificial Light at Night on BLM-Managed Lands](#)
- [Dark Sky Monitoring in a "Hazy" Future - A Western Night Skies Council Webinar \(recorded webinar, 25 April 2022\)](#)

Federal Rulemaking and the Handling of Public Comments

- [Federal Rulemaking: Information on Selected Agencies' Management of Public Comments | U.S. GAOs](#)



Knolls Recreation Area, BLM Utah, Photo Credit: Ryan Andreasen