

# Habitat Connectivity on Public Lands: U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management Issues Instruction Memorandum



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The United States Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”) issued a November 15th Instruction Memorandum (“IM”) titled:

*Habitat Connectivity on Public Lands*

See IM 2023-005.

The IM is transmitted to all BLM Field Officials from the Assistant Director, Resources and Planning.

The purpose of the IM is stated to help:

. . . the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) fulfill aspects of its multiple use and sustained yield mandate by ensuring habitats for native fish, wildlife, and plant populations are sufficiently inter- connected. As part of that work, this policy directs the BLM state offices to consult with state fish and wildlife agencies and Tribes to assess habitat connectivity in order to manage as best as possible for intact, connected habitat.

Habitat Connectivity is often defined as the degree to which the landscape facilitates or impedes animal movement and other ecological processes. To the degree distinct patches of habitat are connected can influence the distribution, genetic diversity, and health of animal and plant populations.

The IM cites the Congressional policies in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (“FLPMA”) which include that the public lands be managed in a manner that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and fish and wildlife development and utilization as one of the six principle or major uses of the public lands. The statute requires that FLPMA manage the public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

The IM indicates that BLM will inventory and assess habitat connectivity to identify how to manage public lands and best support priority species. The assessment is then expected to be utilized to inform land use plans and revisions on public lands that it manages. To execute the policy, the IM indicates that BLM will work with states, Tribes, and other partners to develop and implement proactive, collaborative ecosystem-based conservation strategies to promote habitat connectivity. Examples include:

- Removal of physical barriers to fish and wildlife movements
- Installation of wildlife crossings
- Promoting native plant communities

- Installation of signage to mitigate vehicle-wildlife collisions

Sections of the IM include:

- Assessment of Public Lands for Habitat Connectivity
- Land Use Planning
- Implementation-Level Decisions
- Proactive Habitat Conservation and Restoration
- Budget Impact
- Manual/Handbook Sections Affected

A copy of the IM can be downloaded [here](#).