

Management of Newly Acquired Lands

Lands may come under BLM administration after this RMP is approved. This could occur through exchange, donation, purchase, revocation of withdrawals to other Federal agencies, or relinquishment of Recreation and Public Purposes Act leases. Discretionary acquisitions (such as exchanges) will be guided by approved RMP “lands acquisition criteria” based on resource values of high public interest. Newly acquired lands will be managed for the highest potential purpose for which they were acquired. For example, lands acquired within special management areas with specific Congressional mandates (i.e., wild and scenic rivers) will be managed in conformance with established guidelines for those areas. If lands with unique or fragile resource values are acquired, those values will be protected and managed on an interim basis until the next plan amendment or revision was completed.

Lands acquired without identified special values or management goals will be managed in the same manner as comparable BLM lands. This implies typical livestock grazing, recreation management or timber harvest opportunities, and related management practices, management of the mineral estate, standard operating procedures and pre-committed mitigation measures. Exchanges of lands resulting in net adjustments in the livestock grazing program will be reported to the public in periodic Rangeland Program Summary Updates or RMP evaluation or progress reports.

Operations and Maintenance Actions

Maintenance of existing and newly constructed facilities or projects will occur over time; however, the level of maintenance could vary from year to year based on annual funding. Normally routine operation and maintenance actions are categorically excluded from NEPA analysis. Such activities could include, but are not limited to, routine maintenance of existing roads, ditches, culverts, water control structures, recreation facilities, pipelines, waterholes, fences, cattleguards, seedings, fish and wildlife structures, signs, and other similar facilities and projects. These types of actions are considered to be part of the implementation of this plan and should not require any further analysis to implement on the ground. Maintenance of existing facilities in WSAs will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may require additional NEPA analysis.

Plan Implementation

Introduction

The Resource Management Plan provides a long-term vision for how BLM administered lands in the plan area will function on the local, regional, and national landscape into the future. It establishes land allocations and allowable uses to meet specific goals and objectives for management of natural resources and land uses.

The RMP will be implemented over a roughly 10-20 year timeframe, as funding allows. Some of the land use plan decisions are effective upon approval of this document. However, many decisions will take a number of years to implement on the ground. Implementation monitoring will track progress of RMP decisions. Effectiveness monitoring will evaluate whether decisions or actions are achieving management goals. Adaptive management, as described below, will be used to make changes to those decisions which are not achieving management goals.

An implementation and monitoring schedule helps to focus priorities in order to leverage multiple resources; identifies key partnerships where mutual interests can be met with minimum costs; and provides specific interests an opportunity to focus their resources on areas of specialized interest.

Public Involvement in Plan Implementation

The Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan was developed using a community and consensus - based process. That approach will also be applied to projects that implement the objectives and anticipated outcomes of the Upper Deschutes RMP.

The Deschutes basin is the focus of many basin-wide interests. In times of increasing public interest and changing public funds, integrating these efforts is critical. For instance, the recently completed Deschutes subbasin assessment has been drafted for the Northwest Power & Conservation Council to help focus restoration priorities and funding throughout the basin. Watershed councils in the Upper Deschutes and Crooked River watersheds are also working on securing funding for basin-wide priorities like water quality monitoring and watershed restoration activities such as containment or eradication of noxious weed populations. Many of these efforts are complementary and could be integrated with implementation and monitoring of many of the objectives of the Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan.

Plan Maintenance and Evaluation

Minor changes, refinements, or clarifications in the RMP, including incorporating new data, are called plan maintenance actions. Plan maintenance actions do not expand the scope of resource uses or restrictions or change the terms, conditions, or decisions of the approved Upper Deschutes RMP. Maintenance actions are not considered plan amendments or revisions and do not require formal public involvement and interagency coordination. However, these types of actions will be reported in periodic planning updates.

The BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-9) call for the monitoring of resource management plans on a continual basis with a formal plan evaluation done at regular intervals. Proposed future activity plan decisions will be evaluated to ensure consistency with RMP objectives.

As part of the evaluation process, other government agencies may be asked to review the implementation of the RMP and advise the BLM of consistency with their current plans, programs, and policies. Upon completion of periodic evaluations, the Prineville District Manager will determine what, if any, changes are necessary to ensure that management actions are consistent with management goals. This could be accomplished through adaptive management principles (see explanation below). It is also possible that the need to consider monitoring findings, new data, new or revised policy, or a new proposed action that may result in a change in the terms, conditions, or decisions of the RMP, could lead to changes so great that a plan amendment or revision must be initiated.

Formal plan evaluation will occur at about five-year intervals and evaluate:

- Whether management actions are resulting in satisfactory progress toward objectives;
- Whether actions are consistent with current policy;
- Whether original assumptions were correctly applied and impacts correctly predicted;
- Whether mitigation measures are satisfactory;
- Whether the RMP is consistent with the plans and policies of state and local government, other federal agencies and Indian Tribes;

- Whether new data are available that will require alteration of the plan; and
- Whether the RMP is still valid or needs to be amended or revised.

New Information and Adaptive Management

In developing the RMP, the BLM used the best science available, including the scientific assessment from the ICBEMP (USDA-FS and USDI-BLM, 1996 and 1997). The staff also collaborated with other federal, state, local, and tribal government agencies and involved the public. However, the agency's knowledge will change as local environmental conditions change, as new management techniques are learned, and as advances in science and technology are better understood. As a result, it is inevitable that in the future some of the management direction in the RMP will be found to be inadequate or in need of update.

To rectify such situations, implementation of the RMP decisions will use an adaptive management approach to modify management actions to incorporate new knowledge gained over time. New information could also cause a plan amendment or revision to be prepared.

Adaptive management is a procedure in which decisions and changes in management are made as part of an ongoing process. It is a continuous process of planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and incorporating new information into strategies to meet the goals and objectives of the management described in the RMP. This process builds on current knowledge, observation, experimentation, and learning from experience. A continuous feedback loop allows for mid-course corrections in management to meet goals and objectives. It also provides a model for adjusting goals and objectives as new information develops and public desires change.

The complex interrelationships of physical, biological, and social components of the ecosystem and how they react to land management practices are often not fully understood when a land-use management plan is developed. To be successful, plans must have the flexibility to adapt and respond to new knowledge or conditions.

The following briefly describes the four parts of adaptive management:

1. Planning/Decision – plan development (or revision) is the process leading to decision-making. It starts with issue identification and goals development. The next step is to gather information necessary to develop alternatives for management direction that address the issues and goals. The final stage is to develop alternative management strategies to address issues and meet the management goals, analyze the consequences of the alternatives, and choose a preferred alternative for implementation.
2. Implementation – the process of putting a plan or decision into effect. Implementation includes short- and long-term actions.
3. Monitoring – collecting data to detect change in the condition and trend of the ecosystem and to determine if plan objectives are being met.
4. Evaluation/Assessment – this is the point where plan implementation is reviewed and monitoring data are analyzed to judge the success of the plan in meeting goals and objectives. This may lead to making recommendations for changes in management actions. The understanding gained through evaluations is critical to managing sustainable, healthy, and productive landscapes.