

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
COLORADO STATE OFFICE
2850 YOUNGFIELD STREET
LAKEWOOD, COLORADO 80215-7093

October 6, 1999

In Reply Refer To:

CO-931 (P)

Your Reference: 1610 (210) (P)

Instruction Memorandum No. CO-2000-001

Expires: 09-30-2000

To: Assistant Director, Renewable Resources Planning, (210), 1075 L Street

From: State Director

Subject: Response to IM-99-172 - Identification of High Priority Planning/National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Areas

In response to IM 99-172, the following are Colorado Bureau of Land Management's high priority planning and NEPA areas in priority order:

1. Northern San Juan Fruitland Coalbed Methane Development
2. Vermillion Basin
3. Bangs Canyon/South Shale Ridge
4. Roan Plateau
5. Statewide Transportation and Off-Highway Management

Attached is a detailed description of each area. If you have any questions, please call Dennis Zachman at 303-239-3883.

Signed by
Michael J. Pool
Acting State Director

Authenticated by
Sharon M. Deuter
EMS Operator

Attachment

**Colorado High Priority Planning/National
Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Areas**

(in Priority Order)
in Response to IM 99-172

1. Northern San Juan Fruitland Coalbed Methane Development

GENERAL LOCATION AND APPROXIMATE SIZE

The area is located within and north of the Southern Ute Indian Reservation south of Durango, Colorado. The area is approximately 60,000 acres.

RANKING FACTORS

1. Need to address resource conditions:

The northern San Juan Basin of southwestern Colorado continues to be an active area of coalbed methane development in the western United States. This development of coalbed methane is an important natural resource with estimated reserves of over 50 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Federal, private, and Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT) coalbed methane mineral development has been on 320 acre spacing with enhanced recovery. Future coalbed methane development is proposed on 160 acre spacing with additional enhanced recovery. Associated and potentially associated environmental impacts of this resource development have been the subject of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) monitoring since the early 1990s. Specifically, off-site impacts at the San Juan Basin Fruitland outcrop as a potential result of "down-dip" produced water withdrawal are a concern. These impacts include explosive levels of methane and noxious hydrogen sulfide gases within homes and along the outcrop, dead and dying vegetation, seepage of methane into domestic water wells, and in some areas underground or near surface coal fires. Adding to the development and impact complexity is the suburban setting within which the development has and continues to take place. Because of these concerns we are continuing to request support to conduct necessary NEPA analysis and continued BLM support of research studies on outcrop impacts.

2. Anticipated changes in use (demand) not addressed in planning/NEPA documents:

Development to date has been with adequate Resource Management Plan (RMP) and NEPA compliance, consisting of site specific environmental assessments tiered to a 1991 RMP/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). One area specific EIS was completed for development on the San Juan National Forest in 1992. An EIS for the development of Southern Ute Indian minerals will be released this fall (1999).

However, anticipated future coalbed methane development will require additional NEPA compliance to address 160 acre spacing, enhanced recovery methods, and the significant environmental impacts that are now becoming apparent at and near the Fruitland outcrop. In the past, as well as today, numerous gas seeps and coal fires have been reported in mines and in surface exposures of the Fruitland coals in La Plata and Archuleta Counties.

Exacerbation of these seeps and fires appears to be increasing as coalbed methane gas extraction increases and large-scale withdrawal of coalbed produced water intensifies. Methane and hydrogen sulfide gas accumulations have been measured in soil vapor and confined spaces along the coal outcrop in concentrations deleterious to human health and safety, as well as being lethal to vegetation. Because of the diverse surface and mineral ownership involved, the interface with suburban development and potential environmental impacts, we must fulfill our NEPA responsibilities in a collaborative fashion with county governments, the state of Colorado, local environmental groups, and individual local residents.

To fulfill our NEPA and environmental responsibilities, we anticipate the need for an EIS in fiscal year (FY) 2000 for federal Fruitland coalbed methane development in the Northern San Juan Basin. In addition, we must continue to participate in Fruitland outcrop studies, and appropriate mitigation efforts researched, designed, and undertaken collaboratively by all responsible parties.

3. Program or administrative requirements BLM has not fulfilled:

Presently, there are two federal applications for permit to drill (APD) from Amoco Oil being evaluated in the San Juan Field Office (SJFO), pending additional information on environmental impacts. To date, and excepting the two Amoco APDs, all current coalbed methane development north of the Southern Ute Indian Reservation has been contained on private minerals. It is anticipated that future 160 acre and enhanced coalbed methane development will be proposed on federal surface and/or mineral estates. Over the past several years, mineral development has been extensive throughout the San Juan Basin. Within La Plata County, this mineral development has interfaced with increasing population and suburban development. La Plata County, local environmental groups and local individuals have requested the federal government as well as the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) conduct a complete coalbed methane development analysis.

The BLM SJFO, the SUIT, and the COGCC are undertaking an aggressive comprehensive and experimental study of the Fruitland Formation in the northern San Juan Basin of southwestern Colorado. This research study is

called the "3M Project" (3M), which refers to its three main components of geologic Mapping, ground water Monitoring, and computer Modeling. This unprecedented project seeks to understand, predict, and if necessary, mitigate the subsurface and surface environmental impacts resulting from the continuing production of coalbed methane in the San Juan Basin. This crucial 3M Project is estimated to cost in excess of \$1,000,000, with the majority of funding to date being contributed by the COGCC. The COGCC has received \$88,000 for the project in FY 1999 and \$707,230 for FY 2000. The Colorado State Geological Survey Office has received \$150,000 for the geologic mapping portion of the project. It is anticipated that the SUIT has paid \$132,500 toward the computer modeling aspect of the project. The BLM has contributed \$65,000 toward the reservoir modeling effort and \$155,000 toward the monitor wells in FY 1999, including \$75,000 through a Department of Energy (DOE) grant. Additionally, 1 1/2 full-time positions within the SJFO have been and continue to be dedicated to the program's environmental monitoring efforts on both Southern Ute Indian lands and Federal lands (including split estate). Funding for this study is critical to our understanding of potential long-term environmental impacts of this resource development and to the development of appropriate mitigation techniques.

The relationship to the Clean Water Act is unstudied and unknown at this time.

It is almost certain that an EIS will be needed to process current and future APDs for this gas development.

4. Outside Interest:

The impacts of this active area of coalbed methane development has become very controversial. Concerns include water quality of wells, and safety of residents and visitors. Obviously, the applicants who wish to develop the resource are also interested in seeing that this is resolved. The U.S. Forest Service will likely be involved in this issue also, for they administer some suitable lands in the area.

SUMMARY OF PLANNING/NEPA ACTIONS NEEDED

To properly administer our responsibilities for mineral development, environmental protection and to be responsive to the public under NEPA, three programs need to be pursued:

1. A Northern San Juan Basin EIS, to include a reasonable foreseeable development for all lands north of the Southern Ute Indian Reservation Line (The Ute Line): \$400,000 in FY 2000 and an additional \$400,000 per year for

FY 2001-2002.

2. Continue to support the 3M Project with technical personnel and \$100,000 for FY 2000 and \$100,000 yearly for FY 2001 through 2005 and beyond.

3. In collaboration with the COGCC or independently, develop the fourth "M" - Mitigation of outcrop impacts. Review the legal courses of action available to attach these mitigation measures to appropriate lessees/operators involved in the production of coalbed methane. Funding for this research estimated at \$100,000 per year (although a portion of this should/may be assumed by the operator/lessee).

ESTIMATED TIME FRAMES AND FUNDING NEEDS

FY 2000 - 2002 - Complete work as detailed above.

Funding Needs: \$500,000/year

FY 2003 - and beyond. Complete work as detailed above.

Funding Needs: \$500,000/year

2. Vermillion Basin

GENERAL LOCATION AND APPROXIMATE SIZE

Vermillion Basin is a large area that contains a wide variety of landscapes, ranging from pinon and juniper covered rugged hills in the south, to colorful badlands in the north. The area contains a variety of animals and rare plants. Current uses include livestock grazing, hunting, OHVs, and hiking. There are currently 5,700 acres under oil and gas lease in the extreme northeast corner, though none are developed nor held by production. Industry has requested an additional 7,137 acres for leasing. There are two state sections and one private inholding of 197 acres.

A wide variety of management prescriptions cover the area, consistent with its wide variety of landscapes and resources. The entire area is open to oil and gas leasing, in some areas restricted by fragile soils stipulations. There are two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designated to protect rare plant species, geologic values, and scenic areas. Most of the area is open to OHV use except the ACECs which are limited to designated routes.

RANKING FACTORS

1. Need to Address Resource Conditions:

A RMP amendment and concurrent Wilderness Inventory are scheduled for Vermillion Basin in the year 2000. Colorado BLM made this decision based on a statewide wilderness designation proposal submitted by a Colorado citizens committee, and oil and gas development proposals. The current RMP is over ten years old and does not adequately address current land use issues and status. Portions of the area were not included in the 1980 Intensive Wilderness Area and changes may have occurred since then. The area contains a wide variety of often competing resource values including oil and gas leasing, grazing, recreation, fragile soils, two ACECs, and wilderness proposals. Oil and gas leasing and other significant actions are currently being held in abeyance until resource issues can be resolved through the plan amendment process.

In 1994, the Colorado Environmental Coalition (CEC) issued a Conservationists' Wilderness Proposal (CWP) to designate as wilderness approximately 1.3 million acres of BLM administered public land in Colorado. The CWP emphasized the importance of preserving lower altitude wild country which has traditionally not been considered worthy of wilderness designation.

In response to the CWP, the Colorado BLM developed policies and procedures in 1997 to guide consideration of discretionary actions in non-Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) proposed for wilderness designation by the Conservationists. The policy holds in abeyance any discretionary actions which might have irreversible or irretrievable impacts until the wilderness issue raised by the Conservationists is addressed and resolved through the BLM planning process.

Because discretionary oil and gas leases were proposed in Vermillion Basin, a Roadless Review (the first phase of wilderness inventory) was conducted in 1997. Findings of the Roadless Review conclusions were announced in February, 1998, and public comment and additional information were requested, which might have bearing on the future management of the area.

In November of 1998, BLM Colorado announced Management Decisions on six CWP areas on the Western Slope, including Vermillion Basin. These decisions took into account comments from nearly 3,000 citizens statewide. For Vermillion Basin, the determination was made to undertake a RMP amendment to examine wilderness and other issues. A field inventory for wilderness values will be conducted as a part of the plan amendment process and will include the participation of the local community and interested parties. Implementation of this action will be initiated in FY 2000 and is expected to conclude in FY 2002. Oil and gas leasing and other discretionary actions

which may irreversibly or irretrievably affect the area will continue to be held in abeyance until this process is completed.

The RMP for this area was completed approximately ten years ago and the area contains a wide variety of often competing resource values ranging from interest in additional oil and gas leasing to the CWP. Portions of the area were not addressed in the original intensive wilderness inventory completed in 1980 and changes have occurred since then. Although special stipulations are in effect for oil and gas development to protect fragile soils and other natural features, much of the area is currently open to development with no special restrictions under the 1989 land use plan. A plan amendment will address current issues and conditions and involve the full spectrum of the public.

2. Anticipated changes in use (demand) not addressed in planning/NEPA documents:

Likely changes in the area are land tenure, wilderness, OHV designations, and oil and gas leasing. Other significant issues are anticipated. See ranking criteria No. 1 for additional information.

3. Program or administrative requirements we have not fulfilled:

As part of the amendment process, a thorough analysis of unfulfilled program and administrative requirements will be made and if appropriate, addressed in the amendment. The biggest issue is to address wilderness suitability for the area. See Criteria No. 1 for additional information and rationale.

4. Outside interest:

There is a high level of interest by the environmental community in the future management of the area. As a result, local government, ranchers, oil and gas industry, OHV users and other stakeholders also have a strong interest in future management of the area. See Criteria No. 1 for additional information and rationale.

PLANNING AND NEPA ACTIONS NEEDED

A plan amendment and EIS will be needed.

ESTIMATED TIME FRAMES AND FUNDING NEEDS

FY 2000: Wilderness inventory field work, scoping for plan amendment, and begin preparation for the draft plan/EIS.

Funding Needs: \$100,000

FY 2001: Continue amendment process.

Funding Needs: \$150,000

FY2002: Finish amendment.

Funding Needs: \$75,000

3. Bangs Canyon and South Shale Ridge

As a result of a statewide report on potential wilderness areas submitted to BLM by a citizens conservationist group, the Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO) initiated a roadless review inventory of two units identified in the proposal; Bangs Canyon and South Shale Ridge. The inventory found both areas to contain 5,000 acres or more of roadless lands. In the summer of 1999, a second phase of the inventory was completed that dealt with inventorying additional wilderness characteristics such as naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. This inventory found portions of both areas to have wilderness characteristics. The NEPA action needed as a result of these inventories is to consider amending the GJFO RMP to designate all or a portion of these two areas as administrative WSAs.

GENERAL LOCATION AND APPROXIMATE SIZE

Bangs Canyon is located south of Grand Junction, Colorado. It is approximately 21,472 acres. South Shale Ridge is located north of Grand Junction and west of Debeque, Colorado. It is approximately 33,400 acres.

RANKING FACTORS

1. Need to address resource conditions:

Both of these areas have been evaluated by BLM based on a proposal submitted by a citizens committee to designate these area as wilderness. BLM has currently completed an inventory of wilderness characteristics for both areas and found that portions of each area meet the Bureau's criteria for consideration as wilderness. The current GJFO RMP is over 13 years old and in some instances does not provide management direction that would likely protect wilderness values over the long term. South Shale Ridge contains a variety of competing resource values including oil and gas

leasing, recreational activities, steep slopes, threatened plant species, and proposals for WSAs status. Presently, further oil and gas leasing is on hold pending the completion of the study process. Bangs Canyon contains high quality riparian habitat, 25 miles of scenic canyon systems, big game wildlife habitat, and high quality back country motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities.

2. Anticipated changes in use (demand) not addressed in planning/NEPA documents:

Anticipated changes in use for both areas would be wilderness and OHV designations. The potential exists to not allow any new oil and gas leasing in South Shale Ridge and Bangs Canyon and to also consider a mineral withdrawal for both areas.

3. Program or administrative requirements BLM has not fulfilled:

There are currently no known program or administrative requirements that we have not fulfilled in the South Shale Ridge area. The Bangs Canyon area is part of a larger 57,000 acre Special Recreation Management Area where an activity level management plan and an environmental assessment have just been completed (August 1999). This plan did not address the wilderness issue and it deferred any further decisions on a designated travel route system within the Bangs Canyon CWP area until after the amendment process has been completed. As part of the amendment process, a thorough analysis of unfulfilled program and administrative requirements will be made for each area, and if appropriate, addressed in the amendment.

What primary land use allocation decisions need to be addressed?

* Wilderness Management - What portions of both South Shale Ridge and Bangs Canyon should be designated as WSAs?

* OHV/Transportation - What roads and trails in the Bangs Canyon Area should be designated for motorized and mechanized use?

* Oil and Gas Leasing - What lands in the South Shale Ridge Area should be closed and/or left open for oil and gas leasing?

* Recreation - What recreation opportunities should be provided in each area? Is the current recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classification appropriate in each area?

4. Outside interest:

Conservationists have identified both areas for inclusion in the CWP of

1994. The CEC has expressed the desire for BLM to give these two areas the same attention and protection as the GJFO's six formally designated WSAs.

Both areas are being recommended for wilderness designation in the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1999, sponsored by Colorado Congresswoman Degette.

BLM coordinated and worked closely with a Citizens Advisory Group during the development of the Bangs Canyon Management Plan. This group has a strong interest in the outcome of the amendment process since it will affect the recommendations they made to the GJFO with regard to designated travel routes within the Bangs Canyon CWP area.

The Colorado Congressional delegation and the Mesa County Commissioners have been concerned about the wilderness inventory since its beginning and are very interested in the outcome of the amendment process.

PLANNING AND NEPA ACTIONS NEEDED

Since portions of both areas were found to have wilderness characteristics, an EIS will need to be prepared that will look at a range of options for land management including the possibility of WSAs designation.

ESTIMATED TIME FRAMES AND FUNDING NEEDS

FY 2000 - Complete final phases of wilderness inventory process, do scoping for plan amendment, and begin preparation of the draft EIS.

Funding Needs: \$125,000

FY 2001 - Complete final EIS and RMP amendment.

Funding Needs: \$150,000

4. Roan Plateau

In November 1997, Public Law 105-85 directed the transfer of jurisdiction of the Roan Plateau, formally known as the Naval Oil Shale Reserve (NOSR), from the DOE to the BLM. The transfer directed that the lands be managed in accordance with laws applicable to public lands, including the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). The law also directed that certain lands be leased for oil and gas within one year and that the remaining lands be offered for lease as soon as practicable. The formal transfer of the Roan Plateau to the BLM has broadened BLM's responsibilities and requires that the Glenwood Springs Field Office (GSFO)

complete an RMP amendment.

GENERAL LOCATION AND APPROXIMATE SIZE

The area is located northwest of Rifle, Colorado. It is approximately 4,000 acres.

RANKING FACTORS

1. Need to address resource conditions:

In 1996, the Colorado Natural Heritage Program conducted a biological survey on the Roan Plateau. As per their criteria, ten "Significant" elements occur

on the Roan Plateau. These include: rare plants, two populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout, several wetland plant communities, and several bird species of concern.

The Roan Plateau is recognized by the oil and gas industry as having highly valuable oil and gas reserves. The GSFO anticipates that in addition to surface resources, there is a high level of interest in leasing the subsurface.

Recent land health assessments have noted a few localized problem spots that warrant continued riparian and range management attention.

Other noted values include preservation of: scenic values in Trapper, Northwater, and Parachute Creeks; paleontological resources; and historic and cultural features.

2. Anticipated changes in use (demand) not addressed in planning/NEPA documents:

BLM has been providing custodial surface management on the NOSR for many years under a Memorandum of Understanding with DOE. In fact, the 1984 Glenwood Springs Resource Area RMP includes the NOSR lands and provides management direction for some activities. The formal transfer of the lands to the BLM, however, has broadened BLM's management responsibilities. It means that the GSFO must address multiple-use issues and allocations that were not considered in the past.

3. Program or administrative requirements BLM has not fulfilled:

It is important to realize that the 1984 RMP was the first RMP in the Bureau. It provides a mix of very specific direction for some land uses, such as livestock grazing, and very general guidance for other programs, as in recreation. Some issues were not addressed at all, like Wild and Scenic Rivers. Some decisions are clearly outdated, like OHV management. The GSFO continues to make the current RMP work by completing RMP amendments on a priority basis; the Castle Peak Travel Management Plan (1996) and the recent Oil and Gas SEIS (1999) are examples.

With regard to the Roan Plateau, some major land use allocation decisions were not included in the 1984 RMP. For example, since the lands were not available for oil and gas leasing, no oil and gas leasing decisions for the Roan Plateau are included. Since the lands were not actually BLM lands to be managed under FLPMA, no wilderness inventories/decisions were completed nor were OHV designations approved. Thus, additional inventories and land use allocation decisions are necessary to meet the mandate of Congress regarding oil and gas leasing as well as address current management issues.

What primary land use allocation decisions are needed?

* Wilderness Management - Should such lands be designated as WSAs?

* OHV/Transportation - What roads and trails should be designated for motorized use?

* Oil and Gas Leasing - What lands should be closed to oil and gas leasing? What adjustments to the stipulations and lease notices included in the SEIS are necessary?

OTHER ISSUES

* ACECs - The Roan Plateau contains several areas that have been identified as rare habitats and sensitive species of concern through inventory work by Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) and others. What lands should be designated as ACECs to protect these values?

* Recreation - What recreational opportunities should be provided? Is the current ROS classification appropriate? What level of investment in facilities is needed to accommodate and manage future use?

* Fire Management - Are there opportunities to manage wildfires to achieve resource management objectives?

* Other Lands - Management of adjacent land to the east and southeast,

north of I-70 and west of Highway 13. These lands are planned to be included in an RMP amendment. Currently, they are heavily used by OHVs. Potential cultural and sensitive plant conflicts could exist with the traditional OHV use.

4. Outside interest (independently recognized issues and concerns):

Conservationists have identified a portion of the Roan Plateau for inclusion in the CWP in 1999. The CEC has expressed the desire for BLM to give these lands the same attention as other proposed CWP wilderness areas.

The Nature Conservancy is developing a conservation strategy for the Bookcliff Mountains that includes the Roan Plateau.

Since the transfer legislation directed that the Roan Plateau be offered for lease as soon as practicable, the oil and gas industry is awaiting a decision on leasing on the Roan Plateau.

Recreationists, especially the hunting public, have expressed a need to address travel and access issues.

The CNHP is concerned about protecting the identified "Significant" elements that occur on the Roan Plateau.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife has been a key stakeholder in the recent RMP amendment that addressed oil and gas development on NOSR 1, immediately to the south of the Roan Plateau planning area. We know that they will have even greater interest in how potential management strategies will affect game management objectives.

The Colorado Congressional delegation is interested in the outcome of the RMP process since they were instrumental in the transfer of the lands from the DOE.

Garfield County officials are interested in the potential revenues from mineral leasing on the Roan Plateau.

SUMMARY OF PLANNING/NEPA ACTIONS NEEDED

In November 1997, Public Law 105-85 directed the transfer of jurisdiction of the Roan Plateau, formally known as the NOSR, from the DOE to the BLM. The transfer directed that the lands be managed in accordance with laws applicable to public lands, including FLPMA. The law also directed that certain lands be leased for oil and gas within one year and that the

remaining lands be offered for lease as soon as practicable. The formal transfer of the Roan Plateau to the BLM has broadened BLM's responsibilities and requires that the GSFO complete an RMP amendment.

An RMP amendment for the Roan Plateau would not necessarily be designed to revisit all the decisions in the current RMP. At a minimum, it would focus on the needed major land use allocation decisions. Of secondary importance would be to confirm the previous set of management decisions. Depending on the nature of the public interest in the area, it is possible that some current decisions could be modified. For example, land tenure categories could be adjusted. In addition, some issues were not addressed in the 1984 RMP. For example, no Wild and Scenic River eligibility determinations were made. Ultimately, public scoping and the availability of funding would be the primary factors determining the scope of any RMP Amendment.

ESTIMATED TIME FRAMES AND FUNDING NEEDS

The planning schedule at a glance (detailed draft schedule below):

1999 The GSFO is currently conducting internal pre-planning work which entails preliminary review of existing guidance and internal scoping of issues and planning strategy.

The GSFO will be completing the mandatory wilderness inventory, land health assessments, transportation/travel inventory, and forest inventory.

2000 The GSFO will develop a pre-plan and get bids from DOE/Argonne (and other consultants). Future planning strategies will be based on; 1) available funding, 2) available staff, 3) priorities and, 4) workloads.

The GSFO will collect additional resource data/baseline information and digitize information from files and field assessments (see III.1).

Funding Needs: \$110,000

2001-2003 - Formally initiate the RMP/EIS amendment process and follow draft Roan Plateau planning schedule. This work may be done by contract of cooperative agreement with Argonne.

Funding Needs: \$557,000

5. Statewide Transportation and Off-Highway Vehicle Management

GENERAL LOCATION AND APPROXIMATE SIZE

Statewide - 8.2 million acres

RANKING FACTORS

1. Need to address resource conditions:

Following completion of the rangeland management guidelines, Colorado BLM, in consultation and coordination with the state's Resource Advisory Council (RAC) members, has been in the process of developing recreation guidelines for the state. The RACs are particularly concerned about OHV travel and the effects of such on land health. There is significant interest in revisiting existing designations, especially areas that are currently open to vehicle travel.

2. Anticipated changes in use (demand) not addressed in planning/NEPA documents:

Colorado's older RMPs (six of our eleven RMPs covering more than five of our eight million acres are ten or more years old) were prepared at a time when OHV use was not a major issue. Most OHV use was by authorized users and, other than for hunting, recreational use was relatively light. Most managers responded by taking the least restrictive approach needed, consistent with preventing resource damage. Consequently, about 50 percent of Colorado's public lands were designated open to OHV use. Over the past ten years, rapid population growth along the Front Range and throughout most of Western Colorado, and the increasing popularity of OHV use, coupled with declining budgets and staff, has forced managers into a reactive mode of responding to incidents of resource damage by initiating emergency closures. In spite of heavy workloads, nine of ten field offices have already initiated or proposed Transportation Planning for FY 2000.

The anticipated change in OHV use will be from designated as open to being restricted in some fashion on approximately 3.7 million acres of BLM-administered land in Colorado.

3. Program or administrative requirements BLM has not fulfilled:

In many cases, even where our RMP decisions are appropriate, we have not been able to implement decisions calling for further travel management planning that would result in closures or designations of travel routes. Additionally, over the years Colorado has aggressively pursued land exchanges but has not

always included OHV designations concurrent with the acquisitions. This has

resulted in a sizeable amount of land scattered around the state requiring RMP amendments and travel management planning.

4. Outside interest (independently recognized issues and concerns):

The RACs are particularly concerned about OHV travel and the effects of such on land health. They have specifically requested that the State Director address this issue.

SUMMARY OF PLANNING/NEPA ACTIONS NEEDED

RMP amendments and more site-specific travel management planning and implementation are needed statewide. How this can best be accomplished has not been decided pending the completion of Recreation Guidelines by RAC members.

ESTIMATED TIME FRAMES AND FUNDING NEEDS

We expect that the Recreation Guidelines will be completed and adopted this winter. A decision on the best way to proceed in addressing this issue will follow in the spring of 2000; in time to determine budget and staffing needs for the FY 2001 annual work plan submission.

For some groups this is a highly contentious issue, and any management decisions concerning recreation guidelines have a broad impact on all public land users. To avoid creating future management and enforcement problems, it is essential that the planning process be inclusive of all interests and collaborative in design. We anticipate that this will be a long, labor intensive and costly process, but an essential one to avoid even higher costs during implementation.

FY 2001 - Transportation planning and RMP amendments:

Funding Needs: \$500,000

FY 2002 - Transportation planning and RMP amendments:

Funding Needs: \$500,000

FY 2003 - Transportation planning and RMP amendments:

Funding Needs: \$500,000

FY 2004 and Beyond - Implementation:

Funding Needs: \$250,000/year