

Big Desert

Management Plan

[Volume 2 of 3]

Step 3

Bureau of Land Management

Upper Snake River District

Range Department

Idaho Falls Field Office

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Name (MFP) | Big Desert |
| Activity | Minerals |
| Overlay Reference | Step 1 M 1 Step 3 |

Objective:

Leasable Minerals

Make energy minerals (geothermal, oil and gas) available for use on a managed and controlled basis, consistent with national energy policies and related demands.

Protect energy mineral development from public land closures. Allow leasing exploration and development of leasable mineral resources.

Rationale:

Rapidly increasing national energy requirements have resulted in greater dependence on foreign sources. This has caused an increasingly heavy demand on publicly owned energy sources. Increased dependence on foreign sources places our nation's welfare in jeopardy.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

INSTRUCTIONS

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| Name (MFP) | Big Desert |
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M 1.1

Recommendation:

All public lands with federally reserved mineral rights should remain open to the exploration and leasing of minerals under the appropriate laws (oil, gas, geothermal).

Support Needs:

None

Rationale:

By keeping the area open to exploration and leasing the identification and production of vital leasable minerals (oil, gas and geothermal) can be made.

Multiple Use Analysis:

This recommendation conflicts with wildlife recommendation 4.5 and wildlife aquatics. These recommendations restrict surface occupancy on sage grouse strutting grounds from February 1 - June 15, bald eagle wintering area November 1 - April 1 and on the Snake River Omitted Lands year long. Wildlife aquatics recommends managing omitted lands for wildlife. Wilderness recommendations 1.2c and 1.3c recommend no surface occupancy on existing lease applications and to minimize visual intrusion of developments. Wilderness 1.1 also recommends the designation of the Great Rift as a wilderness. Wilderness recommends no surface occupancy on geothermal lease applications pending on north and west sides of Craters of the Moon flow (W 1.2) and application of VRM to geothermal leases adjacent to Great Rift (W 1.3c). Recreation 5.2 recommends closure of China Cup, Cedar Butte, Saddle Butte to ORV use and limits ORV use to existing roads on Quaking Aspen Butte, slopes greater than 15% and soil association 8 (SE of Arco).

Multiple Use Recommendation:

Accept recommendation with the following modifications:

Leasing activities shall not impair wilderness values on the following areas (must comply with Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review: BLM Dec. 12, 1979). Allow exploration and leasing of minerals on the entire planning unit, except for the following:

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Hell's Half Acre WSA
Cedar Butte WSA
Great Rift WSA

No Surface Occupancy on the following areas:

Saddle Butte
China Cup
Big Southern Butte
Quaking Aspen Butte
Omitted Lands

Allow geothermal leases in area north and west of Craters of the Moon flow only in accordance with interim management guidelines for WSA's.

Reasons:

Resource values associated with the above exceptions warrant excluding these areas from exploration and development for leasable minerals. Restrictions in the wildlife areas as to time of year reduces the disturbance that would be caused during critical periods. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Bald Eagle Expert claims the oil and gas development would not have a detrimental effect on wintering bald eagles due to the dispersed nature of oil and gas activity.

Multiple Use Decision:

Accept the Modified Multiple Use recommendation.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

Form 1600-21 (April 1975)

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GPO 836-084

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| Name (MFP) | Big Desert |
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Objective:

Locatable Minerals

Make locatable minerals available for use as needed to meet market demand.

Protect locatable mineral development from public land closures. Allow exploration and development of locatable mineral resources.

Rationale:

The nation's welfare depends on an uninterrupted supply of mineral commodities. Declining domestic supplies of locatable minerals and increased dependence on foreign sources jeopardizes this welfare.

Increasing demands and improved exploration, mining and processing techniques have generated interest in areas previously considered low in mineral value.

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Recommendation:

All public lands should remain open to mineral entry under the 1872 mining law.

Support Needs:

None.

Rationale:

By keeping the area open to mineral entry production of necessary minerals will be assured.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

Form 1600-21 (April 1975)

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Areawide

M 2.1

Multiple Use Analysis:

This recommendation conflicts with wildlife WL 4.5, which recommends no mineral exploration on sage grouse strutting and nesting areas between February 1 and June 15. Recreation conflicts are as follows:

R1.1A Close Big Southern Butte to mineral entry. R1.3 Manage the Great Rift, and Hell's Half Acre for primitive backcountry recreation. R1.8 Protect China Cup from environmental modification. R2.1B Withdraw Box Canyon on Big Lost River and Snake River Omitted Lands from mineral entry. R4.1 Withdraw Firth river bottoms from appropriation under the mining laws. Recreation 5.2 recommends closure of China Cup, Cedar Butte, Saddle Butte to ORV use and limit ORV use to existing roads on Quaking Aspen Butte slopes greater than 15% and soil association 8 (SE of Arco).

Multiple Use Recommendation:

Accept recommendations with the following modification:

Work with mining companies under 3809 regulations to mitigate adverse impacts of locatable mineral exploration and development activities on other resources. Areas of particular concern are:

Sage grouse strutting and nesting areas
Big Southern Butte
Great Rift
Hell's Half Acre
~~China Cup~~
Box Canyon of Big Lost River
Snake River Omitted Lands
Firth river bottoms
China Cup Butte
Cedar Butte
Saddle Butte
Quaking Aspen Butte
Slopes greater than 15%
Soil Association 8
INEL
Kings Bowl

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Areawide

Reasons:

BLM has very little discretion involving mineral entry under the 1872 mining law. Moderate success in protecting other resource values can be obtained from responsible mining companies. Efforts in this direction should continue. Withdrawal from mineral entry or for any other purpose is not looked on favorably at the present time by the Bureau nor the political constituency. The 3809 regulations provides an opportunity to protect other resource values or mitigate adverse impacts.

Multiple Use Decision:

Accept the Modified Multiple Use recommendation.

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Objective:

Saleable Minerals

Make mineral materials (aggregate and decorative lava rock) available for use as needed to meet market demand. Provide for use by State highway and County road department, by the BLM for the maintenance and construction of roads and other projects and by the general public.

Protect mineral materials use from public land closures. Allow exploration and development of saleable mineral resources.

Rationale:

Construction projects which support the use of resources within the planning unit require the availability of mineral materials. Maintenance and construction of State, County and BLM roads throughout the planning unit require the use of mineral materials.

Material sites do not normally interfere with other land uses.

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| Entire Area | |

M 3.1

Recommendation:

All public lands and lands with reserved mineral rights should remain open to exploration and development of saleable minerals under the appropriate laws. This includes competitive sales, common use area sales, community pit sales, material sites free use permits, etc. on sand and gravel, cinders, lava stone and other saleable mineral materials.

Support Needs:

None.

Rationale:

Only by keeping areas open to geological reconnaissance and exploration can essential mineral materials discoveries be made. The U.S. owns total or partial mineral rights on 68.7% of the planning unit.

Multiple Use Analysis:

Wildlife 4.5 recommends restriction of mineral exploration and surface occupancy in sage grouse strutting and nesting areas between February 1 and June 15. Wildlife aquatics 3 objective is to manage omitted lands for wildlife. Recreation 1:2, 1.4 recommend an ACEC designation for Big Southern Butte, China Cup and Kings Bowl. R1.5 and 1.7 recommend management of Hell's Half Acre and Cerro Grande for primitive recreational values. R2.1 and 4.2 recommend management of omitted lands and Box Canyon of Big Lost River for recreation and/or wildlife habitat values and withdrawal from mineral location and leasing. It is assumed mineral sales would also be in conflict. R4.1 recommends withdrawal of Firth river bottoms from appropriation under mining laws - it is assumed this would include saleable minerals. R5.2 recommends closure of China Cup Butte, Cedar Butte, and Saddle Butte to ORV use and ORV restriction to existing roads on Quaking Aspen Butte. Wilderness W1.1 recommends designation of Great Rift WSA by Congress as a wilderness area. VRM2.2 recommended to allow no mineral material excavation along Snake River.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

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Entire Area

Multiple Use Recommendation:

Modify the recommendation as follows:

Keep the entire area open for saleable materials (including Sec. 28, T. 4 S., R. 33 E., FUP I-017147 Bingham County) except for the following which will be closed to sale of mineral materials:

Snake River Omitted Lands and Firth river bottoms
Great Rift proposed wilderness area
Big Southern Butte
Kings Bowl (Crystal Ice Cave)
China Cup Butte
Cedar Butte and Hell's Half Acre WSA's
Saddle Butte
Quaking Aspen Butte
Box Canyon Big Lost River
Hell's Half Acre lava flow east of I-15
(open to competitive sales only) see M 3.2

Clearance for material sites and sales will be handled on a case by case basis. Sale of topsoil will not be done. BLM is in the business of conserving topsoil.

Reasons:

These locations have other resource values which warrant excluding them from mineral sales. Adequate alternate sites exist to meet demand.

Multiple Use Decision:

Accept the modified multiple use recommendation.

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M 3.2

Recommendation:

Conduct only competitive commercial sales on Hell's Half Acre lava flow east of Interstate 15 near Firth, Idaho.

Support Needs:

Legal access over non-federal lands.

Rationale:

Sales of decorative lava rock would help meet the commercial demand for the material. Private landowners control the access to the lava flow southeast of Interstate 15. They do not approve of general sales in this area but would allow commercial access through their lands. Other resource values would be protected or restored according to Department policy, NEPA and FLPMA.

Multiple Use Analysis:

No conflicts.

Multiple Use Recommendation:

Accept Step 1.

Reasons:

The adjacent landowner controls access to this lava flow. He would make arrangements to provide access to a single commercial operator, but is not willing to deal with a large number of the general public due to the demand this would place on his time (Brent Stolworthy adjacent landowner).

Multiple Use Decision:

Accept the Multiple Use recommendation.

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