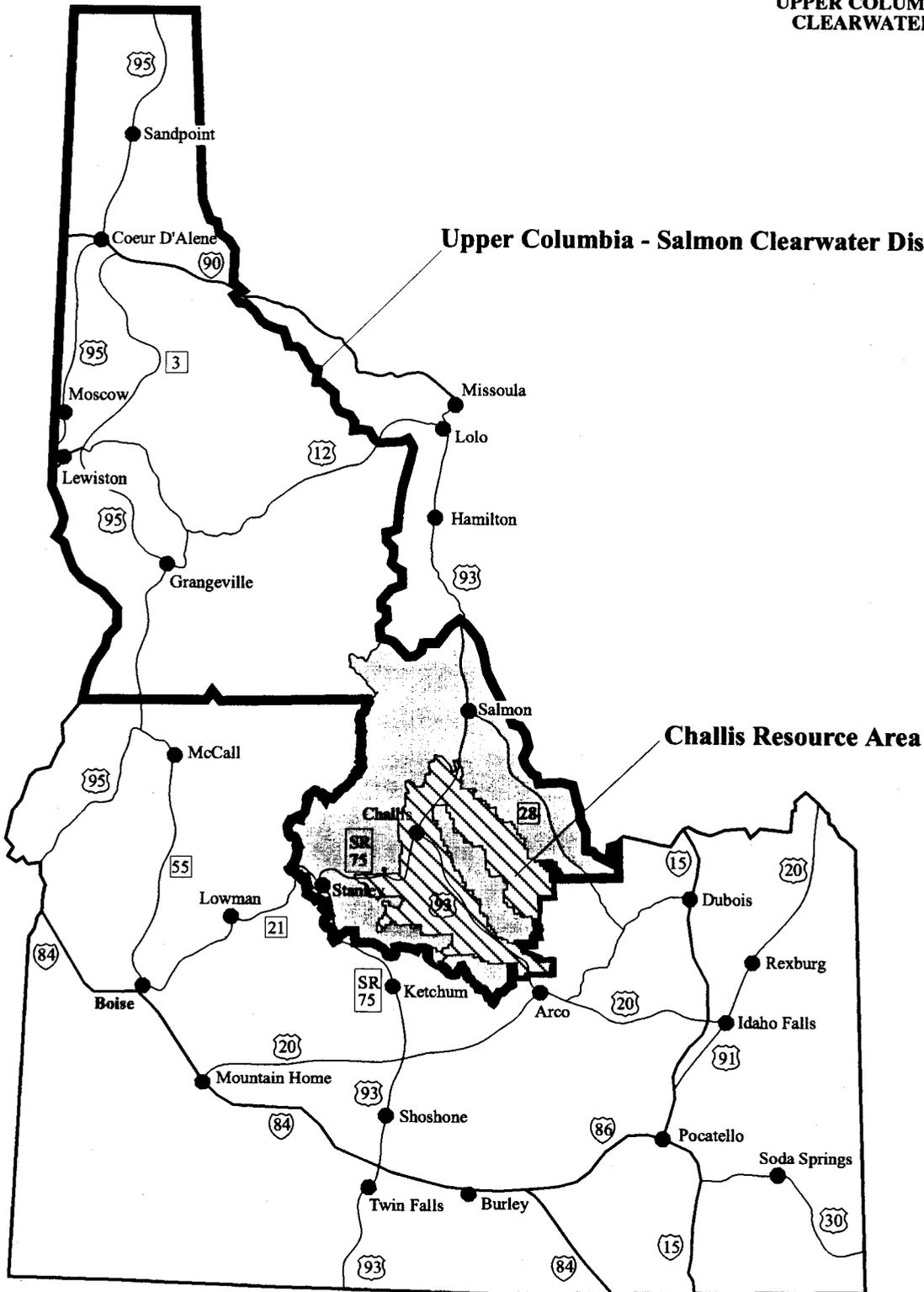


Summary



Bayhorse historic townsite, adjacent to the Challis Resource Area.

**CHALLIS
RESOURCE AREA
UPPER COLUMBIA - SALMON
CLEARWATER DISTRICTS**



Note: Land Ownership Status is shown on Map E.
Management Actions apply to BLM public land only.

RMP Purpose, Need, and Implementation.

The Challis Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS) describes and analyzes the Bureau of Land Management's proposed resource management of approximately 792,567 acres of BLM public lands administered by the Challis Resource Area, Upper Columbia-Salmon Clearwater Districts in Custer and Lemhi counties, Idaho (see General Location map).

The purpose of the Challis Resource Management Plan (RMP) is to identify resource condition objectives, land use allocations, and management actions and direction necessary to guide resource management on a long term, sustainable basis during the next 15 to 20 years. The resource management decisions recommended in the Proposed RMP (see **Volume 1**) are based upon approved planning criteria and adhere to BLM planning regulations.

The Challis RMP would be implemented following Plan approval, as documented in a Record of Decision. The Challis RMP would replace existing Management Framework Plans (MFPs) for the Challis Resource Area and amend the Little-Lost-Birch Creek MFP used by the Upper Snake River District - BLM; the Challis RMP may also alter decisions or directions contained in other existing BLM decision documents. RMP implementation would occur according to an implementation plan developed following signature of the Record of Decision. Some RMP decisions would require immediate action and be implemented upon signature of the approved RMP. Other Plan decisions would be implemented sometime during the 15 to 20 year life of the RMP. Still other Plan decisions would require action only when (and if) an activity is initiated externally. The approved RMP would be monitored and evaluated on an on-going basis in order to determine the effectiveness of the RMP and the need for maintenance, amendment, or revision as provided for in 43 CFR 1610.4-9 and 1610.5-4 through 5-6.

Issues and Management Concerns.

The PRMP addresses the planning issues and management concerns identified by BLM resource specialists; representatives of organizations, public interest groups, Indian tribes, and Federal, State, and local agencies; and members of the general public. The identified planning issues and related management concerns include the following.

Issues

Range Management - Rangeland management actions affecting forage allocations have the potential for conflict among competing users. Other rangeland issues, such as riparian area grazing and watershed management, have the potential for conflict over the use of resources, as well as conflict with legal requirements such as those contained in the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act. Related management concerns are *Fire Management, Livestock Grazing, Noxious Weed Infestations, Rangeland Vegetation Treatment Projects, Upland Watershed, Wild Horses and Burros, and Wildlife Habitat.*

Water Related Resource Management - Important fish habitat for anadromous and resident fish species found in the Challis Resource Area is of concern because of its biological, recreational, traditional cultural, and economic values. Scarcity of some anadromous fish species (Snake River spring-summer chinook salmon, Snake River sockeye salmon, and Snake River steelhead rainbow trout) and resident fish species (bull trout) has resulted in their listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Recovery strategies for listed species, water quality requirements prescribed by the Clean Water Act, and protection of identified beneficial uses may impact future uses of the public lands. These new emphases have the potential to create substantial public concern about the use of a resource value and possible economic impacts resulting from compliance with legal requirements. Related management concerns include *Fisheries*, *Floodplain/Wetland Areas*, *Minimum Streamflow*, *Riparian Areas*, and *Water Quality*.

Land Tenure and Access - Public and private lands are interspersed within the boundaries of the Challis Resource Area. Geologic landforms in the area, along with the interspersed ownership patterns, have contributed to unauthorized agricultural and occupancy use. Removal of the unauthorized use, land exchanges, or public sales of parcels of land are methods sometimes used to resolve unauthorized use conflicts. In addition, specific parcels of public land may be identified for exchange for private parcels containing important resource values. Such actions can result in public concern relating to the use or preservation of a resource, loss of a resource or environmental value, conflict over the use of resources, and concern over the increase or decrease of the public land base. The related management concern is *Land Tenure and Access*.

Special Management Areas - Special management designations vary according to the resource needs being addressed. Two kinds of special designations are being considered for the Challis RA: (1) additional Areas of Critical Environmental Concern needed to address critical elk and bighorn sheep habitats, cultural resources, sensitive plants, and fish habitat values; and (2) suitability findings which may result in Congressional designation of Wild, Scenic, or Recreational Rivers (as defined by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act). Designating, or not designating, may lead to substantial public concern over the special management of these resource values. Related management concerns are *Areas of Critical Environmental Concern*, *Wilderness Study Areas - Management if Released from Wilderness Review*, and *Wild and Scenic Rivers*.

Additional Management Concerns

The following additional management concerns identified during the scoping process are also discussed in the Challis PRMP/FEIS, in order to provide complete disclosure and analysis of resources, programs, and land uses in the Challis Resource Area: *Air Quality*, *Biological Diversity*, *Cultural Resources*, *Forest Resources*, *Hazardous Materials Management*, *Minerals*, *Off-highway Vehicle Use*, *Paleontological Resources*, *Recreation Opportunities and Visitor Use*, *Special Status Species*, *Transportation*, *Tribal Treaty Rights*, and *Visual Resources*.

Development of the Proposed RMP.

The Challis Draft RMP/EIS described and analyzed five alternatives in detail, including the “no action” alternative (existing management). Three additional alternatives were considered during Draft RMP development, but eliminated from detailed study.

During the public comment period on the Draft RMP/EIS, the BLM received written comments from Federally recognized tribes, State agencies, various committees, businesses, and organizations, and members of the general public. Based on these written comments and internal BLM recommendations, the BLM revised the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2) described in the Draft RMP. The BLM considered one additional alternative (no timber harvest) during development of the PRMP, but eliminated this option from detailed study.

The BLM made the following changes to the Preferred Alternative when developing the Proposed RMP:

- Off-highway vehicle use limitations were expanded, in order to reduce the surface disturbance and other impacts of off-road vehicle travel on vegetation, soils, wildlife, cultural, fisheries, and other resources. The PRMP limits OHV use on the entire Resource Area to existing roads, vehicle ways and trails, unless more restrictive area limitations or closures apply.
- Various decisions were revised to (a) clarify the BLM’s intent, (b) improve the BLM’s ability to measure and implement the actions consistently, and (c) provide an overall increase in protection of upland, riparian, and aquatic habitats.
- Emphasis on watershed assessment as a component of integrated resource activity planning and site-specific project planning was incorporated as a standard operating procedure.

Affected Environment.

This section summarizes the existing condition of the physical, biological, and socioeconomic environment in the Challis Resource Area.

Geography, Topography, and Climate

The steep, incised character of principal drainages in the RA limits human access and influences wildlife and livestock utilization patterns. The general relief of the area varies from nearly flat on the valley floors of major drainages to nearly vertical cliffs on the mountains. Elevations range from about 4,600 feet to 10,100 feet and growing seasons vary from 60 to 100 days. The climate is characterized by abundant sunshine, low humidity, and high evaporation. Average annual precipitation ranges from about 7.5 inches (the lowest in Idaho) at Challis (elevation 5,200 feet) to 25 inches at Jerry Peak (elevation 10,100 feet), with an estimated average of 10 to 15 inches. Drought cycles are typical of the Intermountain West, and can affect the growth and vigor of plants and animals and limit free water availability from surface water sources such as springs,

creeks, and seeps. Average temperatures range from a high of 68 °F in July to a low of 18 °F in January, with extremes from -33 °F to 103 °F.

Affected Resources or Programs

Air Quality: Air quality in the RA is generally believed to be excellent. Air quality degradation occasionally occurs in the RA, but it is usually seasonal, short-term, and localized.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern/Research Natural Areas (ACECs/RNAs): Eight ACECs totalling approximately 14,021 acres have been designated in the Challis RA to highlight various values and resources for management and protection: unique plant communities, petrified trees, fragile soils, and a bighorn sheep population. These ACECs include approximately 5,975 acres of RNAs designated for study of natural, pristine, or unique characteristics. The ACEC values in all ACECs are in good to excellent condition with stable trend, except for the 896-acre Thousand Springs ACEC, where the ACEC values are in fair condition with upward trend. The Challis PRMP would expand the Thousand Springs ACEC and would designate approximately 73,916 acres in seven additional ACECs, in order to highlight the following resources for management and protection: unique plant communities; fragile soils; a geological area of interest; unique riparian areas; fisheries habitat; roadless, primitive and scenic values; crucial bighorn sheep habitat; crucial elk habitat; and unique cultural resources.

Biological Diversity: Genetic diversity - The Challis RA contains several species or subpopulations of plants, fish, and wildlife which are ecologically or geographically isolated and limited to this general area. These species or subpopulations have a high probability of significant genetic difference from other populations. Species diversity - Data on species diversity are limited to inventories of vertebrate animal and vascular plant species/communities. Virtually no data on invertebrate animals or nonvascular plants are available. From what is known, species diversity appears to be good, and most species have viable populations. Community diversity -The RA contains examples of a variety of biological communities, some with abundant distribution (*e.g.*, sagebrush/grasslands), and others with limited distribution (*e.g.*, riparian areas, wetlands, old growth forest, talus slopes, spring sites). Structural diversity is somewhat limited in the RA, except for forest lands. Landscape/ecosystem diversity - The steep, rugged mountainous terrain and patchy distribution of forested areas among sagebrush/grassland results in significant natural landscape diversity.

Cultural Resources: The Challis RA manages archaeological remains, historic values, and traditional lifeway values important to Native American groups. BLM lands within the RA contain 495 known, recorded cultural resource sites which represent a variety of types and chronological periods. These sites document an almost continuous occupation of the RA from at least 11,000 years ago to the present. The majority of known sites are considered eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and several sites are listed on the NRHP. Due to various factors such as wind and water erosion, human and animal intrusion, and development and maintenance activities, the trend of cultural site conditions in the RA is considered to be downward.

Economy and Society: The Challis PRMP/FEIS analyzes the impacts of proposed management on two distinct socio-economic regions which lie in proximity to the Challis Resource Area: The Fort Hall Indian Reservation and the Custer-Lemhi counties two-county region. The economy and society of those two regions are summarized below.

Fort Hall Indian Reservation - The 544,000-acre Fort Hall Indian Reservation, home of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, is located in southeast Idaho between the cities of Pocatello (pop. 46,080) to the south and Blackfoot (pop. 9,646) to the north. The townsite of Fort Hall (pop. 900) is the only major community within the Reservation. The Reservation is home to 3,035 enrolled members of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and 2,079 non-Indians; an additional 493 tribal members live off the Reservation. The Reservation economy is primarily comprised of economic activity related to leasing agricultural land, contracts with the Federal government, grants from Federal, state, and private sectors, and revenue derived from the Bingo Hall and Trading Post complex (grocery store, restaurant, clothing store, gas station, museum). The Reservation economy exhibits unemployment and household poverty levels far greater than the average unemployment and poverty levels for the U.S., Idaho, or four surrounding counties. Given the poverty level of the majority of people living on the Reservation, it is possible that resources hunted for, fished for, or gathered in the Challis Resource Area through the exercise of tribal treaty rights could be an important or essential component of personal subsistence for tribal members. In addition to contributing to tribal members' economic subsistence, resources from the Challis Resource Area have important social and cultural values to the Tribes.

Custer and Lemhi Counties - Custer and Lemhi counties are rural, with population concentrations in and around seven communities. The population for the two-county area is approximately 11,000 persons. The counties are quite distant from major population centers (which are one to three hours drive away) (see General Location Map). Employment and income/earnings information for Custer and Lemhi counties indicates that underemployment and poverty are common in the two-county region, generally due to a lack of full-time, yearlong, and higher-wage employment opportunities. Both counties have over 90% of the land base in public ownership and receive substantial amounts of non-local aid to support expenditures for public goods and services. The two-county region's primary economic sectors are agriculture, mining, government, business associated with visitors to the area ("tourism"), and timber. On a regional basis, the two-county economy is diverse, for four economic sectors each provide one-fourth to one-fifth of the employment and income/earnings opportunities for the region. However, most economic subregions are dependent on only one or two economic sectors for their local economy (except for the Salmon economic subregion, which has a diverse economy). This makes those subregions particularly vulnerable to downward shifts in regional, national, and international economic trends. Except for occasional "boom" or "bust" cycles in the mining industry, the regional economy exhibits only a slow rate of change. The vast majority of respondents to a recent sociological study of the area had the following attitudes regarding resource use in a community: They felt that (a) resources have value when they are used by a society to meet its wants and needs; (b) customary uses (e.g., land use, water use) are either assumed to be rights or have been codified as rights (e.g., through grazing allotments and water allocations); and (c) the local community should be the locus of control for decisions about resource use.

Fire Management: Fire activity due to either unplanned wildfires or prescribed fire has been low, with few acres affected and low fire intensities. As a result, vegetation habitat conditions in the RA are thought to have changed over time. Sagebrush densities on grassland habitats have probably increased, reducing forage quantity and quality. Fire suppression in forested types is thought to have changed species composition and increased ladder fuels, overstocking, stand decadence, and the risk of insect/disease epidemic or stand-replacing fire.

Fisheries: Resident salmonid populations of rainbow trout, westslope cutthroat trout, brook trout, bull trout, kokanee salmon, and mountain whitefish are broadly distributed in the RA, reflect low to moderate abundance, and, depending on the stock or population being considered, indicate either downward or relatively stable population trends. Anadromous fish populations of chinook salmon, sockeye salmon, and steelhead rainbow trout reflect low to very low abundance and show downward population trends. The Snake River sockeye salmon is Federally listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The Snake River spring/summer chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead trout, and bull trout are Federally listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The westslope cutthroat trout, Idaho's State fish, is managed as a sensitive species. Habitat condition ratings for major fisheries streams in the Resource Area are 50% - good, 30% - fair, and 20% - poor. Factors currently limiting resident or anadromous fisheries habitat and production in the RA include (a) fishery losses through unscreened irrigation diversions; (b) dewatering of stream channels for irrigation; (c) riparian systems which are in non-functional or functional-at-risk condition; (d) stream channel alterations; and (e) siltation.

Forest Resources: Forest lands occupy small, scattered portions of the RA and account for only 7.4% (58,461 acres) of BLM administered lands. The majority of forest habitat types are low timber productivity sites (20 to 50 cubic feet/acre/year), and all commercial forest lands (30,987 acres) are in areas which indicate management difficulties, such as fragile sites, problem reforestation sites, or adverse locations. As a result, timber harvesting in the RA utilizes shelterwood marking prescriptions (60% overstory removal) to promote natural regeneration. About 85% of forest lands are dominated by pure stands of Douglas-fir; the remaining 15% of forest land includes lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, whitebark pine, limber pine, Ponderosa pine, quaking aspen, and black cottonwood. About 85% of forest lands are comprised of stands dominated by sawtimber size (10 inches or greater DBH) trees (even structured) in varying age classes (uneven-aged). Overstory Douglas-fir ranges from 100 to 400 years old, with an average of approximately 200 years. An estimated 50% of commercial forest land acres in the RA have old growth characteristics. The greatest forest health problem in the RA is reduced stand vigor because of overstocking as a result of fire suppression since the early 1900s. Currently, there is little demand for either commercial timber or other woodland products from the Challis RA.

Hazardous Materials Management: Of the 130 sites recently inventoried for the presence of hazardous materials, only 2 sites contained hazardous materials (outdated pesticide and contaminated soil at an unauthorized dump; old, unstable dynamite at an abandoned mine site). Those sites have been cleaned up. No designated Superfund sites are located in the RA. Containment of hazardous materials on some private lands within the Resource Area boundary is of concern on some nearby public lands.

Land Tenure and Access: The land ownership pattern is generally private lands at lower elevations and along water courses, BLM lands at mid-elevations, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands at higher elevations, and State of Idaho sections intermingled throughout. The BLM authorizes numerous land uses through rights-of-way grants, Recreation and Public Purposes Act leases and patents, various site withdrawals, and easements. Since 1978 only about 1,251 acres of BLM public lands have been acquired or disposed of through land tenure adjustments.

Livestock Grazing: About 97.3% (771,224 acres) of BLM-administered lands in the RA are currently allocated for livestock grazing. Eighty-four (84) livestock operators have permits to graze their livestock on the 62 allotments in the RA. Most livestock use consists of cow-calf operations grazing during the spring or fall (either before or after summer grazing on adjacent National Forests). Current active preference is 51,069 AUMs, and actual use averages 43,769 AUMs per year. Rangeland monitoring indicates management applied up until 1992 did not meet existing land use plan objectives to improve range condition Resource Area-wide, although objectives were met on some allotments. Improved grazing management implemented on 14 allotments since 1993 has resulted in observable improvement in resource conditions on those allotments.

Minerals - Locatable, Saleable, and Leasable: Locatable minerals extracted or identified in the past include tungsten, molybdenum, silver, copper, lead, barite, opaline material, and uranium. Current locatable mineral production is limited to the Thompson Creek molybdenum mine and a small decorative stone operation. Small quantities of saleable minerals (including stream sands and gravels, alluvial fan material, talus material) are sold annually to State and county road departments and independent contractors. There are no known deposits of solid leasable minerals in the RA. Except for a few sites with high potential, most of the RA is zero or low potential for fluid energy (oil, gas, or geothermal) mineral occurrence.

Paleontological Resources: A few fossil-bearing localities have been identified in the RA, including a site with petrified trees. Given the geologic nature of the RA, the potential for discovery of paleontological resources is moderate. Known paleontological resources are in a degraded condition with downward trend, due to erosional processes, fossil collecting, and off-highway vehicle damage.

Recreation Opportunities, Visitor Use, and Off-highway Vehicle Use: Challis RA public lands support numerous recreation uses, including floating, boating, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, nature study, photography, picnicking, wildlife viewing, backpacking, rockhounding, mountain biking, cross country skiing, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. Most of the RA (71%) is open to OHV use without restriction; only about 2% of the RA is "closed" to OHV use. Over 99% of the RA is legally accessible to the public for recreational pursuits. Recreation resources include 19 recreation sites, 3 miles of trails, 64 miles of National Scenic Byway, 141,260 acres of Wilderness Study Areas, almost 100 miles of floatable rivers, and 50 miles of wildlife viewing routes. Most recreation use is concentrated within two Special Recreation Management Areas, one located along the Salmon River, the other at Mackay Reservoir.

Summary

Soils: Soils and soil conditions in the RA vary with local geology, topographic relief, climate, and vegetative cover. Most soils are residual - formed in place from weathered sedimentary rock, although some soils are alluvial - deposited by running water. Most soils have the relief and physical properties capable of absorbing nearly all precipitation in the area. However, overland flow and sediment transport into streams are pronounced during periods of intense thunderstorms. Although vegetation is sparse in the RA, the productive capacity ranges from 100 pounds per acre on rough, broken lands to 3,000 pounds per acre on wet meadows. Surface disturbance on some soils types can be sources of accelerated erosion if protective vegetative cover is not maintained.

Transportation: 718 miles of inventoried roads provide physical access to public, State, and private lands throughout the RA. The BLM is responsible for maintaining about 47% of these roads. Many BLM roads are in poor condition due to limited maintenance and use during saturated soil conditions when the roads are most susceptible to damage. About 63% of BLM roads are suitable for two wheel drive vehicles during good weather. Not all BLM roads have legal access for public use: 41 easements on 26 roads are needed. Other transportation facilities include 3 miles of trails, 2 authorized airstrips, and several boat ramps.

Tribal Treaty Rights: The Challis RA is entirely comprised of aboriginal and traditional lands used by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes that were negotiated in the "Fort Bridger Treaty" of 1868 with the Eastern Band Shoshone and Bannock Tribes. As stated in the Treaty and clarified in *State v. Tinno*, the Tribes retain legal rights to hunt, fish, and gather natural resources in the Challis RA. The Tribes do not depend on commodity resources from the RA for their economic livelihood, but they do rely on BLM public lands for subsistence and cultural purposes. Treaty rights in the Challis RA may also extend to other Federally recognized tribes which have treaty language providing rights to lands in this area. Tribal treaty rights pursued on public lands in the RA include fishing for anadromous and resident game fish species, hunting large and small game, and gathering natural resources for subsistence and medicinal purposes.

Vegetation: Vegetation in the RA has many uses/demands as a resource: forage for livestock, wild horses, and big game; habitat (*e.g.*, cover, nesting areas) for wildlife; watershed and water quality protection; recreation/aesthetics (shade, naturalness); and fisheries habitat (*e.g.*, nutrient input, temperature moderation). At present, these vegetation uses are minimally affected by the invasion and spread of noxious weeds (mostly along road corridors). Upland rangeland vegetation communities are primarily comprised of bluebunch wheatgrass/big sagebrush. Upland forest communities are primarily Douglas-fir. Riparian zones within the RA can generally be identified by the existence of riparian-dependent vegetation such as cottonwoods, willows, sedges, and rushes. Twenty-seven (27) special status plant species are known to occur within or adjacent to the RA, and six more species are suspected to occur. (The Federally endangered plant species *Ute ladies'-tresses* orchid may occur in the RA, although its presence has not been documented to date.) Thirty-four (34) additional rare and endemic plant species are known to occur within or adjacent to the RA. The uniqueness of vascular flora in the Challis area suggests there may be unique non-vascular flora as well.

Visual Resources: The visual quality of the RA is very high, due to inherent characteristics of the area's landforms, vegetation, and land use patterns, and because there are few visual intrusions.

Some land and resource uses lower the visual quality of the RA, including power lines, gravel pits, unauthorized dumps, casual OHV use, and heavy livestock use. Existing visual resource management (VRM) classifies 42% of the RA as VRM Class IV - Modification (which allows activities which require major modification of the existing landscape), 21.5% as VRM Class III - Partial Retention (which allows activities which would partially retain the existing character of the landscape), and 36.5% as VRM Class I (Preservation) or VRM Class II (Retention) (which would retain the existing character of the landscape).

Water Resources: Recent riparian inventories indicate the condition of riparian areas is approximately 35.8% proper functioning condition, 55.7% functional-at-risk, and 8.5% non-functional. Ground water in the RA is generally believed to be of adequate quantity and good to excellent quality, suitable for all uses needed on a RA-wide basis. Surface waters originating on public lands are used for water-based recreation activities, domestic and agricultural water supplies, and maintenance of cold water fisheries and habitat. The primary water right claims for the BLM are for livestock and wildlife consumption. Most surface water in the RA originates in mountainous areas above the principal drainages and is of high quality near its source. However, depending on local land use, geology, and ground water discharge, water quality in many tributary streams becomes degraded as water travels down the mountains. Watershed erosion susceptibility in the RA is 32% low to slight, 40% moderate, and 28% high to severe.

Wilderness Study Areas: The RA contains seven WSAs totaling 142,260 acres of public lands. Portions of three WSAs (38,930 acres) were recommended by the BLM to Congress as "suitable" for wilderness designation. The values of naturalness, roadlessness, and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation which qualified the WSAs for designation have remained relatively unchanged. Authorized uses in WSAs include livestock grazing, off-highway vehicle use on existing roads and trails, and recreation use.

Wild Horses and Burros: The RA no longer contains a Herd Management Area for wild burros. The wild horse herd is managed to maintain 185 animals, with round-ups every other year to reduce the population to that level. The wild horse herd appears healthy and viable, with average herd size increases of 17% annually. Horses gathered during round-up are generally adopted quite readily under the BLM's "Adopt-a-Horse" program.

Wildlife: Populations of elk, mule deer, and antelope are generally stable and sufficiently abundant to be controlled by hunter harvest. Historically, bighorn sheep were abundant throughout most of the RA; however, settlement resulted in severe population decline and complete loss of some populations. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has reintroduced bighorn sheep to some of their historic ranges and has plans for more reintroductions in the future. Various upland game species are present in the RA, including sage grouse, blue grouse, chukar partridge, mourning doves, and cottontail and pygmy rabbits. The most common waterfowl species are the Canada goose and mallard. Shorebirds include sandpipers, willets, sandhill cranes, long-billed curlews, and others. Several riparian/wetland habitats in the RA provide habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds. Approximately 307 species of vertebrate non-game, furbearing, and predatory wildlife species inhabit the RA. Raptors include golden eagles, prairie falcons, red-tail hawks, goshawks, Cooper's hawks, sharp-shinned hawks, owls, and osprey. Predators/furbearers

include the black bear, mountain lion, coyote, red fox, and bobcat. Three Federally listed threatened or endangered species are present in the RA (peregrine falcon, gray wolf, and bald eagle). One species proposed for listing as threatened is present in the RA (Canada lynx). Thirty-seven (37) species of terrestrial wildlife (mammals, birds, and amphibians) listed as "sensitive" are known to be present in the RA.

Wild and Scenic Rivers: To date, no wild, scenic, or recreational rivers have been designated within the Challis RA. The Challis RA has completed a Wild and Scenic Rivers inventory of 201 river segments, to determine their eligibility for potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. Fifty-seven (57) rivers were found eligible for further study. Identified outstandingly remarkable values include the following resources/values: cultural, scenic, recreational, ecological, geological, wildlife, fisheries, other. The Challis Draft RMP/EIS summarizes the BLM's suitability study of these eligible segments, and the Challis PRMP/FEIS presents the BLM's proposed suitability findings.

Environmental Consequences.

The BLM's analysis of impacts indicates Proposed RMP decisions would have the following impacts on resources and land uses in the Challis Resource Area:

- **Resource Values Maintained:** PRMP decisions would maintain the following resource values which are already in good condition: air quality; visual quality; unique resource values on approximately 14,290 acres of existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs); primitive values in suitable portions of the Jerry Peak and Burnt Creek WSAs, if released from wilderness review; and wild horse populations.
- **Protection of Resource Values Increased:** PRMP decisions would increase the level of consideration and protection provided to known and possible cultural and paleontological resources, biological diversity, special status species, visual resources, unique resource values on about 73,916 acres of new ACECs, and Wild and Scenic Rivers values on 15 segments identified as eligible for further study or suitable for designation.
- **Resource Conditions Improved:** PRMP decisions would improve degraded and maintain satisfactory condition riparian and aquatic habitats, with resulting benefits to riparian soils, water quality, fisheries habitat, and riparian-dependent wildlife species. PRMP decisions would also improve the condition of upland vegetation communities, with beneficial impacts to soils, upland watersheds, most wildlife habitats, and wild horse habitat within the Herd Management Area. Decisions related to forest resource management would improve long term sustained productivity and forest health on most sites. Developed recreation opportunities would improve, as would the quality of primitive recreation experiences.
- **Social and Economic Impacts:** The availability and quality of trust resources of importance to Federally recognized tribes would improve. The Fort Hall Indian Reservation's economy and society may be positively affected by increased opportunity for tribal members to utilize resources to provide for personal subsistence, to obtain raw materials (to make value-added

products) and to fulfill cultural needs. Within the Custer-Lemhi counties' economy, reductions in some resource and land uses would, over the long term, improve and sustain the condition of resources which support activities related to the regional economy and society. Although the estimated quantitative impacts to the Custer-Lemhi counties' economy would not be significant (less than 1% decrease in sales, earnings, and population), the impacts to individual livestock permittees and subregions dependent on agriculture could be greater, depending on the resource values and conditions within a given allotment.

- **Land Uses Reduced:** Off-highway vehicle use limitations would essentially eliminate off-road vehicle travel throughout the Resource Area. PRMP decisions may result in up to a 25% decrease in estimated annual livestock use, depending on permittees' efforts to manage livestock use and distribution. Restrictions on mineral materials sales may limit the availability of new, easily accessible and low cost mineral material sites to meet public demand.
- **Residual (Unmitigated) Resource Impacts:** The analysis of environmental consequences indicates that cultural resources loss, disturbance, or damage may still occur in localized areas, due to (a) unauthorized collection and vandalism, or (b) land sales/transfers or surface disturbing activities on sites which were not identified during Class III intensive inventories. Some surface disturbing activities, such as road construction or campground development, would cause an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of the soil resource on a localized basis. Primitive values may decline in some portions of WSAs, if released from wilderness review; this loss of values may be irreversible and irretrievable.

Comparison of the Proposed RMP and the Preferred Alternative.

The Proposed RMP is very similar to the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2) described and analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS. However, the PRMP increases the level of protection to aquatic, riparian, and upland resources by limiting off-highway vehicle use to existing roads, vehicle ways, and trails throughout the Resource Area. The PRMP also clarifies numerous decisions, and thereby improves the BLM's ability to implement effective management in order to address resource concerns and improve resource conditions. Finally, the PRMP includes an emphasis on integrated resource activity planning and watershed assessment, in order to ensure that individual project proposals are considered within the context of broader landscapes. As a result of these modifications to the Preferred Alternative, the BLM believes the Proposed RMP would more rapidly and effectively improve resource conditions, while still providing for consumptive resource uses such as timber harvest, minerals exploration and development, and livestock grazing.

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