

# Jarbidge RMP Newsletter

Fifth Issue, September 2010

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## Letter from the Field Manager

First, I would like to thank you for your understanding over the past several years. The Jarbidge Field Office has had many challenges that required extensive time commitments from the staff.

As you probably know, the largest fire in the United States in 2007 burned in the Jarbidge Field Office. The Murphy Complex Fires consumed over 400,000 acres of public land, 33% of the Jarbidge Field Office. Field Office staff were heavily involved in suppression activities during the fire and emergency stabilization and rehabilitation activities following the fire.

In addition to their regular responsibilities, Field Office staff have committed considerable time to large Freedom of Information Act requests, additional or new litigation, and recent special status species listings.

The Murphy Complex Fires impacted the development of the Jarbidge Draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS) in several ways. First, the Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) had to reassess the current condition of the planning area. Second, alternatives were revisited to address the changed conditions, including adding an alternative with a single

focus of addressing wildland fire based on comments receiving during and following the fires.

We are looking forward to receiving public comment on the work we've been engaged in for the past several years. This newsletter contains important information on how to most effectively comment on the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS.

We appreciate your continued participation in this effort.

*Rick Vander Voet*

Rick Vander Voet  
Field Manager  
Jarbidge Field Office

### Comment Period Begins for Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS

The EPA's Notice of Availability for the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS was published in the Federal Register on September 3, 2010, initiating the 90-day comment period for the document. The comment period will last through December 2, 2010. A copy of the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS should arrive at this address shortly in the format you requested. In addition, it will be available online at:  
[http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/jarbidge\\_resource/Documents.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/jarbidge_resource/Documents.html)

### Jarbidge RMP Contact Information:

Web: [www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/jarbidge\\_resource.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/jarbidge_resource.html)  
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Fax: (208) 736-2375 (Attn: Jarbidge RMP)  
Phone: (208) 736-2350 (Aimee Betts or Amanda Nisula)  
Mail: RMP Project Manager, Jarbidge Field Office, 2536 Kimberly Rd, Twin Falls ID 83301

### Be an Informed Reader!

We understand that reading the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS is a large undertaking. The following tips will help you successfully navigate the document.

- **Read the *How to Use This CD or How to Use the Documents on This Website* guides if you are using those formats:** These guides provide useful information on the special features of these electronic documents.
- **Read the *Errata Sheet*:** The sheet provides information on how recent national laws and programmatic EISs will be incorporated into the Jarbidge Proposed RMP/Final EIS.
- **Read the *How to Read This Chapter* section of each chapter:** This section provides important information on the organization of each chapter and will help you locate the information you are looking for.
- **Attend a public meeting (see back):** Resource specialists will be available to answer questions and clarify information.



## Comparison of Alternatives for the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS

The ID Team and the Idaho BLM State Office developed a set of alternatives based on information received during scoping, feedback from the April 2007 public workshops, and the most recent data gathered on resources and uses. These alternatives represent an overall range of management strategies for the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS. The following descriptions provide a brief snap-shot of each alternative. **Detailed information about each alternative can be found in Chapter 2 of the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS.**

**Alternative I** focuses on enhancing and sustaining existing and historic uses. This alternative would have the largest component of active recreation management, including Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) for motorized recreation, hunting and fishing, hiking, and water-based recreation. Livestock grazing would be maintained near 2009 levels. This alternative would focus more on implementing management to benefit mule deer than other alternatives. Restoration projects would focus on providing habitat for mule deer and special status species, including treatments in some non-native perennial communities. Upland vegetation treatments would include actively restoring native and non-native perennial communities in big game and sage-grouse habitat. Annual communities would also be a focus for vegetation treatments. Vegetation treatments could use native or non-native species depending on vegetation objectives.

**Alternative III** focuses on restoring the resiliency of ecosystem structure and function through intensive management of fuels and enhanced fire suppression capabilities. This alternative would provide for the highest amount of fuels treatments. Non-native perennial plant communities would be actively managed to contribute to wildland fire prevention and suppression efforts, including increased levels of permitted livestock grazing. Treatments of annual communities would focus on converting these areas to a non-native perennial fire-tolerant community. Native plant communities would be restored to move toward their historic fire regime; intensive fuels reduction measures may be taken to manage native plant communities. Vegetation treatments may use both native and non-native species, with fire-tolerant and fire-resistant species having a high priority. Other uses would be allowed to the extent they do not contribute to an increase in wildland fire size and intensity. The quality and quantity of infrastructure such as roads and water would be increased to support fire suppression activities more in this alternative than in other alternatives.

**Alternative V** focuses on the restoration of habitats toward historic vegetation communities. In native plant communities, passive restoration approaches would be preferred. Active restoration would take place in non-native perennial and annual communities; treatments in non-native perennial communities would minimize soil disturbance. Restoration projects would focus on habitat for sage-grouse and other special status species as well as special designations. Vegetation treatments would use only native species.

**The No Action Alternative** continues to implement the 1987 Jarbidge RMP and its amendments. Lands in poor ecological condition would be improved, while lands in good and excellent ecological condition in the Bruneau River Sheep Creek and Jarbidge River Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) would be maintained. A limited number of upland vegetation treatments would focus on maintaining or improving wildlife habitat, especially habitat for big game, sage-grouse, and upland game birds. Vegetation treatments could use native or non-native species. The majority of the planning area would remain available for resource uses, including livestock grazing, cross-country motorized vehicle use, and land use authorizations.

**Alternative II** focuses on increasing commercial uses. Livestock grazing would be increased substantially. Non-native perennial communities would be actively maintained for livestock, and treatments in non-native annual communities would focus on converting these areas to a non-native, more fire-tolerant, forage-producing perennial community. Native plant communities would be maintained. A limited amount of restoration in native plant communities would be implemented, focusing on special status species habitat. Other commercial uses, including energy development, would be allowed throughout most areas and have the fewest restrictions compared to the other alternatives. Vegetation treatments could use native or non-native species depending on vegetation and resource use objectives.

**Alternative IV (the Preferred Alternative)** focuses on actively restoring the resiliency of ecosystem structure and function through restoration projects and managing uses. Priorities would be to treat at-risk or fragmented habitats and non-native perennial and annual communities. This alternative would provide for active restoration using more tools and more intensive approaches in more areas than in Alternative V. Vegetation treatments could use native or non-native species depending on vegetation objectives. Management would be implemented to benefit sage-grouse. Alternative IV has been split into two sub-alternatives. The only difference between the sub-alternatives is the size of the Inside Desert and Jarbidge Foothills Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs); these ACECs would have larger boundaries in Alternative IV-A than in Alternative IV-B. When differences are specified between Sub-Alternatives IV-A and IV-B, Alternative IV-B is the Preferred Alternative.

*The Preferred Alternative indicates the agency's preliminary preference. Identification of Alternative IV as Preferred does not represent a final BLM decision. BLM has the discretion to select an alternative in its entirety or to combine aspects of the various alternatives presented in this draft to develop the Proposed RMP and Final EIS. The Proposed RMP may include objectives and actions described as portions of other analyzed alternatives based on information received during public comment on the Draft RMP/EIS, new information, or changes in BLM policies or priorities.*

## How to Comment on the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS

You are invited to review the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS and provide written comments, which will be used to prepare the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Comments regarding the Draft RMP/EIS can be sent using any of the methods identified on the back of this newsletter. Comment letters, faxes, and email must include your complete name, address, and phone number. Anonymous comments will not be considered. Comments that include specific suggested changes, mention page numbers or action codes (where appropriate), or cite reference literature are most helpful.

In order for the ID Team to most effectively respond to your comments, it is important for you to identify the portion of the document you are commenting on. At the very minimum, please provide the chapter, section, and page number that contains the information on which you are commenting. When commenting on Chapter 2, please provide the reference code for the goal, objective, allocation, or management action on which you are commenting. The ID Team will respond to substantive comments on the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS. The ID Team will not respond to unsubstantive comments (see boxes to right).

The National Environmental Policy Act Handbook defines substantive comments as comments that do one or more of the following:

- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in the EIS
- Question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis
- Present new information relevant to the analysis
- Present reasonable alternatives other than those analyzed in the EIS
- Cause changes or revision in one or more of the alternatives

Comments that are not considered substantive include the following:

- Comments in favor of or against the alternatives without reasoning that meets the criteria listed above
- Comments that only agree or disagree with BLM policy or resource decisions without justification or supporting data that meet the criteria listed above
- Comments that do not pertain to the planning area or the planning-level decisions
- Comments in the form of vague, open-ended questions

### New Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Designated in the Jarbidge Field Office



The Omnibus Public Lands Management Act (OPLMA; Public Law 111-11) was signed by the President on March 30, 2009. Title I, Subtitle F of this act, entitled *Owyhee Public Land Management*, designated the Bruneau-Jarbidge Rivers Wilderness and released areas previously identified as the Bruneau River-Sheep Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and the Jarbidge River WSA that are not contained in the newly designated Wilderness from future consideration for Wilderness. In addition, OPLMA designated four Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSRs) within the planning area and contains additional management direction for cultural resources and transportation in the portions of the planning area within Owyhee County, Idaho.

When OPLMA passed in March 2009, the ID Team was in the process of finalizing the impact analysis for the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS. To incorporate OPLMA into the Draft RMP/EIS, the BLM determined numerous acreage and other changes would be necessary in the document.

The ID Team determined this workload would delay publication of the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS by approximately one year. To prevent further delay in publishing the Draft RMP/EIS, BLM decided to publish the document without full incorporation of the designations and management contained in the Act and incorporate them before publication of the Jarbidge Proposed RMP/Final EIS. BLM does not expect these changes to affect the ultimate conclusions of the analysis presented in the Draft RMP/EIS; rather, most changes will only appear in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS as minor variations in acreages or changes in word-

ing.

More information on OPLMA can be found in the Errata Sheet at the beginning of the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS.



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<p><b>Public Meetings</b> Public meetings will be held to allow the public to learn more about the Jarbidge Draft RMP/EIS. These meetings will use an open house format, so stop by at your convenience. Meetings will be held at the following dates and locations:</p>	
<p>Sept. 21, 4 to 7 pm          Three Island Crossing State Park          1083 S. Three Island Park Dr.          Glenn's Ferry, ID</p>	<p>Sept. 22, 4 to 8 pm          AmeriTel Inn          539 Poleline Rd.          Twin Falls, ID</p>
<p>Sept. 23, 4 to 7 pm          Three Creek Schoolhouse          49909 Three Creek Rd.          Three Creek, ID</p>	<p>Sept. 28, 4 to 8 pm          BLM Boise District Office          3948 Development Dr.          Boise, ID</p>
<p>Oct. 6, 4 to 7 pm          Red Lion Hotel          2065 Idaho St          Elko, NV</p>	<p>Additional meetings          will be scheduled as          necessary.</p>

**New Jarbidge RMP Website Address**

The Jarbidge RMP Website has a new look and a new location. The website provides information on why the Jarbidge RMP is being prepared, the planning process, and how to get involved and comment. Information from public meetings, news & newsletters, Federal Register Notices, planning documents, and maps & photos of the planning area are posted on the website. The change in format will allow the website to be updated more quickly.

**Go to [http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/jarbidge\\_resource.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/jarbidge_resource.html) to see our new site!**

**Presentations on Draft RMP/EIS**

**Jarbidge Field Office staff are available to speak to organizations about the Jarbidge RMP. Feel free to contact us to schedule a presentation.**

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT CONSIDERATIONS:** Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.