

WILDLIFE

The Plan will provide for existing big game populations and Idaho Department of Fish and Game population projections through 1995. It will provide for improvement of crucial elk winter range; deer, antelope and sage grouse habitat; and nongame habitat. Habitat will be protected or enhanced through acquisition of limited acreages of state and private land; moderate restrictions on livestock use, forestry, and mineral activity; and retention of all important habitat. Fences presenting a hazard or movement problem for big game will be modified. Guzzlers will be installed for antelope, sage grouse, and nongame in water deficient areas. Sensitive and threatened or endangered species habitats will be protected through standard operating procedures. This Plan should provide enhanced habitat conditions such that population increases for many wildlife species will be possible.

Rationale: The Plan formally recognizes the ecologic nonconsumptive and consumptive values associated with viable populations of diverse species of wildlife and their habitat. Supporting that recognition are accommodations for wildlife by other, potentially competing, resource activities and various habitat improvement efforts. The Plan should provide the enhanced habitat conditions that will make possible population increases for many wildlife species.

The Plan addresses the issues of livestock and wildlife forage designations (4.b), wildlife habitat management (5.a,b,c), restrictions on forestry to protect wildlife habitat (3.b), and restrictions on mineral activities to protect wildlife habitat (2.b).

WATERSHED

Under the Plan, 1,494 acres of watershed presently in unsatisfactory condition will be improved through monitoring and livestock grazing use modifications. Approximately 15.5 miles of perennial stream riparian area will be improved by fencing to exclude livestock. Thirteen of fourteen riparian areas listed in Table 3-5 page 3-20 of the Draft RMP/EIS as "most in need of improvement" will improve under this plan. Timber harvest roads will be closed except for forestry and fire management purposes following completion of timber harvest activities to mitigate the adverse impacts of timber harvesting on watersheds and water quality.

Rationale: The Plan recognizes that water and water-related resources in the area are of great importance to both public and private lands. Mitigation efforts for water and watershed resources will support this recognition. The Plan should maintain or improve riparian and watershed conditions such that benefits associated with healthy riparian areas and watersheds (improved wildlife, fisheries, recreation, water quality, and flood control) could be maintained or improved.

The Plan addresses the issues of riparian degradation due to overuse by livestock (6.a), watershed degradation caused by timber harvest practices (6.b), and overgrazing by livestock on highly erosive, low elevation rangeland (6.c). The plan recognizes the direct and indirect values associated with healthy riparian areas. The political, socioeconomic, and ecological complexities surrounding the riparian problems are enormous. Refer to Appendix A-8 of the Proposed RMP/EIS for detailed rationale concerning riparian management.

FISHERIES HABITAT MANAGEMENT

The Plan would improve fisheries habitat on 3.0 miles of McDevitt Creek and improve water quality on 2.25 miles of Sevenmile Creek. A total of 94.7 miles of stream will be managed to maintain fisheries habitat in its present condition.

Rationale: The Plan recognizes the importance of the aquatic/riparian habitat along 5.5 miles of perennial stream that will be improved. The other 94.7 miles will remain in an overall static trend. This addresses planning issues (6.a) and (4.c).

SOILS

Issue 6.c asks, "How should the problem of early spring turnout and overgrazing by livestock on highly erosive, low elevation rangeland be handled?"

Rationale: The Plan will establish lower stocking rates, implement more range improvements, and improve livestock distribution. The improved distribution will lead to improvement of the poor and fair ranges (20,200 acres), thus reducing the erosion potential on these areas. The better distribution will lessen, but not eliminate, the impact of grazing and wildlife on the bentonite badlands areas (5,028 acres).

RECREATION

Recreation use varies in direct proportion to the national economy, river water levels, big game seasons, and anadromous fish runs. Principal uses include hunting, fishing, off-road vehicle (ORV) use, river running, and sightseeing. The Plan will continue the designation of three special recreation management areas: the Salmon River, Continental Divide Trail, and Lewis and Clark Trail. Recreation sites will be developed at two locations. Mineral entry withdrawals, no-surface-occupancy restrictions, and other use restrictions will be used in developed recreation sites and special recreation management areas. The Plan will leave 93 percent of the area open to ORV use. There will be 14,796 acres closed to ORV use, and 16,230 acres will have a seasonal (winter) use limit.

Rationale: The development and protection of recreation sites and nationally designated trails will help meet the projected demand for recreation in the area. There has been an increasing demand for recreation opportunities along the Salmon River. The special recreation management area designations will provide for more detailed planning so that most uses could be accommodated. The closure of 14,796 acres to ORV use is required for the area recommended for wilderness (if designated by Congress).

This plan designates open, limited, and closed ORV areas in response to Issue #8 and provides specific management direction for existing recreational facilities and nationally significant areas in response to Issue #7.

WILDERNESS

Within the Eighteenmile Wilderness Study Area (WSA), 14,796 acres will be recommended for wilderness designation and 10,126 acres for nonwilderness uses under the Plan.

Rationale: The area recommended for wilderness designation contains the heart of the WSA, including all of the primitive and most of the semi-primitive nonmotorized lands. This area is manageable as wilderness, little influenced by past land uses, and borders a portion of the Italian Peaks Roadless Area recommended for wilderness by the U.S. Forest Service.

The area recommended for nonwilderness is a narrow strip adjacent to several mining areas that has been more affected by nearby past uses than the rest of the WSA. Management of this narrow strip of land as wilderness would be difficult. Adjacent Forest Service lands are not recommended for wilderness designation.

This plan offers a reasonable response to the issue of wilderness suitability (Issue #9).

FIRE MANAGEMENT

The Plan will provide for full suppression on 444,770 acres and limited suppression only on isolated tracts. A total of 14,796 acres will be managed under the suppression restrictions within the WSA. A hazard reduction program will be conducted on 10,000 acres. Prescribed fires will be used to treat 30,078 acres to improve forage and wildlife habitat.

Rationale: Prescribed fire is an economical means of carrying out brush control and other vegetative manipulation projects. The WSA has certain criteria that state what type of suppression actions can be taken in that area. Hazard reduction is a means of removing fuel loading in areas that have the potential, if a fire starts, to support a disastrous fire.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Plan will protect and preserve documented prehistoric and historic sites. Cultural resource management plans will be prepared for five areas, including the Chief Tendoy Cemetery, the Salmon River, the Lewis and Clark Trail, and Indian Area A and Indian Area B. Management plans will guide the use and protection of significant cultural, natural history, and paleontological resources under BLM administration. The cultural resources standard operating procedures will be applied to protect cultural resources.

Rationale: The Lemhi Resource Area's cultural resources are fragile, nonrenewable resources. They have significant socio-cultural values as well as excellent archaeological research potential. The Plan recognizes the nature and significance of these resources and will recommend protective and interpretive measures. The Bureau is required by law to protect the cultural resources on the public lands. Cultural resource protection and use will remain consistent and compatible with other public land resource uses and activities. The standard operating procedures will help protect cultural resources throughout the planning area. This alternative addresses management concern #2, which was identified during the scoping process.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The following management guidance applies to, and is a part of, the Management Prescription. All Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are based on existing laws, regulations, and policy.

Allowable Uses

The public lands will be managed under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield as required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Any valid use, occupancy, or development of the public lands that conforms with the RMP will be considered. Those uses, including rights-of-way, leases, and permits, will be subject to environmental review and may require limitations or stipulations to protect and preserve natural resources. Limitations may also be imposed on either the type or intensity of use, or both, because of environmental values, hazards, or special management considerations. Some limitations have already been identified for specific areas. These are included in the land use allocations and management objectives in this land use plan.

Coordination With Other Agencies, State and Local Governments, and Indian Tribes

The BLM will ensure that the detailed management plans and individual projects resulting from the RMP are consistent with officially adopted and approved plans, policies, and programs of other agencies, state and local governments, and Indian Tribes. Cooperative agreements and memoranda of understanding will be developed as needed to promote close cooperation between BLM and other federal agencies, state and local governments, and Indian Tribes.

Lands

Land Ownership Adjustments

Objectives for acquiring public lands are discussed under activity needs within the alternatives. Site-specific decisions regarding land ownership adjustments in the resource area will be made based on whether the lands are needed for Bureau programs or are considered more valuable for other purposes. The following criteria will be applied to site-specific determinations for lands that are within transfer areas:

1. Public resource values, including but not limited to:
 - a. Threatened, endangered, or sensitive species habitat.
 - b. Riparian areas.
 - c. Fisheries.
 - d. Nesting/breeding habitat for game animals.
 - e. Key big game seasonal habitat.
 - f. Developed recreation and recreation access sites.
 - g. Class A scenery.
 - h. Municipal watersheds.
 - i. Energy and mineral potential.
 - j. Sites or places eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
 - k. Wilderness areas and areas being studied for wilderness.
 - l. Other designations authorized by law.
2. Accessibility of the land for public uses.
3. Amount of public investment in facilities or improvements and the potential for recovering that investment.
4. Difficulty or cost of administration (manageability).
5. Suitability of the land for management by another federal agency.
6. Significance of the decision in stabilizing business, social, and economic conditions and/or lifestyles.
7. Encumbrances, including, but not limited to, Recreation and Public Purposes leases, withdrawals, and other leases or permits.
8. Consistency of the decision with cooperative agreements and plans or policies of other agencies.
9. Suitability, and need for change in land ownership or use, for purposes including, but not limited to, community expansion or economic development such as industrial, residential, or agricultural (other than grazing) development.

The land ownership adjustment criteria identified above will be considered in land reports and environmental analyses prepared for specific adjustment proposals.

Retention Areas

Public land within retention areas generally will remain in public ownership and be managed by the BLM. Transfers to other public agencies will be considered where improved management efficiency would result. Recreation and Public Purpose applications will be considered on all public lands except those lands of national significance. Land exchange proposals will be considered on all public lands. However, these proposals must be in the public interest, which will be determined by site-specific application of the land ownership adjustment criteria.

Transfer Areas

Public land within transfer areas generally will be made available for disposal through sales, exchanges, or desert land entry. Some land may be retained in public ownership based on site-specific application of the land ownership adjustment criteria.

Exchanges

Land to be acquired by BLM through exchanges generally should be located in the retention areas. In addition, acquisition of such land should:

1. Facilitate access to public lands and resources.
2. Maintain or enhance important public values and uses.
3. Maintain or enhance local social and economic values.
4. Improve management efficiency through the elimination of isolated tracts and the blocking up of public lands.
5. Facilitate implementation of other aspects of the Lemhi RMP.

Sales

Public land to be sold must meet one or more of the following criteria derived from Section 203(a) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976:

1. The land must be difficult and uneconomic to manage as part of the public lands and must not be suitable for management by another federal department or agency.
2. The land must have been acquired for a specific purpose and must no longer be required for that or any other federal purpose.
3. Disposal of the land will serve important public objectives that can be achieved prudently or feasibly only if the land is removed from public ownership, and these objectives outweigh other public objectives and values that would be served by maintaining the land in federal ownership.

Sale will be the preferred method of disposal when:

1. It is required by national policy.
2. The level of interest in a specific tract indicates that competitive bidding is desirable for reasons of fairness.
3. Disposal through exchange is not feasible.

Agricultural Development

Public land identified for agricultural development must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Each 40-acre parcel in an application must contain at least 40 percent of Soil Conservation Service capability Class I, II, or III soils.
2. The land must be lower than 6,350 feet in elevation.
3. The land must meet the requirements of the Desert Land Act of March 3, 1877, as amended.

Unauthorized Use

It is BLM policy to identify, abate, and prevent unauthorized use of public lands. Existing unauthorized uses of public land will be resolved either through termination, temporary authorization by short-term permit, issuance of rights-of-way, leasing through the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, sale, exchange, or other appropriate manner.

Utility/Rights-of-Way (ROW) Avoidance

Utility and transportation development may be permitted based on consideration of the following criteria:

1. Type of and need for the proposed facility.
2. Conflicts with other existing or potential resource values and uses.
3. Availability of alternatives and/or mitigation measures.

Land Use Authorizations

Land use permits under Section 302 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act may be used as an interim management measure for resolving unauthorized use problems prior to a final land use/status determination, and for one-time uses of short duration. Leases will be used as a longer-term (5 to 10 years) interim management tool, particularly where future disposal or dedication to another particular land use is contemplated. The latter may allow for agricultural use on an area that may also be needed for future materials sources, or for community expansion needs.

Cooperative agreements, under certain circumstances, may be reached with other federal entities for uses that are not appropriately covered by a right-of-way or a withdrawal. Flood control and aquifer recharge areas may be most appropriately covered by cooperative agreements.

Withdrawals and Classifications

It is BLM policy to review all withdrawals on and classifications of public lands by October 20, 1991. This includes a review of approximately 6,180 acres of various withdrawals as well as review of the Classification and Multiple Use Act (I-1639) that will involve approximately 422,578 acres of public land. Review of these latter acres is to be complete by the end of September 1987.

The multiple use classification will be reviewed through the planning process and a decision will be made to cancel or continue the classification, either in whole or in part, based on the transfer and retention areas.

Access

All existing public access routes will be reserved if the lands are transferred out of public ownership. Easements will be obtained across private property as needed for general public use and public land management by BLM.

Energy and Minerals

Oil and Gas Leasing

Oil and gas leasing is presently covered by a district-wide environmental assessment, which is incorporated in this RMP.

As a general rule, public lands within the resource area are available for oil and gas leasing. In many areas, oil and gas leases will be issued with only the standard stipulations. In other areas, leases will have special stipulations attached to them at the time of issuance to protect seasonal wildlife habitat or other sensitive resource values. In highly sensitive areas, where special stipulations do not provide adequate protection for important surface resource values, portions of the lease, or the entire lease, will be issued with a "no-surface-occupancy" stipulation.

This analysis assumes that horizontal deviations of up to 1,500 feet are feasible with current directional drilling techniques. However, because of the high cost of directional drilling, such operations would not be anticipated unless there is high potential for a discovery.

The general areas where standard, special, and "no-surface-occupancy" stipulations would apply are shown on the map. During any given year, the authorized officer could waive the special restrictions if actual conditions did not warrant them. The standard stipulations are as follows: