

LEMHI  
RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT PLAN



April 1987

LEMHI RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE LEMHI RESOURCE AREA

### Introduction

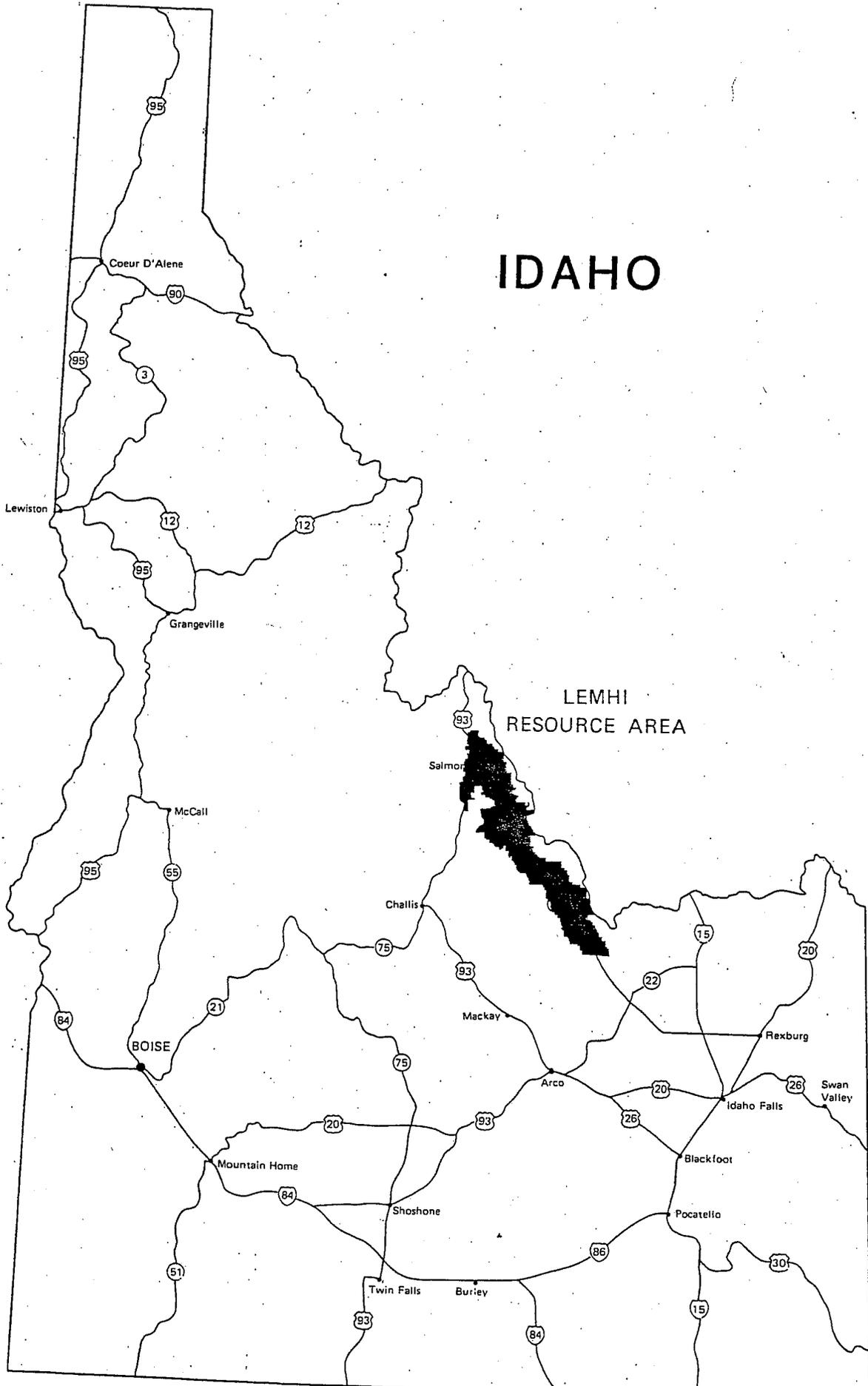
This Lemhi Resource Management Plan (RMP) is the land use plan that will guide BLM in the management of the resource area for the next 15 to 20 years. BLM considered all of the comments received by letter and at the public hearing and made a thorough review of the Draft RMP/EIS. Alternative F, with some minor additions and corrections, was chosen as the Plan for the area.

A portion of the Ellis Planning Unit (Approximately 40,000 Acres) is now a part of the Lemhi Resource Area. The entire Ellis-Pahsimeroi area was recently covered by the Ellis-Pahsimeroi Management Framework Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (1982). Since that plan is still current, the BLM has not developed or analyzed a new plan for that portion of the Ellis Planning Unit which is now in the Lemhi Resource Area.

The Lemhi RMP is being prepared under the authority of and in accordance with Sections 201 and 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-579, FLPMA). Further, pursuant to Section 603 of FLPMA, this document contains a preliminary wilderness suitability recommendation for the Eighteenmile Wilderness Study Area (WSA) located within the planning area boundary. For this WSA, this document will make only preliminary recommendations as to its suitability or nonsuitability for inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System. This recommendation will be reported through the Director of the BLM, the Secretary of the Interior, and the President to Congress. The final decision on suitability or nonsuitability of the WSA will be made by Congress. A separate Final Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared for the Eighteenmile WSA.

This document also serves as the instrument to satisfy the intent of the 1975 U.S. District Court approved agreement (Case 1983-73) between BLM and the Natural Resources Defense Council et al., in which BLM agreed to consider the impacts of various intensities of livestock grazing in its decision-making process. Livestock grazing has been identified as one of the planning issues. This issue is addressed in the land use plan and considered in the EIS.

# IDAHO



LEMHI  
RESOURCE AREA

GENERAL LOCATION MAP

## Plan Approval

The Lemhi RMP was approved by the State Director on April 8, 1987.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The Lemhi Resource Area is located in south-central Idaho and encompasses 459,566 acres of public land (see Location Map 1). The area includes the lands surrounding the town of Salmon in the northern end of the Salmon District and then stretches to the southeast along the Lemhi River Valley and the upper reaches of Birch Creek, joining the Idaho Falls District at the Clark/Butte County line. The Lemhi and Salmon rivers run through the area. The Salmon River provides recreational use such as fishing, boating and camping. The Lemhi River is essentially all on private land.

Elevation varies from 4,000 feet at Salmon to 11,000 feet along the Montana line. The climate varies from semi-arid to sub-humid. Precipitation varies from 9 inches at Salmon to 22 inches at higher elevations and occurs mostly during winter and spring.

Most of the public lands are dry grazing lands. These dry grazing lands are for the most part marginal for agricultural development and are left over from Homestead Act and Desert Land Act settlement. Livestock use the public land during spring, summer, and fall.

The total population in the area is about 6,000. The area's largest communities are Salmon (population 3,303) and Leadore (population 114). During the summer months Salmon and Lemhi County experience a noticeable population increase. Summer homes; government, timber and recreation jobs; and recreation use results in a large influx of people.

Agriculture and agriculture related industries provide the base for the local economy. Agriculture is mainly livestock grazing. Beef cattle numbers remain relatively constant in Lemhi County, fluctuating between 30,000 and 32,000 brood cows. Also significantly contributing to the economy are recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, camping, river floating, and off-road vehicle use.

### MANAGEMENT ACTIONS OR CONCERNS THAT WILL GUIDE MANAGEMENT OF THE LANDS IN THE LEMHI RESOURCE AREA

#### Fire Management

Develop a fire management plan for the Lemhi Resource Area and maintain vegetation types based on:

1. Capability of the land for improvement through fire manipulation.
2. Protection of certain public and private lands (e.g., critical wildlife and watershed areas, cultural resources, privately owned structures such as homes, oil and gas pumping stations, etc.).

3. Need to change plant communities to a subclimax vegetation, primarily for the benefit of livestock and wildlife forage, as well as to improve watershed conditions.
4. Economic impacts of any fire management alternatives.

#### Cultural Resource Management

The BLM will manage cultural resources so that representative samples of the full array of scientific and socio-cultural values are maintained consistent with state and federal laws.

The Lemhi Valley has special cultural resource significance because of the high socio-cultural value the Lemhi Shoshone place on the area as a significant part of their heritage. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (P.L. 95-341) emphasizes considering the impact of federal policies and procedures on American Indian religious freedoms. Many of the tribal members now residing on the Fort Hall Reservation, as well as the local Lemhi Indians, are descendants of the Sheepstealer or Mountain Shoshoni and the Lemhi Indians who resided in the Lemhi River Valley until the reservation at Lemhi was closed and most moved to Fort Hall in 1907. The values, memories, and traditions attached to the Lemhi River Valley by these Indians are as important as the material remains themselves.

Significant sites or districts will continue to be managed for their cultural resource values. Management will emphasize appropriate site use through the development of specific management plans which identify cultural resource protection and use objectives, establish the actions BLM must take to achieve its objectives, and outline procedures for evaluating accomplishments.

During the planning process there has been consultation with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

#### Noxious Weeds

Control of noxious weeds is an important management concern. Especially important is Leafy Spurge (Euphorbia esula), which has infected the area from Kirtley Creek to Badger Springs. Leafy Spurge is a very persistent perennial that spreads both vegetatively and by seeding. It is difficult and expensive to control and is readily spread by livestock and wildlife. It is the most persistent weed known of all the weeds capable of growing in this climatic area. BLM policy is to control noxious weeds and BLM has prepared the "Idaho Noxious Weed Control Environmental Assessment" and "Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program EIS." Control of noxious weeds will be accomplished through close coordination and cooperation with Lemhi County and the Lemhi County Agent.

As stated in the "Idaho Noxious Weed Control Environmental Assessment" the purpose of weed control is twofold:

1. To reduce present and future economic losses to ranchers, farmers, and the general public caused by reduced crop yields, lowered range-land productivity, and costly weed control efforts. These losses could be reduced by controlling the designated noxious weeds on public lands.
2. To comply with state and federal laws. Federal law restricts interstate shipping of contaminated products and addresses itself to weed control efforts. These losses could be reduced by controlling the designated noxious weeds on public lands.

The BLM is responsible for implementing the proposed weed control program on public land and may do so through cooperative agreements with county weed control districts. The Idaho Department of Agriculture is responsible for coordinating weed control activities on federal, state, and private land. Proposed control efforts to minimize infestations of noxious weeds will use an interdisciplinary approach.

The need to control noxious weeds has been recognized by federal and state lawmakers. It is also demonstrated by annual estimated economic losses which could be reduced by an effective weed control program.

As stated in the Standard Operating Procedures noxious weed control will be considered under all alternatives. Individual sites and species (larkspur, Canadian thistle, leafy spurge, etc.) will be handled on a case-by-case basis through the environmental assessment (EA) process. Where biological controls have proven to be effective, they will be used in preference to chemical or mechanical methods.

#### Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals

Whenever possible, management activities in habitat for threatened, endangered, or sensitive species will be designed to benefit those species through habitat improvement.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will be consulted prior to implementing projects that may affect habitat for threatened and endangered species. If a "may affect" situation is determined through the BLM biological assessment process, consultation with the USFWS will be initiated in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

The BLM is aware of the presence of three listed species (gray wolf, peregrine falcon, and bald eagle) in the Lemhi Resource Area. Also, several plants are listed as candidate species. Therefore, BLM has consulted with the USFWS throughout the Lemhi RMP process and will continue to coordinate with the USFWS.

Physaria didymocarpa var. lyrata is presently listed as a candidate federally endangered species. A monitoring plan has been developed in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the Williams Creek shale pit site. An ongoing inventory of potential sites is being conducted in hopes of locating other populations of this rare plant.

Penstemon lemhiensis is presently listed as a candidate federally threatened species. It has been identified along many roads within the RMP area. Herbicide spraying along roads is the only activity that could seriously impact this species.

Astragalus scaphoides has only recently been considered as a proposed federally endangered species. Any future management will consider impacts to this species.

#### QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS NOT ADDRESSED

The following questions and management concerns were considered but not analyzed in the planning process.

1. "Access for minerals and energy exploration is a concern. Conflicts exist where roads to public lands cross private land."

The access concern cannot be addressed in alternative levels (proposed levels of management action). The resource area staff will continue to work with those landowners who own lands which block access to large parcels of public land. Negotiations to obtain an access easement where needed to manage the public lands will be sought. In some cases, the guarantee of total public access onto or through private lands may not be possible.

2. "Utility Corridors may be needed for future development."

Should area growth require additional transmission lines, there are regulations and BLM procedures that will allow for this.

3. "Trespass land uses should be identified".

The resolution of trespass will be considered a priority within the constraints of funding. An inventory will be done to determine areas being used in trespass. The cases will be reviewed to determine if the trespass should be authorized or terminated based on the long-term planning for the area.

4. "What opportunities exist for blocking state and federal lands?"

The current Idaho BLM policy and directives require development of a statewide program, in coordination with the state of Idaho, to identify opportunities for blocking and the process for the blocking of both state and BLM lands. An amendment would be prepared on this action and incorporated into those plans in effect, including this RMP, at the time of approval.

5. "Are there any Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)?"

There are no identified ACECs in the resource area. If such areas are identified in the future and their resource values cannot be protected through other management techniques, ACEC designation will be proposed and a plan amendment completed for the Lemhi RMP.

#### MULTIPLE USE AND TRANSFER CLASSES

The Lemhi RMP Area has been broken down into the following multiple use or transfer classes: intensive use, moderate use, limited use, or transfer. Multiple use and transfer classes are general planning categories included in Idaho RMPs to provide statewide consistency and uniformity.

Multiple use and transfer classes serve two purposes in this plan. The first is to describe overall opportunities and constraints by indicating what level of resource production and use is appropriate, what intensity of management is needed, whether there are sensitive and significant resources that must be protected, and whether BLM would consider transfer of public lands from its jurisdiction. The second purpose is to provide a basis for considering unexpected proposals by supplementing the detailed resource management objectives and required actions established for the resource area with general purpose and policy statements. This feature is intended to help keep the plan responsive to future demands and to reduce the number of future plan amendments that otherwise might be needed.

Prior to undertaking or approving any proposed resource management action on public lands in the resource area, BLM will ensure that such action is consistent with the purposes and policies of the multiple use or transfer class or classes involved.

The multiple use classes assigned to the RMP area are shown on Map 3 in the Proposed Lemhi RMP/EIS. Map 3 illustrates all of the potential transfer classes. Public lands are placed in the multiple use or transfer class that best reflects the specific resources and management priorities for the area. The multiple use and transfer classes described for the RMP area pertain only to the surface acreage managed by the BLM. A description of these classes and their purposes and policies is given in the following sections:

##### Moderate Use Class

A total of 140,047 acres are classified as moderate use in this RMP.

##### Purpose

The purpose of a moderate use class is to delineate public lands that are suitable for a wide variety of existing and potential uses.