

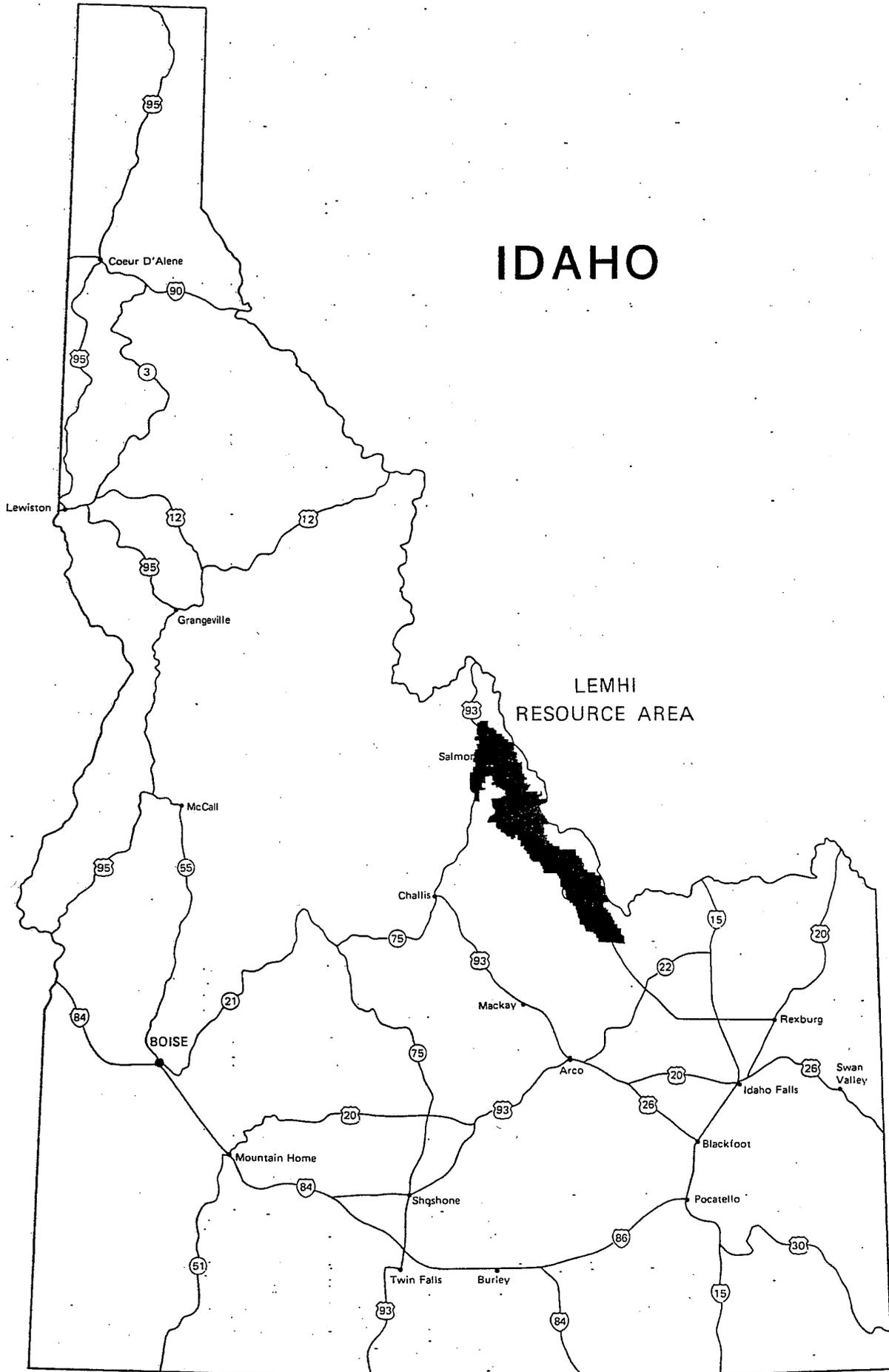
**RECORD OF DECISION**  
FOR THE  
**LEMHI**  
**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL**  
**IMPACT STATEMENT**



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**  
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**  
Salmon District, Idaho  
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# IDAHO



GENERAL LOCATION MAP

RECORD OF DECISION  
LEMHI RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Introduction

This record of decision (ROD) documents approval of the Lemhi Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Lemhi RMP is a land use plan that will guide resource management in the Lemhi Resource Area for the next 15 to 20 years.

The Lemhi Resource Area contains 499,566 acres of public land in south-central Idaho administered by the Salmon District of the Bureau of Land Management. The Resource Area consists of the Lemhi Planning Area (459,566 acres) and part of the old Ellis/Pahsimeroi planning units and is shown on the map on the inside front cover. 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, we have not analyzed or developed a new plan for that portion of the Ellis Planning Unit which is now in the Lemhi Resource Area.

The final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Lemhi RMP was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on July 16, 1986. This ROD meets the requirements of 40 CFR Part 1505.2 pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

This document contains only a draft proposal for wilderness. A separate Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared for the Eighteenmile Wilderness Study Area (WSA). A proposed wilderness decision for the Eighteenmile WSA is not included in this plan. This is because while the BLM's Idaho State Director has the decision authority for resource management plans in general, Congress has specifically reserved the authority to make final wilderness decisions. The wilderness recommendations listed under the alternatives on the next few pages are for reference only and do not represent decisions.

Decision

The approved Lemhi RMP is unchanged from the proposed Lemhi RMP and is the same as Alternative F of the Final Lemhi EIS. See page 13 of the Lemhi Proposed Plan for the Management Action Summary under Alternative F. See page 43 of the Lemhi Proposed Plan for the Proposed Management Prescriptions.

Alternatives

Seven alternative plans were developed for consideration in the selection of a RMP for the Lemhi Resource Area. Each alternative addressed the planning issues in a different way and was developed to cover a range of possible resource uses. The environmental consequences of various management options were available for consideration in selecting a RMP.

#### Alternative A

Alternative A represents the existing situation. The present level of management on the public lands would be continued, with measures being taken to prevent or correct deteriorating conditions. Any changes in management would be brought about through monitoring and the environmental analysis process. All actions would be handled on a case-by-case basis.

The Eighteenmile Wilderness Study Area would not be recommended for wilderness designation. The area would be managed for multiple use values.

#### Alternative B

Alternative B emphasizes livestock grazing, given present and anticipated future budget levels. A total of 14,796 acres would be recommended as suitable for wilderness and 10,126 acres as nonsuitable.

#### Alternative C

Alternative C emphasizes wildlife and fisheries enhancement, wilderness and recreational values, cultural resource management, and watershed protection. A total of 24,922 acres would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

#### Alternative D

Alternative D emphasizes mineral development on the public lands. The objective is to manage the federal mineral estate to allow optimum exploration and development, while minimizing unnecessary impacts to other resources. The Eighteenmile Wilderness Study Area would not be recommended for wilderness designation. The area would be managed for multiple use values.

#### Alternative E

Alternative E emphasizes intensive management on 30,309 acres of commercial forest land for sustained yield production. The 24,922 acres in the Eighteenmile Wilderness Study Area would be recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

#### Alternative F

This alternative is now the approved Lemhi RMP. In this alternative a variety of resource uses will be allowed. Production and use of commodity resources and commercial use authorization will occur, while protecting fragile resources and wildlife habitat, preserving natural systems and cultural values, and allowing for nonconsumptive resource uses.

Under Alternative F the BLM will consider 4,495 acres for transfer from federal ownership through public sales or exchanges. An additional 1,340 acres will be considered for transfer under the Desert Land Act. The BLM will attempt to acquire 5,600 acres primarily through exchange.

A total of 161,909 acres will be open for oil and gas leasing with standard stipulations, 221,519 acres with seasonal occupancy restrictions, and 77,369 acres with no-surface-occupancy restrictions. Approximately 14,796 acres will be closed to oil and gas leasing and 15,596 acres closed to geothermal leasing. A total of 455,434 acres will be open for location of mining claims while 18,921 acres will be closed to mineral entry. Material sales will not be allowed on 92,010 acres, but the remaining 382,888 acres will be open to material sales.

Approximately 28,865 acres of public forest land will be open to commercial harvest. Of this, 1,179 acres will receive restricted management to reduce impacts to crucial elk winter range. Set-asides included in this alternative will reduce the timber production base by 1,444 acres. About 23,138 acres of woodland will be available for non-sawtimber products, while 3,131 acres will be closed.

Livestock management will provide 43,602 AUMs of livestock forage. The BLM will maintain or improve existing perennial forage plants, maintain or improve soil stability and stabilize or improve areas currently in a downward trend. Range improvements will be implemented to help achieve these objectives.

Game populations of 9,350 deer, 2,194 elk, 2,950 antelope, and 200 big-horn sheep will utilize 6,466 AUMs of forage. Project development will occur, providing water, habitat, and safety for wildlife. Six habitat management plans will be developed on 260,056 acres.

A total of 15.5 miles of riparian area will be fenced and four watershed activity plans will be written. New timber harvest roads will be closed when timber sales are completed, except for use in forest and fire management.

The BLM will maintain 94.7 miles of fisheries habitat in present condition and improve 3.0 miles. Surface-disturbing activities adversely affecting Class III streams will be avoided, if practical.

Recreation will be recognized as the principal use of the lands in the three special recreation management areas (SRMAs). Additional mineral withdrawals, restrictions on some nonrecreational uses, and restrictive visual management practices will be implemented. A recreation area management plan will be written for each SRMA.

Off-road vehicle use will continue to be limited during winter months on 16,230 acres of big game range. A year-round closure to all vehicle use will be placed on 14,796 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation.

A total of 14,796 acres will be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

Full suppression fire management guidelines will be followed on 444,770 acres. Prescribed burns will be conducted on 30,078 acres, and heavy fuel loading caused by logging debris and dead trees will be reduced on 10,000 acres to decrease the likelihood of having a disastrous fire.

Cultural resource management plans will be completed for the Chief Tendoy Cemetery, Lewis and Clark Trail, Salmon River Corridor, Indian Area A, and Indian Area B. A recreation area management plan will be written for the Lewis and Clark Trail that will provide for protection of cultural and historic values.

#### Alternative G

Alternative G is identical with the proposed action (Alternative F) except for the Eighteenmile WSA. It was developed to manage those resources that would be affected if Congress did not designate as wilderness the Eighteenmile Wilderness Study Area recommended in Alternative F.

#### Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The alternatives considered in the EIS would achieve all the requirements of sections 101 and 102(1) of NEPA and other environmental laws and policies. Each alternative is environmentally acceptable. Each of the alternatives is designed to use practicable means to create and maintain conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, but the emphasis is different in each alternative.

In terms of effects on biological and physical components of the environment, Alternative C would be the environmentally preferable alternative. Alternative C would preserve the most wilderness values and natural history values. It would result in the greatest increase in wildlife populations. It would result in the most vegetation in good ecological condition, the least in downward trend, the most in upward trend, the lowest average erosion rate, and the least area in a severe erosion category.

In terms of economic benefits, Alternative B would be the preferable alternative. It would generate the greatest increase in income and jobs in the Lemhi Planning Area. It would make the least amount of land available for transfer to private ownership and development for agriculture. It would also have the highest management cost. The average erosion rate would be the highest, and wildlife populations would decrease.

In terms of social benefits, no alternative is clearly preferable to another. Alternative C would protect the most high-density cultural resource occurrence areas from surface disturbance. Alternative B would have the highest level of grazing. Alternative A would have the lowest management cost.

Alternative F, the proposed Lemhi RMP, is the approved Lemhi RMP. In comparison with the other alternatives considered in the EIS, it will attain the widest range of beneficial use of the environment while preserving important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage. The effects on the various resource uses and values will be between those of the other alternatives. Considering the effects of the alternatives, including effects on biological and physical components of the environment, economic effects, and social effects, Alternative F is the environmentally preferable alternative in terms of the overall human environment.

### Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail

Two alternatives were considered by the RMP Core Team but were not developed or analyzed in detail because they did not meet the criteria for selection. These alternatives and the reasons for their elimination are presented below.

#### No Livestock Grazing

This alternative would have excluded all livestock grazing on public lands in the planning area. It was eliminated for the following reasons:

1. Resource conditions, including range, vegetation, watershed, and wildlife habitat, do not warrant prohibition of livestock grazing resource area wide. However, elimination of livestock grazing was considered on selected allotments and in riparian areas under other alternatives.
2. Elimination of grazing would be in direct conflict with existing laws and regulations and would not provide for multiple use of public lands.
3. The cost of removing range improvement projects not benefitting other programs would be prohibitive.
4. The enforcement of no livestock grazing on the fragmented pattern of public lands in the resource area would be unmanageable and very expensive.
5. Public comments received during the issue identification and criteria development steps indicate a general acceptance of livestock grazing on public lands, provided that such grazing is properly managed.
6. It is estimated that permittees using BLM lands generate \$1.9 million in annual income for Lemhi County and 239 jobs. Given this economic significance and general social acceptance of livestock grazing, people in Lemhi County and the state of Idaho would not support a no grazing alternative.

This alternative was considered to be unreasonable and unrealistic.

#### No Timber Harvest

This alternative would have excluded all timber harvest on public lands in the planning area. It was eliminated because it was not consistent with existing laws and regulations, did not include adequate provisions for multiple use of public lands, and would have had adverse social and economic impacts. A total of \$336,000 and 19 jobs would be lost to the local economy. The timber industry in Lemhi County is already depressed because of a shortage of timber. This alternative would have worsened the situation and thus been unacceptable to the people of Lemhi County. However, elimination of timber harvest was considered on selected areas to protect wilderness, wildlife, and recreation values under other alternatives.