PART I

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		PAGE
A.	INTRODUCTION	1
B.	MANAGEMENT AREAS	4
C.	MULTIPLE USE AND TRANSFER CLASSES	5
D.	DRAFT MANAGEMENT AREA DECISIONS (PROPOSED PLAN)	7
E.	SELECTION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE	21
F.	PLANNING CRITERIA	26
G.	PLANNING PROCESS	29
H.	STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE	32
I.	SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS	49
J.	CONSISTENCY	50
K.	IMPLEMENTATION	50
L.	MONITORING	50

INTRODUCTION

Part I of this document is the draft plan for the Medicine Lodge Resource Area, Idaho Falls District (see map 1 for location). In developing a plan for the area using the Bureau of Land Management's guidance for Resource Management Plans (RMPs), nine distinct geographic areas were recognized and used as management areas. The management areas and the Medicine Lodge Resource Area are shown on Map 2. These management areas differ in land ownership pattern, resource uses, problems and management needs. See Map 8 (map packet) for land ownership. A brief description of each of these nine areas follows with management objectives and required actions for each.

Part I also includes a discussion of the planning criteria used and the standard operating procedures that apply to the proposed plan, as well as all of the alternatives. Support requirements, consistency with plans of other agencies, implementation of the proposed plan, and monitoring are also included.

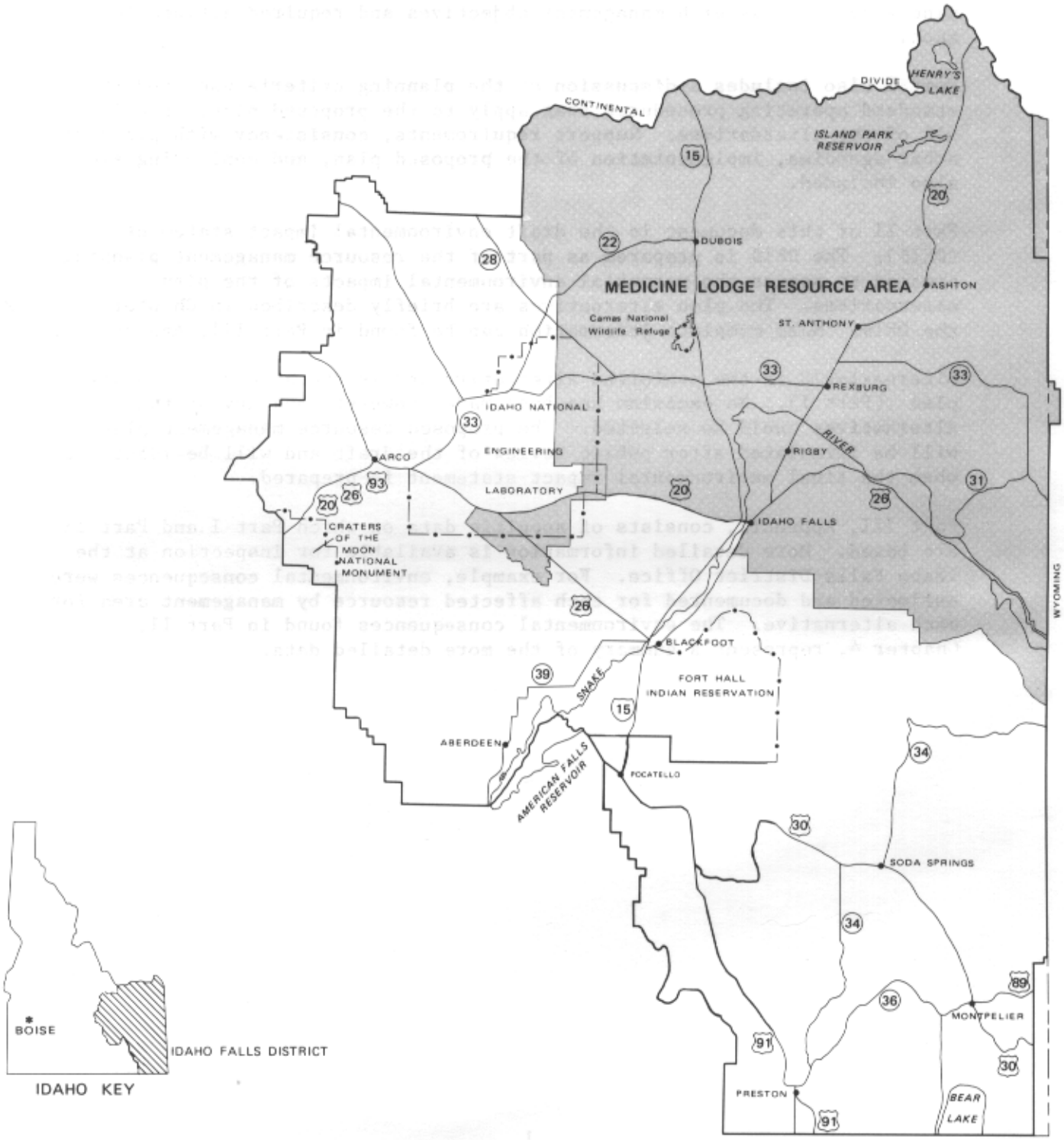
Part II of this document is the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). The DEIS is prepared as part of the resource management planning process to assess the potential environmental impacts of the plan alternatives. The plan alternatives are briefly described in Chapter 2 of the DEIS. More complete information can be found in Part III, Appendix F.

Alternative C is the preferred alternative and is the same as the draft plan (Part I). No decision has been made, however, and any of the alternatives could be selected. The proposed resource management plan will be formulated after public review of the draft and will be identified when the final environmental impact statement is prepared.

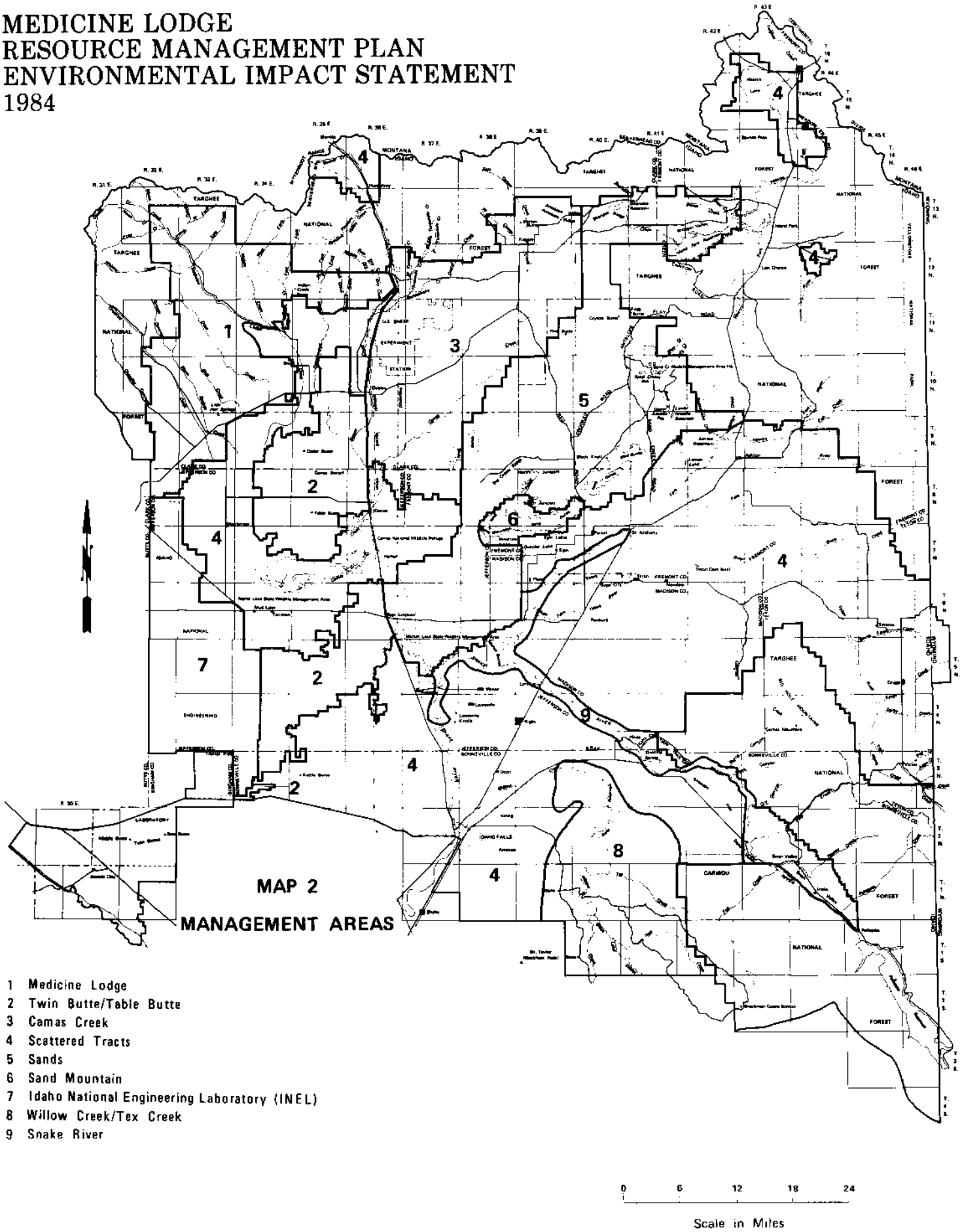
Part III, Appendix, consists of specific data on which Part I and Part II are based. More detailed information is available for inspection at the Idaho Falls District Office. For example, environmental consequences were estimated and documented for each affected resource by management area for each alternative. The environmental consequences found in Part II, Chapter 4, represent a summary of the more detailed data.

MEDICINE LODGE RESOURCE AREA
GENERAL LOCATION MAP

MAP 1



MEDICINE LODGE
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
1984



THE MANAGEMENT AREAS

The Medicine Lodge Resource Area is divided into 9 management areas for purposes of organizing and presenting the planning decisions. A management area generally contains lands having similar resource features and characteristics. It can effectively be managed as a unit.

Each management area is defined in terms of its description, resource management objectives and required actions. The description identifies the major natural, physical and cultural resources of the management area. The resource management objectives set priorities for managing the various resources in the area. Required actions identify the management actions, limitations and other provisions which are needed to accomplish the objectives.

The management areas are delineated on Map 2 and are described in detail beginning on page 6.

In addition to the 9 management areas defined in the plan one additional area contains public lands which need to be recognized. This area is within the Teton Dam project and is currently under the management of the Bureau of Reclamation. The area has approximately 3,470 acres of public land. Major resource values included in the area are wildlife, fisheries and recreation.

If the Teton Dam project were ever to be deauthorized the management of the public lands would return to the Bureau of Land Management. Management emphasis for the area would be placed on wildlife, fisheries and recreation.

The subsurface mineral estate managed by the Bureau of Land Management is larger than the surface acreage. This acreage does not include the subsurface minerals on the National Forest.

MULTIPLE USE AND TRANSFER CLASSES

Each management area in the Medicine Lodge Resource Area is assigned to one or more multiple use or transfer classes: moderate use class, limited use class or transfer class. 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 resource 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 which must be protected, and whether BLM would consider transfer of public lands from its jurisdiction. The second is to provide a basis for considering unexpected proposals by supplementing the detailed resource management objectives and required actions established for the management area with general purpose and policy statements. This feature is intended to help keep the plan responsive to 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 or transfer class or classes assigned to each management area are shown on Maps 3 through 7 and identified in the management area descriptions beginning on page 6. 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 each management area pertains to only the surface acres managed by the BLM. A description of these classes and their purposes and policies is as follows:

MODERATE USE CLASS

Purpose

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

Policy

The first priority for managing a moderate use class is to provide for the production or use of forage, timber, minerals and energy, recreation, or other consumptive resources while maintaining or enhancing natural systems. These areas will be managed for a moderate intensity of use. These areas will generally be available for production and use of consumptive resources, subject to BLM standard operating procedures and other controls as needed. Sensitive and significant resource values, however, will be protected consistent with federal and state law. Public lands in a moderate use class will be retained in federal ownership.

LIMITED USE CLASS

Purpose

The purpose of a limited use class is to delineate public lands where strict environmental controls are required to protect sensitive and significant resources.

Policy

The first priority for managing a limited use class is to protect key wildlife habitat, scenic values, wilderness, cultural resources, watershed, and other sensitive and significant resources while providing for other compatible uses. These areas will be managed for relatively low intensities of use and with strict environmental controls to protect sensitive and significant values. A limited use class may be closed to or contain restrictions on ORV use, mineral and energy exploration and development, forest management practices, location of utility corridors and installations, and livestock grazing. Because of the relatively significant environmental considerations in these areas, some uses may not be permitted. Special attention will be given to finding appropriate locations for compatible uses. Public lands in a limited use class will be retained in federal ownership.

TRANSFER CLASS

Purpose

The purpose of a transfer class is to delineate public lands which may be considered for transfer out of federal ownership.

Policy

A transfer class is the only class in which public lands may be transferred out of federal ownership under this plan. Public lands declared eligible for transfer by their inclusion in this category are subject to detailed consideration prior to the final decision regarding transfer. Transfer classes are delineated in response to specific demands and needs identified during the planning process, such as agricultural development, community expansion, and other transfers, including transfers to the State of Idaho. Transfer classes will be managed on a custodial basis until transferred from federal jurisdiction. New public investments in these lands will generally be kept to a minimum.

DRAFT MANAGEMENT AREA DECISIONS

MANAGEMENT AREA 1 - MEDICINE LODGE

The Medicine Lodge Management Area contains 168,678 acres of public land, of which the majority is well blocked. The area rises to the north and west and peaks at the Continental Divide on the Montana/Idaho state line. The highest elevation in the resource area occurs on Red Conglomerate Peak at 10,106 feet. There is considerable perennial water in the area and the major resource uses are livestock forage and wildlife habitat. The area has higher precipitation and more production potential than public lands that lie to the south and southeast.

The area contains industrial grade limestone, travertine buidling stone and bentonite clays.

Management Objectives

1. Multiple Use and Transfer Classes

   a. Classified as Moderate Use: 162,289 acres.
   b. Classified as Limited Use: 5,920 acres in the northwest corner of the area classed as a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized. About 187 are withdrawn from the timber base because of site capability.
   c. Classified for Transfer: 280 acres of isolated tracts.

2. Retain a public land base of 168,398 acres for long term management in federal ownership.

3. Manage 176,900 acres of federal mineral estate for mineral and energy exploration and development with consideration being given for wildlife, water and water quality and riparian use.

4. Intensively manage 1,184 acres of commercial forest land for timber production according to current silvicultural practices. Manage 1,347 acres of woodland with consideration for wildlife needs.

5. Manage 162,939 acres for grazing. Improve 26,225 acres of fair condition range to good. Increase stocking levels in the long term by 5,318 AUMs over existing use levels through range improvement and better distribution.

6. Provide forage and cover for existing and projected wildlife numbers. maintain or improve at least 75% of all terrestrial in satisfactory condition.

7. Improve water quality from poor to fair on approximately 11 miles of stream in the area.

8. Continue to manage for dispersed recreation opportunities in the area.

9. Manage 22,700 acres as limited fire suppression and the remaining 145,978 acres as full suppression.

10. Manage cultural resources for sociocultural, management and potential scientific uses.

Required Management Actions

1. Examine 280 acres of public land, applying the standard operating pro-dures, for sale or state or private exchange (refer to map 6). Utilities would be limited to existing corridor.

2. None of the lands would be closed to mineral leasing and only 160 acres closed to mining claim location. A total of 31,900 acres would be open to leasing under seasonal occupancy restrictions and 12,500 acres under no surface occupancy. The majority of the area, 237,500 acres, would be open to mineral leasing and exploration with standard stipulations. The majority would be available for sale of mineral materials with only 14,900 acres closed to protect other values.

3. Timber sales could be held on 1,184 acres with 189 acres withdrawn from sales to protect wildlife habitat. An addition 1,347 acres of woodland would be managed for production of forest products with measures to consider wildlife habitat.

4. Of the 25 grazing allotments, reductions would be made in four of the allotments and an increase on one allotment (refer to Appendix B). For the management area as a whole, the initial stocking rate of 28,763 is above the 5 year average, but less than active preference. Long term stocking would be essentially the same as active grazing preference.

   Proposed improvements include 187,000 acres brush control, 1,500 acres seeding, 12 springs, 2 wells, 14.5 miles of pipeline, 18 reservoirs, and 51.5 miles of fence.

5. An HMP would be developed for the Edie Creek Bench for about 168,700 acres. Objectives of the HMP would be to improve deer, antelope, sage grouse, and moose habitat. Vegetation manipulation would be accomplished through controlled burning and as a result of livestock grazing adjustments.

6. A Water Quality Management Plan would be developed for Indian Creek and one for Edie and Irving Creeks. Actions would likely include fencing of some riparian areas, drift or trail fencing and some improved livestock distribution measures.

7. There would be 5,920 acres closed to ORV use and an additional 6,720 acres with a seasonal restriction on ORV use. Two campgrounds would be developed.

8. A fire management plan for about 22,700 acres would be developed for limited fire suppression.

MANAGEMENT AREA 2 - TABLE BUTTE/TWIN BUTTES

This management area is composed of two well-blocked areas of public land totaling 156,561 acres west of Interstate 15. One block is north of Mud Lake and the other is south. The areas are both important for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat. Farming in the area has increased the demand for lands with agricultural potential and several Desert Land Applications have been filed in the District Office.

Management Objectives

1. Multiple Use and Transfer Classes
   a. Classified as Moderate Use: 153,366 acres.
   b. Classified as Limited Use: No acres were placed in this class.
   c. Classified as Transfer: 680 acres classed as transfer by sale or exchange, 1,395 acres having DLE applications and 1,120 acres having soils potential for agricultural development.

2. Retain 153,366 acres of land in public ownership for long term multiple use management.

3. Manage 161,100 acres of federal mineral estate for mineral and energy exploration and development.

4. Manage 127,228 acres of public land for grazing purposes in the Medicine Lodge Resource Area. Manage 27,436 acres which lie within the Big Butte Resource Area for grazing purposes. Improve 15,880 acres of range land from poor or fair range condition to good range condition. Increase stocking levels in the long term by 3,167 AUMs over existing use levels.

5. Provide forage and cover for existing and projected wildlife numbers. Improve 10 percent or 4,000 acres of unsatisfactory antelope and sage grouse habitat. Maintain a suitable prey base for 35 bald eagles and 75 golden eagles. Provide foraging habitat for reintroduction of Peregrine falcons.

6. Manage fire on a limited suppression basis on 101,076 acres and full suppression on 55,489 acres.

7. Reduce archaeological site vandalism and manage cultural resources for sociocultural, management and scientific uses.

Required Management Actions

1. Examine 680 acres of public land for sale, private or state exchange, act on 1,395 acres under DLE application, and examine 1,120 acres of public land where soil is suitable for farming. Land examinations would follow standard operating procedures.

2. None of the lands would be closed to mineral leasing. About 400 acres would be open to leasing under no surface occupancy restricitons and 39,100 acres would be open under seasonal restrictions. Only 80 acres would be closed to mining and 1,300 closed to sales of mineral materials.

3. Reductions in grazing use would be made in four allotments, with increases in three allotments. The initial stocking rate of 18,613 is below active preference but more than the 5 year average active use. Long term grazing available would exceed the active preference. About 27,436 acres of the Twin Buttes allotment is located in the Big Butte Resource Area but managed along with this area. Proposed improvements include 12,800 acres of brush control, 2,880 acres seeding, 1 spring, 9 wells, 2.5 miles of pipeline, 1 reservoir, and 4.75 miles of fence.

4. Develop a monitoring plan that would ensure maintenance of a suitable prey base for bald eagles, golden eagles and Peregrine falcons if they are reintroduced into the area. Monitoring would also be needed to ensure maintenance of antelope fawning and winter range and sage grouse habitat.

5. Most of the area would be managed for limited fire suppression and a fire management plan would be completed. About 55,489 acres would be managed under full suppression.

MANAGEMENT AREA 3 - CAMAS CREEK

This management area presents a fragmented and scattered pattern of 59,480 acres of public land in the area east of Dubois north to the Targhee Forest boundary. The majority of the area consists of private and state lands with public lands in the minority. There are important range resources and key elk calving, riparian, big game winter range and upland game habitat.

Management Objectives

1. Multiple Use and Transfer Classes
   a. Classified as Moderate Use: 58,680 acres.
   b. Classified as Limited Use: No acres were placed in this class.
   c. Classified as Transfer: 800 acres classed as transfer by sale or exchange. Area has potential as state exchange actions.

2. Retain 58,680 acres of land in public ownership for long term multiple use management.

3. Manage 74,700 acres of federal mineral estate for mineral exploration and development, primarily oil and gas and sand and gravel.

4. Intensively manage 1,788 acres for timber production and 1,242 acres of woodland.

5. Manage 50,017 acres for livestock grazing, improve distribution, improve 2,875 acres from fair to good range condition, and increase livestock forage by 310 AUMs in 20 years.

6. Maintain satisfactory habitat in key elk calving areas, antelope fawning areas and big game winter range. Provide suitable habitat for upland game on the scattered tracts.

7. Improve 1.5 miles of riparian vegetation on 3 Mile Creek.

8. Continue to manage for dispersed recreation opportunities and manage 1,540 acres as semi-primitive motorized.

9. Manage 58,680 acres as full fire suppression.

10. Manage cultural resources for sociocultural, management and potential scientific uses.