

PART I

DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This document is divided into three parts. Part I is the Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP). The draft plan is described in the Proposed Management Prescription section and includes both management objectives and required management actions. The Rationale for the Selection of the Preferred Alternative is also outlined.

Alternative B is the preferred alternative and, as pointed out above, is the same as the draft plan (Part I). The only exception is the Range Management Program for which the proposed action is Alternative A. No final decisions have been made, however, and any of the alternatives could be selected. The resource management plan proposed for final approval will be formulated only after public review of the draft. The final proposed plan will be identified in the final environmental impact statement, which is scheduled for release in September 30, 1987.

Part II of this document is the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Draft EIS is prepared as part of the resource management planning process to assess the potential environmental impacts of the plan alternatives. The plan alternatives are described in Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS.

Part III, Appendix, consists of specific data on which Part I and Part II are based. Even more detailed information is available and can be inspected at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Pocatello Resource Area Office in Pocatello, Idaho.

For example, environmental consequences were estimated and documented for each affected resource by alternative. The environmental consequences found in Part II, Chapter 4, represent a summary of the more detailed data.

The Caribou-Bear Lake and Pocatello Management Framework Plans (MFPs) have been incorporated into the Pocatello Draft RMP document. These two plans cover the majority of the Pocatello Resource Area (PRA). Many of the MFP decisions were carried forward as part of the Draft RMP.

This document has been prepared under the authority of and in accordance with Sections 201 and 202 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (Public Law 94-579) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

There are two Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in the PRA; they are Petticoat Peak (28-1) which consists of 11,298 acres and Worm Creek (37-77) which consists of 40 acres. Worm Creek WSA is adjacent to a Forest Service Rare II area. The Petticoat Peak WSA has been covered in

the Eastern Idaho Plan Amendment EIS. The Worm Creek WSA will be covered under a Section 202 EIS. Although the 11,338 acres are carried in the Draft RMP in some activities to balance the acreage, wilderness suitability will not be evaluated in this document. These PRA two WSAs will be managed under the BLM's Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review, until Congress makes its decision.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The PRA is located in southeastern Idaho and encompasses 264,481 acres of public land (see Location Map 1). The area includes the lands surrounding the city of Pocatello in the northwestern corner of the PRA then south to the Utah State line and east to the Wyoming State line. The Burley District borders the west, and the Big Butte and Medicine Lodge Resource Areas (Idaho Falls District) serve as the northern boundary. Three major rivers run through the PRA - Portneuf River, Blackfoot River, and Bear River.

Characteristic landforms are a combination of rolling plains and valley floors bordered by low foothills and more rugged mountain ranges. Elevations on public land in the PRA range from a low of 4,350 feet in the valleys to 8,032 feet atop Petticoat Peak.

Foothills and meadows in the area provide opportunities for ranching and dry farming, with irrigated farming practiced in some of the valleys. The northern portion of the area is part of the Columbia Plateau, primarily a flat to rolling plain of basaltic lavas traversed by the Snake River. The soils, rich in volcanic ash, provide for good agricultural crop production and rangeland.

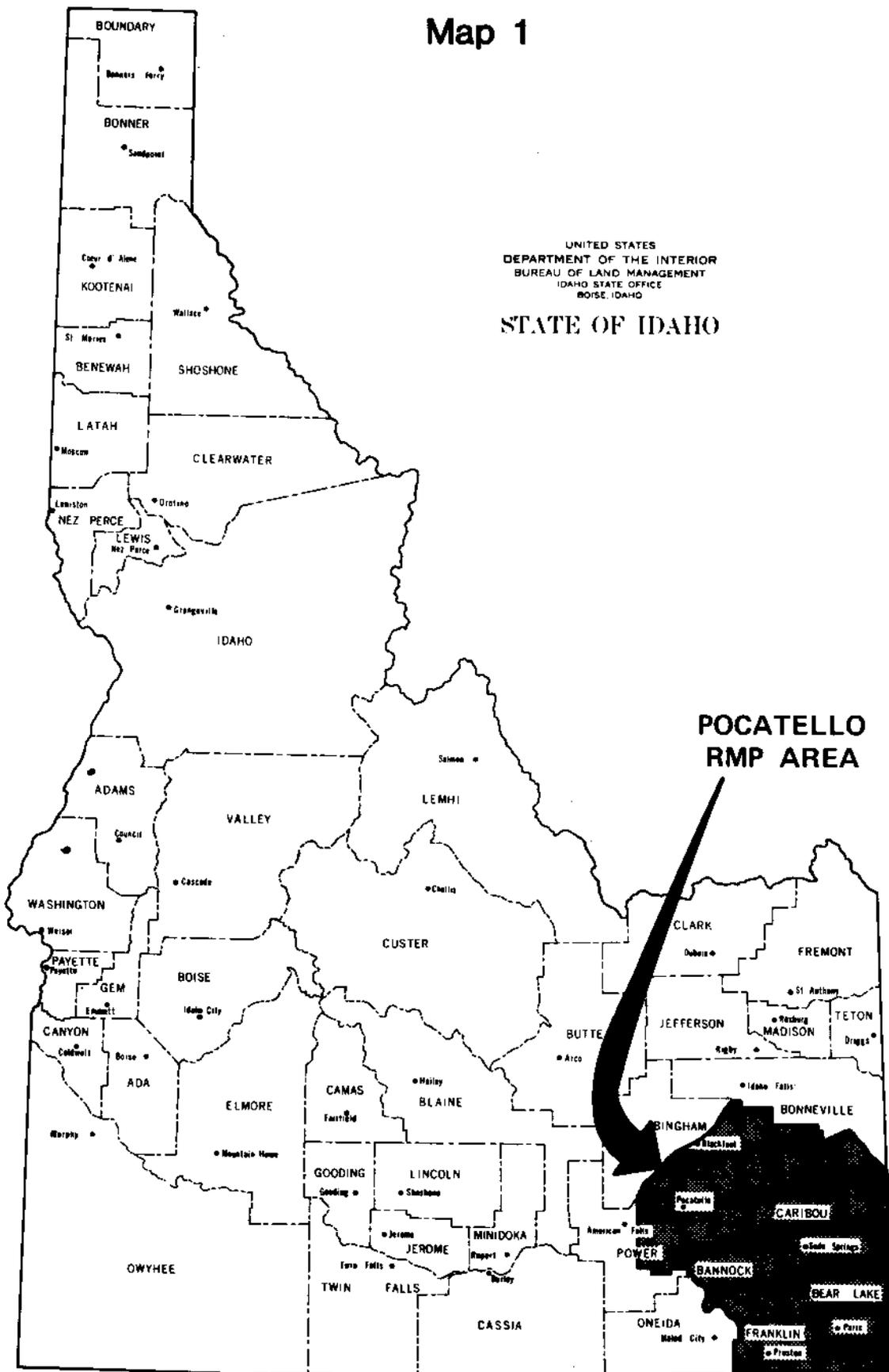
Native vegetation consists primarily of sagebrush-grass associations in the valleys and juniper-grass associations in the foothill areas. On higher elevation areas, Douglas-fir stands are found on north and east-facing slopes, with aspen communities often occurring in canyon bottoms, along stream channels, and in other wet areas. Localized riparian and meadow communities are found throughout the area, with various shrub species (mountain mahogany, serviceberry, chokecherry) occurring locally at higher elevations.

The PRA covers all or portions of seven counties: Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Bonneville, Caribou, Franklin, and Power. There are 35 incorporated cities in the area, with populations that range from below 100 to 46,340 (Pocatello). Total population of the seven-county area is estimated at 208,200 (Bureau of the Census 1985). Bannock and Bonneville counties each account for 33 percent of the population, while Bingham County adds another 18 percent. No other county accounts for more than 5 percent.

Map 1

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
IDAHO STATE OFFICE
BOISE, IDAHO

STATE OF IDAHO



**POCATELLO
RMP AREA**

Total earnings in the seven-county area in 1983 were \$1.35 billion (Bureau of Economic Analysis 1985). This consisted of \$1.24 billion in nonfarm earnings and \$0.11 billion in farm earnings. The major industry, in terms of earnings in the area, is services (includes a variety of businesses such as hotels, motels, movie houses, colleges and universities, lawyers, doctors, and hospitals).

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process described in BLM Planning Regulations 43 CFR 1600 contains ten steps. These are illustrated in Figure 1 and are described below:.

1. Identification of Issues

Each BLM resource area has different problems, needs, and resource uses. At the very beginning of the planning process, BLM listens to citizens' suggestions regarding development and protection of the area's resources. At this stage, BLM needs the public to help determine the issues and their importance. These issues then become important to the planning effort and are considered in each step of the process. The issues and conflicts are not resolved at this step, but it is important for the BLM to hear specific comments.

2. Development of Planning Criteria

Once the issues have been identified, the District Manager prepares criteria to guide development of the plan. These criteria are used to guide the gathering of information and, later, to formulate and evaluate alternatives. The criteria are published for public comment before they are adopted by the District Manager.

3. Inventory and Information Collection

The BLM planning team needs to know the present condition of the resources in the area and their past production levels. The District Manager arranges for the district staff to collect and assemble this information. BLM appreciates public contributions of information.

4. Analysis of the Management Situation

The planning team assesses the capability of the public land resources to respond to the needs, concerns, and opportunities previously identified through public participation. BLM policy and the policies, plans, and programs of other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and Indian tribes also play a role in this

analysis. The Analysis of the Management Situation for the PRA is located in the PRA Office.

5. Formulation of the Alternatives

Several alternative plans are prepared that range from emphasizing production of resources to favoring protection of resources, including continuation of present management. Each alternative must be a complete plan for managing the resources in the planning area. Public comments help identify conflicts among the alternatives.

6. Effects of the Alternatives

The BLM interdisciplinary team analyzes the physical, biological, economic, and social effects of implementing each alternative. The relationship between short-term uses of the environment and long-term productivity must be analyzed during this step.

7. Selection of a Preferred Alternative

Alternatives and their effects are evaluated according to the planning criteria developed in Step 2. The District Manager then selects a preferred alternative based on information and analysis developed up to this point in the planning process. This alternative is included in the draft plan and draft environmental impact statement that are presented to the public. It is important for the public to participate in the review and comment period at this time. This Draft RMP/EIS identifies BLM's preferred alternative.

8. Selection of the Resource Management Plan

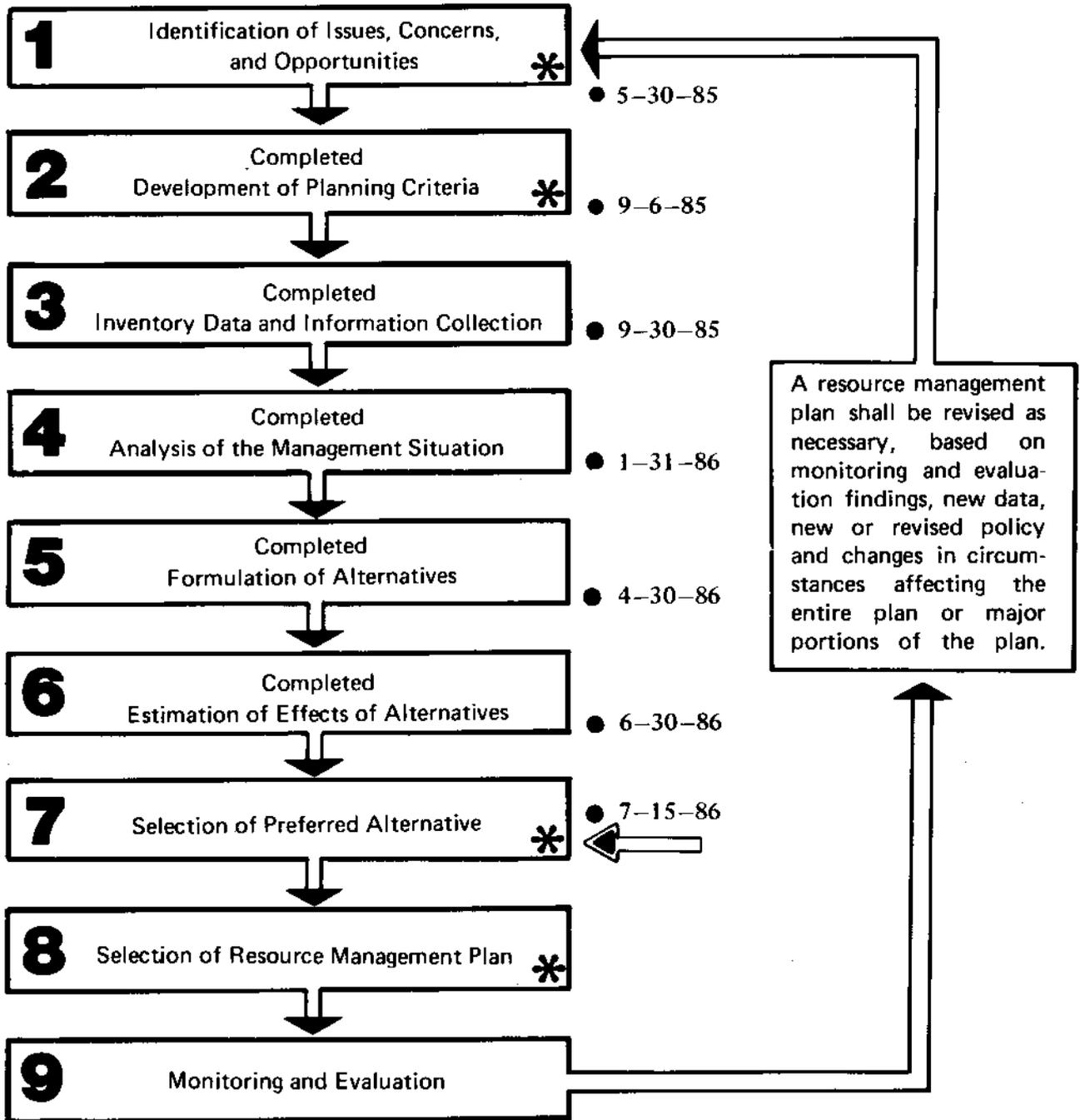
After evaluation of comments received on the draft plan and draft environmental impact statement, the District Manager selects the proposed Resource Management Plan. After review and concurrence, including a review by the Governor for consistency with State or local plans, policies, or programs, the BLM State Director approves the final plan and environmental impact statement.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Once the plan is approved by the State Director, it can be implemented. Review of the plan is ongoing and amendments are made as needed. The ongoing review determines if mitigating measures are effective; if environmental limits have been exceeded; if other Federal, State, or local plans have changed; or whether there are new data significant to the plan. Monitoring studies begin as soon as possible and are used, along with initial inventory data, to sustain or modify livestock use adjustments.

Figure 1

STEPS IN THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS



A resource management plan shall be revised as necessary, based on monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, new or revised policy and changes in circumstances affecting the entire plan or major portions of the plan.

- * Steps Requiring Public Participation
- Date Completed

Studies are conducted on a recurring basis. Monitoring and evaluation reports are available for public review.

10. Maintenance, Amendment, and Revision

Resource management plans are updated to reflect minor changes in data and further refinement or documentation of the approved plan. Maintenance does not result in expansion of the scope of resource use or restrictions or in changes in the terms, conditions, or decisions of the approved plan. Maintenance does not require formal public involvement, interagency coordination, or the preparation of environmental analysis documents.

When changes are required that go beyond routine maintenance, the resource management plan must be amended in accordance with the BLM planning regulations. Amendments must include the NEPA process to determine environmental impacts, public involvement, interagency coordination, and consistency determinations as required by the regulations.

When changing conditions (e.g., major improvements or declines in forage condition) affect all or major portions of the plan, then the plan must be revised, using the regulations required for the preparation of a new plan.

PLANNING ISSUES, SCOPING, AND PLANNING CRITERIA

The BLM planning regulations generally equate land use planning with problem solving or with issue resolution. An issue may be defined as an opportunity, conflict, or problem regarding the use or management of public lands and resources. Not all issues can be resolved through land use planning. They may instead require changes in policy, budgets, or legislation.

Scoping

The Pocatello Draft RMP addresses public issues and management concerns related to public land management in the PRA. An initial list of issues and concerns was developed by the PRA staff. This list was submitted to the Idaho Falls District Advisory Council and the Grazing Advisory Board and was mailed to all other known interested parties. Comments were solicited from all of these parties as well as from a variety of informal public contacts. From this initial list of issues and public comments, similar items were combined and agency management concerns were incorporated to avoid duplication. The result was eleven planning issues that the Pocatello Draft RMP will address. These eleven issues have been used to establish the scope of this Draft RMP.

It is important to understand that issues brought to BLM's attention by the public involve value judgments or personal preferences. This frequently results in differing or opposing views of public land management. These different ways of looking at public land management are reflected in the alternatives, which are described and analyzed later in Part II.

Some of the issues identified by the public are not considered in the Draft RMP. These are issues that do not require a land use decision. These issues may be handled through routine administrative channels. An example of an issue that was brought to BLM's attention and will not be included in this Draft RMP is "maintain the existing grazing fee". Resolution of this concern cannot be addressed by the planning system because it is determined by legislation and/or administrative procedures.

All public input to the Pocatello Draft RMP has been documented and filed in the PRA Office. It is available for public review.

Planning Criteria

Planning criteria are the factors or data that BLM must consider prior to arriving at a land use decision relative to any issue. The following are the factors that have been used in arriving at decisions in the Draft RMP:

- A. Social and economic values.
- B. Plans, programs, and policies of other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and Indian tribes.
- C. Existing law, regulations, and BLM policy.
- D. Future needs and demand for existing or potential resource commodities and values.
- E. Public input.
- F. Public welfare and safety.
- G. Past and present use of public and adjacent lands.
- H. Quantity and quality of noncommodity resource values.
- I. Environmental impacts.

Issues Addressed in the Pocatello Draft RMP

Eleven issues are addressed in this document. These issues were identified based on planning team members' judgment, interagency consultation, public input, and review by BLM managers.

The following discussions present a brief overview of the issues included in the alternatives. The alternatives are found in Part II, Chapter 2 and are analyzed in Part II, Chapter 4.

ISSUE #1 - Land Ownership Adjustments

Background

In accordance with Section 102(a)(1) of the FLPMA, "The public lands shall be retained in Federal ownership, unless as a result of the land use planning ...it is determined that disposal of a particular parcel will serve the national interest...". The scattered nature of some of the public lands within the PRA makes them difficult for BLM to manage. Therefore, we are considering sale and exchange proposals. Other public lands can provide access for utilities, roads, and communication sites, while others can meet community expansion, recreation development, and private institution needs. FLPMA contains provisions to allow BLM to sell, exchange, lease, and authorize rights-of-way across public lands.

However, we are expanding on previous management plans which have identified approximately 12,000 acres of public lands suitable for sale, 403 acres suitable for lease, and 11,000 acres suitable for exchange.

Criteria

Public land disposals involving either public sale or exchange must meet the criteria in Sections 203 or 206 of FLPMA:

Section 203

1. The land must be difficult and uneconomical 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.

Section 206

1. The public interest will be well served by making that exchange.
2. The Federal lands found proper for transfer out of Federal ownership and which are located in the same State as the non-Federal lands to be acquired.

3. The values shall be equal or if they are not equal, the values shall be equalized by the payment of money to the grantor or to the Secretary concerned as the circumstances require so long as payment does not exceed 20 percent of the total value of the lands transferred out of Federal ownership.

The public lands identified for sale are isolated tracts scattered throughout the PRA that have minimum multiple use values. Many of these tracts have no legal or physical access because they are surrounded by private lands.

The public lands identified for exchange are principally those lands that would consolidate lands for the State of Idaho and BLM to improve management. Some private land exchanges have also been identified that would consolidate BLM land blocks.

ISSUE #2 - Legal and Physical Access to Public Lands

Background

The scattered, isolated nature of some blocks of public land in the PRA provides limited or no public access across private lands. The major need for access comes from recreationists (hunting, fishing, ORV users); however, the Forestry and Wildlife programs would also benefit from improved access to public lands. Wherever a need to improve access to public lands across private lands is identified, the impacts to private landowners would be considered.

Criteria

Acquiring legal access to blocks of public lands where the public and BLM have identified high resource values must meet the criteria of Section 205 of FLPMA, which states: Acquisitions shall be consistent with the mission of the department involved, and with land use plans.

The level (type) of access needed will be determined by activity planning, legal adequacy, costs vs benefits, duration, availability of informal use authorizations, and assurance of favorable opinion of title.

ISSUE #3 - Rangeland Management

Background

The PRA has 415 grazing allotments. Currently (1986) 21,886 animal unit months (AUMs) are licensed to cattle, 7,035 AUMs to sheep, 230 AUMs to horses, and 3,506 AUMs (cattle and sheep) are being held in non-use. The total livestock forage allocation of 32,657 AUMs was based upon the range survey of 1963 and the Bannock-Oneida Grazing EIS, finalized in 1980. Except for the 29 allotments located in the Bannock-Oneida EIS area, the grazing allotments are managed on a case-by-case basis following general policies established by BLM.

Livestock grazing on public lands has some conflicts with other resources. These conflicts include competition with wildlife for forage, water, and shelter; alteration of vegetation leading to soil erosion or water quality reduction; and contamination of recreation sites.

Livestock grazing on public lands in many cases is an important part of local farming operations.

Future livestock forage allocation will be based upon ecological site inventories, type of livestock to be grazed, season of use, and forage needs of other species. The ecological site inventory includes range site classification, present vegetation, ecological condition, and apparent resource trend. The analysis of the above information will determine a proposed stocking rate for each allotment. Adjustments to the proposed stocking rates will be made by future monitoring on each allotment.

Criteria

The following factors being considered in setting livestock use levels and establishing basic management:

1. The economic stability of the local livestock industry in all seven counties.
2. Plant vigor maintenance requirements, condition and trend, as well as watershed and riparian area protection and stability requirements, must be met.
3. The BLM will provide habitat, including forage, for wildlife on public land. The amount of forage provided is determined by BLM through consultation with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the public land users.

ISSUE #4 - Protection of Wildlife Habitat

Background

Wintering habitat, both food and shelter, is crucial for elk, deer, sharp-tailed grouse, sage grouse, and many nongame species in the PRA. Whenever winter feed is not adequate or accessible to animals on public land, they may move to private lands, other less suitable public lands, or die.

Riparian habitat is an important natural resource to wildlife, livestock, water, and recreationists. Management of riparian areas is one of the key wildlife habitat management issues. Effective and practical stipulations for development and livestock use of riparian areas is a high priority. Management of livestock and other programs (e.g., minerals) should be directed at reducing soil erosion, stream sedimentation, and vegetation rehabilitation.

Criteria

BLM will manage fish and wildlife habitat on the public lands by:

1. Preparing Habitat Management Plans.
2. Installing wildlife improvements: fences, watering facilities, brush seedings, and goose nesting platforms.
3. Giving priority to threatened or endangered species habitat.
4. Maintaining big game habitat to support herd numbers as identified by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.
5. Inclusion of stipulations or conditions on BLM leases.

ISSUE #5 - Control of Grasshoppers and Weeds on Public Lands

Background

Grasshopper populations have been very high on some public lands in the last few years due to weather conditions. In 1985, extensive areas of public and private lands were sprayed with malathion to reduce very high populations of grasshoppers. The BLM worked closely with county extension agents and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to conduct the control program.

Noxious weeds continue to invade some public lands within the PRA. In 1984, it was estimated that 8,055 acres of public land in the PRA was infested by State listed noxious weeds. Between 1983 and 1985, weed control efforts were curtailed due an appeal involving spraying to the Interior Board of Land Appeals. Consequently, the weeds have re-invaded treated areas and continue to spread in other areas. Local county weed control supervisors are concerned that continued lack of weed control on public lands will jeopardize their control efforts on adjacent private lands.

Criteria

Control of grasshoppers on public lands is also a concern in BLM. We will continue to cooperate with APHIS wherever grasshopper population densities occur. Whenever grasshopper or mormon cricket population exceed 8 per square yard on BLM lands next to croplands, control can be started. Infestation on "large blocks" of BLM rangeland can also be controlled under this Act.

Control of noxious weeds is a concern to BLM. In the PRA, Dyer's woad is the most widespread weed which has infested approximately 1,620 acres of public land. The BLM is presently cooperating in a Noxious Weed EIS supplement which should be completed in early 1987.

Individual sites and species will be handled on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the EIS supplement.

ISSUE #6 - Off-Road-Vehicle Use on Public Lands

Background

Year around off-road-vehicle (ORV) use in the PRA is a popular recreation activity. The BLM, in coordination with the Forest Service, has designated some wheeled and over-snow trails across public lands in the PRA. Soil erosion and subsequent siltation of streams result from some ORV use on public land. The degree of erosion is dependent on soil type, slope, vegetative cover, and amount of precipitation. Designated ORV trails require significant maintenance work each year to minimize negative impacts to soils.

ORV use on public lands can also adversely impact the experience of other recreation users; therefore, any new designations should take other users into consideration.

Criteria

Public lands will be designated as either open, limited, or closed to motorized vehicles. In making these determinations BLM will consider the following:

1. Public safety.
2. Resolving conflicts between uses of public lands.
3. Resource protection requirements.
4. Public access requirements for recreation use.
5. Maintaining the Pocatello ORV Plan's designations.

ISSUE #7 - Timber and Firewood Utilization

Background

The PRA has a few small timber sales each year. They usually involve only a few thousand board feet per sale and are mostly contracted to local farmers and small logging operations. Access is a major problem making large timber sales rare unless the BLM timber can be combined with a sale on adjacent State or Forest Service lands. The access problem also makes it difficult to allow the public use of the slash for fuelwood. Overall, in the PRA, firewood utilization is limited by both physical and legal access.

Criteria

Generally, lands containing commercial timber or other forest products such as firewood, posts and poles, and Christmas trees are available for

harvest except where expressly closed by law or regulation. Some areas may also be subject to special restrictions to protect other resource values. All Timber Production Capability Classifications will be re-evaluated relative to current BLM forest land policy.

ISSUE #8 - Protection of Riparian Habitat and Water Quality

Background

Riparian habitat is a key natural resource valuable to wildlife, livestock, water quality, recreation, and other interests. The PRA has a considerable amount of riparian habitat which occurs along perennial streams, springs, lakes, reservoirs, marshes, and rivers. Livestock and people concentrate along streams; therefore, the likelihood of conflict is inevitable as are the adverse impacts to riparian habitat and water quality. Heavy livestock grazing along streams can reduce streamside vegetation enough to allow streambank erosion, stream sedimentation, stream pollution, and general annoyance and concern to recreationists using the streamside for fishing, camping, and picnicking.

Management of riparian areas is one of the key wildlife habitat management issues. Effective and practical stipulations on development and livestock use of riparian areas is a high priority, and new methods of managing need to be considered for these areas. Management actions for livestock management and other programs (e.g., minerals) should be directed at reducing sedimentation and stream pollution.

The Portneuf River and Marsh Creek have sedimentation and pollution problems which adversely impact water quality and recreational use of the streams.

Criteria

Executive Order (E.O.) 11990 requires BLM to avoid long-term and short-term adverse impacts associated with destruction, loss, or degradation of wetland-riparian areas. BLM must also ensure the preservation and enhancement of "the natural and beneficial values of wetland-riparian areas which may include constraining or excluding those uses that cause significant, long-term ecological damage". A variety of methods may be employed, including the use of management actions designed to maintain or improve riparian habitat, inclusions of stipulations or conditions in BLM leases, granting of licenses and permits, and development of detailed plans for watershed management.

BLM policy and responsibilities mandate adherence to FLPMA and the Clean Water Act in regards to nonpoint-source water quality management (refer to Section 208, Public Law 92-500). By the use of standard operating procedures and best management practices, the BLM will meet or exceed Idaho State water quality standards. Monitoring will be conducted to check compliance and effectiveness of these practices and procedures.