



Upper Snake Resource Management Plan

June 2008



Public
Scoping
Information
Package



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Idaho Falls District
Upper Snake Field Office
Idaho Falls, ID 83401

**It is the Mission of the
Bureau of Land Management
to sustain the health,
diversity, and productivity
of the public lands for the
use and enjoyment of
present and future
generations.**

Public Scoping Information Package

Upper Snake Field Office Resource Management Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Upper Snake Field Office Resource Management Plan (Upper Snake RMP) is a planning activity that encompasses approximately 1.8 million acres of public land located in southeastern Idaho. The Upper Snake Field Office (Upper Snake FO) currently administers these public lands under four separate land use plans: the Big Desert Management Framework Plan (MFP), Big Lost MFP, Little Lost/Birch Creek MFP, and the Medicine Lodge RMP. When completed, the Upper Snake RMP will replace these four existing land use plans, resulting in a single, updated source of comprehensive land use management direction for the Upper Snake FO.

The land use planning process is the key tool used by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to manage resources and to designate and allocate uses on public lands, in coordination with state and local government, tribal governments, land users, and interested public. Land use plan decisions establish goals and objectives for resource management (i.e., desired future conditions, protective measures, or best management practices), the measures needed to achieve these goals and objectives, and parameters for resources and resource uses on BLM-administered public lands.

The planning process under which the Upper Snake RMP is being developed will comply with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), and BLM policies, manuals, and handbooks.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Upper Snake RMP is to respond to resource conditions that have changed, respond to new issues, and provide the Upper Snake FO a comprehensive framework under which to administer public lands into the future.

The need for the Upper Snake RMP is to develop a comprehensive plan that maintains, improves, or restores resource conditions; identifies desired future conditions; and provides for the economic needs of local communities over the long term.

UPPER SNAKE FO RMP AREA

A map of the Upper Snake FO planning area for the RMP is provided on the next page.



Upper Snake FO Planning Area

The Upper Snake FO serves 13 southeast Idaho counties and administers approximately 1.8 million acres of public land within a patchwork of private, state, and other federal agency land ownerships.

The Upper Snake RMP planning area includes the St. Anthony Sand Dunes and South Fork of the Snake River, premier destinations for motorized recreation and fishing opportunities in the Nation.

CURRENT DIRECTION REVIEW

An extensive review of current land management decisions/direction was conducted by a team of resource and planning specialists (the Upper Snake RMP interdisciplinary team). The team reviewed the Big Desert MFP (1981), Big Lost MacKay MFP (1983), Little Lost/Birch Creek MFP (1985), and the Medicine Lodge RMP (1985). This review was conducted to determine the identification of

- Key direction, where appropriate, for resource and resource uses that may be carried forward into the new RMP
- Direction for resource and resource uses that needs to be updated to address current laws, regulations, and policies
- Direction to address changed conditions on the public lands managed by the Upper Snake FO
- Any new or expansion of resource considerations that may require decisions
- Any tribal cultural and heritage practices or concerns not previously addressed.

DIRECTION CARRIED FORWARD

BLM has two main categories for natural resources management, resources and resource uses. Resources are natural, biological, and cultural features that improve the quality of life and resource uses are the products, either tangible or intangible, that are managed from resources.

Current land management direction that has proven to be effective and requires no change will be "carried forward" through the analysis process. An example of management direction for a specific resource that the Upper Snake FO currently follows, and has been reviewed as **needing no further change** for consideration under the Upper Snake RMP, is for the area of water quality, surface water.

Manage public land uses so that water quality in springs and streams complies with Idaho State water quality standards under the Clean Water Act. Comply and be consistent with the memorandum of understanding that implements the non-point source water quality program for the State of Idaho.

Other resources and resource uses where current management direction was found appropriate to carry forward through the RMP planning process included air quality, soils, riparian, aquatics (including fish), wildlife, and forestry.

NEED FOR CHANGE TOPICS

Need for change topics have been identified for the following resources and resource uses to address current laws, regulations, and policies; changed conditions; and new or expanded conditions or opportunities on BLM-administered public lands.

Vegetation

Desired Future Condition—Direction is needed to identify the desired future condition of the vegetation types that occur within the Upper Snake FO planning area. Existing plans provide direction for the uses of vegetation by livestock and wildlife, but do not provide direction for the desired future condition of the vegetative resources.

Disturbed Lands—Direction is needed for rehabilitating, reclaiming, and/or restoring public lands after ground disturbing activities, including disturbance that results from permitted/authorized activities. Existing plans do not provide direction for rehabilitation, especially with regard to concerns such as minimizing weed establishment and reducing weed spread.

Special Status Species—Flora (Plants)

A special status species (flora) is generally a native plant that because of its limited presence, or existence of threats to its persistence, has been placed on the State of Idaho Special Status Plants List, BLM Special Status Species List, or federally listed as a threatened or endangered species. Special status species lists do not state what specifically should be done to protect a special status species and existing management plans provide little or no direction.

For the Upper Snake FO area, it is desired to identify management direction not only for individual species, but also, where appropriate, for the habitats in which they occur. Currently over 45 species have status in the State of Idaho that may need management direction. This direction would be based on a review of the scientific literature and current policies for the management of the affected species and their habitats.

Special Status Species—Fauna (Animals: Vertebrates and Invertebrates)

A special status species (fauna) is generally a native animal, which because of its limited presence, or existence of threats to its persistence, has been placed on the Idaho Species of Greatest Conservation Need List (i.e., the Idaho Department of Fish and Game List), BLM Special Status Species List, or federally listed as a threatened or endangered species. Other than recovery plans for federally listed species, special status species lists

do not state what specifically should be done to protect these species. Existing management plans also provide little or no direction.

The species in need of management direction include, but are not limited to, sage grouse, pygmy rabbit, Townsend's big-eared bat, sharp-tail grouse, Sand Dune tiger beetle, wolf, grizzly bear, yellow-billed cuckoo, ferruginous hawk, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, bull trout, Utah valvata snail, shorthead sculpin, and white sturgeon. Direction for special status species would be based on a review of the scientific literature and current policies for the management of the affected species and, as applicable, their habitats.

Cultural Resources

Management direction is needed to better address traditional cultural properties (TCPs), which are places in the environment that have special significance to individuals and human communities because of their cultural connections. Examples of TCPs may include indigenous sacred and ceremonial places, trails, medicinal and other plant collecting areas, and ethnic architectural styles or patterns of land use.

Paleontology

When it comes to the fossil record, most people are familiar with vertebrate fossils such as dinosaur bones, mammoth tusks, and sharks teeth, but much less familiar with invertebrate fossils such as ammonites, trilobites, pelecypods, and other marine invertebrates that are also a part of the Upper Snake FO area's rich geological history. Current management direction is being carried forward for vertebrate fossils, but new direction is needed for invertebrate fossils.

Visual Resources

The visual resource management (VRM) system provides a way to identify and evaluate scenic values to determine the appropriate levels of management. VRM is a tool used by the BLM to identify and map essential landscape settings to meet public preferences and recreation-related experiences today and into the future.

VRM management classes are assigned for all BLM-administered public lands based on an inventory of visual resources and management consideration for other land uses. VRM inventory consists of a scenic quality evaluation, sensitivity level analysis, and a delineation of distance zones. Based on these three factors, public lands are placed into one of four visual resource inventory classes: Class I, II, III, or IV—with Class I having the highest visual sensitivity and Class IV being the least sensitive. VRM classes need to be reviewed and updated, as necessary, and management direction is needed to better address VRM for the entire Upper Snake FO area.

Wildland Fire Management

The Proposed Fire, Fuels, and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS, 2008) will amend the existing land use plans with fire management direction for implementation into the future. However, planning direction for fire management continues to evolve and direction may be needed to identify and delineate areas of appropriate management response (AMR) for wildland fires. AMR includes any action taken to meet resource objectives identified in land use plans and incorporates a spectrum of tactical operations ranging from simply observing the behavior of the fire to aggressive and intensive suppression actions.

Wilderness Characteristics

The Upper Snake FO does not manage any Congressionally-designated wilderness areas, and current land use plans do not address wilderness characteristics outside of wilderness study areas (WSAs). The status of existing WSAs will not change as a result of this planning process, as only Congress may designate WSAs as wilderness or release them for other uses. However, BLM may identify areas that possess wilderness characteristics (naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude, and outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation) and manage activities to protect or preserve these characteristics. There is a need to identify and develop management direction for BLM-administered public lands that may exhibit wilderness characteristics.

Cave & Karst

In keeping with the Federal Cave Protection Act of 1988, there is a need to identify and develop management direction for significant caves that occur, or that may be found in the future, within the Upper Snake FO area.

Livestock Grazing

Vacant and Unallocated Areas—Allotments can become vacant over time as a result of a number of scenarios. Vacant and unallocated lands may be problematic for continued grazing use. Management direction is needed to address vacant and unallocated areas to determine if they should, or should not, be made available for grazing, and especially with regard to areas found in the Teton Canyon and Tex Creek areas and along the Snake River.

Recreation/Visitor Services

Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs)—SRMAs are designated where recreation is the principle management focus and funding and personnel are used to fulfill commitments made to provide specific "structured" recreation opportunities. There are

two SRMAs in the planning in area, Snake River (South Fork, Henry's Fork, and the Main Snake River) and the St. Anthony Sand Dunes. Improved management direction is needed for the St. Anthony Sand Dunes to address increased recreational demand.

Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs)—ERMAs are public lands where recreation is unstructured and does not require intensive management (i.e., SRMA) or significant investments in trails or facilitates. ERMAs offer a variety of dispersed recreation activities through custodial recreation management, which addresses use and user conflicts, visitor safety, and or resource protection.

There is a need to identify ERMAs and associated management direction to resolve user conflicts. Eight specific areas being considered include Teton River, Birch Creek, Henry's Lake, Main Snake, Hells Half Acre, Big Southern Butte, Box Canyon Climbing Area, and King Mountain Hang Gliding Area. All remaining lands would be considered as another ERMA.

Trails/Travel

Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs)/Over Snow Vehicles (OSVs)—There is a need to designate the Upper Snake FO area as "limited" to existing roads and trails for OHV management. This assumes current route designations are valid. Existing direction for the Upper Snake FO provides a mix of designations including open, limited, and closed areas.

In addition, management direction is needed to address OSV use. Existing plans provide no OSV direction.

Lands & Realty

Land Tenure Adjustment—Direction is needed to identify and designate zones of public lands for retention or disposal. Existing plan direction only identifies specific parcels by legal description available for disposal.

Corridors—Adoption of utility corridor(s) direction, which will result from the decisions made from the West-Wide Energy Corridor Programmatic EIS, is needed. The existing plans provide little or no direction for designated utility corridors.

Alternative Energy Sources—Direction is needed to allow for the development of alternative energy sources, such as wind energy, consistent with the President's National Energy Policy. Existing plans do not provide management direction for the development of alternative energy sources.

Minerals (Leasable, Locatable, and Common Variety Minerals)

There is a need to prepare a reasonable foreseeable development scenario for leasing fluid minerals (oil, gas, geothermal). This scenario would serve as the basis for issuing future fluid mineral leases within the Upper Snake FO.

Administrative Designations

The BLM uses "administrative designations" as a tool to afford unique protections to resources and resource uses. Need for change topics have been identified for the following administrative designations.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)—All existing ACEC designations need to be reviewed. The designation of three new ACECs needs to be considered, which involves approximately 17,856 acres, in total, in the Southwest Lemhi Range (5537 acres) and the Teton River (3496 acres) and Main Snake River (2835 acres) areas. An expansion of the Nine Mile Knoll ACEC to 56,048 acres from 40,090 acres needs to be considered as well as the possible reclassification of five existing research natural areas (RNAs) that are already located within existing ACECs (involving North Menan Butte, Reid Canal Island, Pine Creek Island, Squaw Creek Island, and the St. Anthony Sand Dunes RNAs).

Wild and Scenic Rivers—The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires BLM to assess river and stream segments as part of the planning process. Before a river corridor may be considered for designation as a Recreation, Scenic, or Wild River Area, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires a determination that the river and its immediate environments possess one or more specific, outstandingly, remarkable values.

An eligibility study for the Upper Snake FO has been completed as a baseline for this planning effort. A suitability study is underway, including analyses of current and future uses of the eligible stream segments, and the results will be incorporated into the development of the RMP.

Suitability determination and management direction needs to be determined for eligible river segments within the Upper Snake FO. There are numerous opportunities for interested parties and the public to be involved in this process, including through the RMP development process.

PLANNING PROCESS

The RMP planning process includes the preparation of an EIS, which provides continued opportunities for public involvement and incorporation of comments throughout the planning process. The decision the State Director will reach from the analyses of the proposed action and alternatives in the EIS will result in the preparation of the final, approved RMP for the Upper Snake FO. The RMP will provide management direction for resources and resources uses into the future. Preparation of the EIS and RMP is expected to take place over a 38-month period, as the following milestones show:

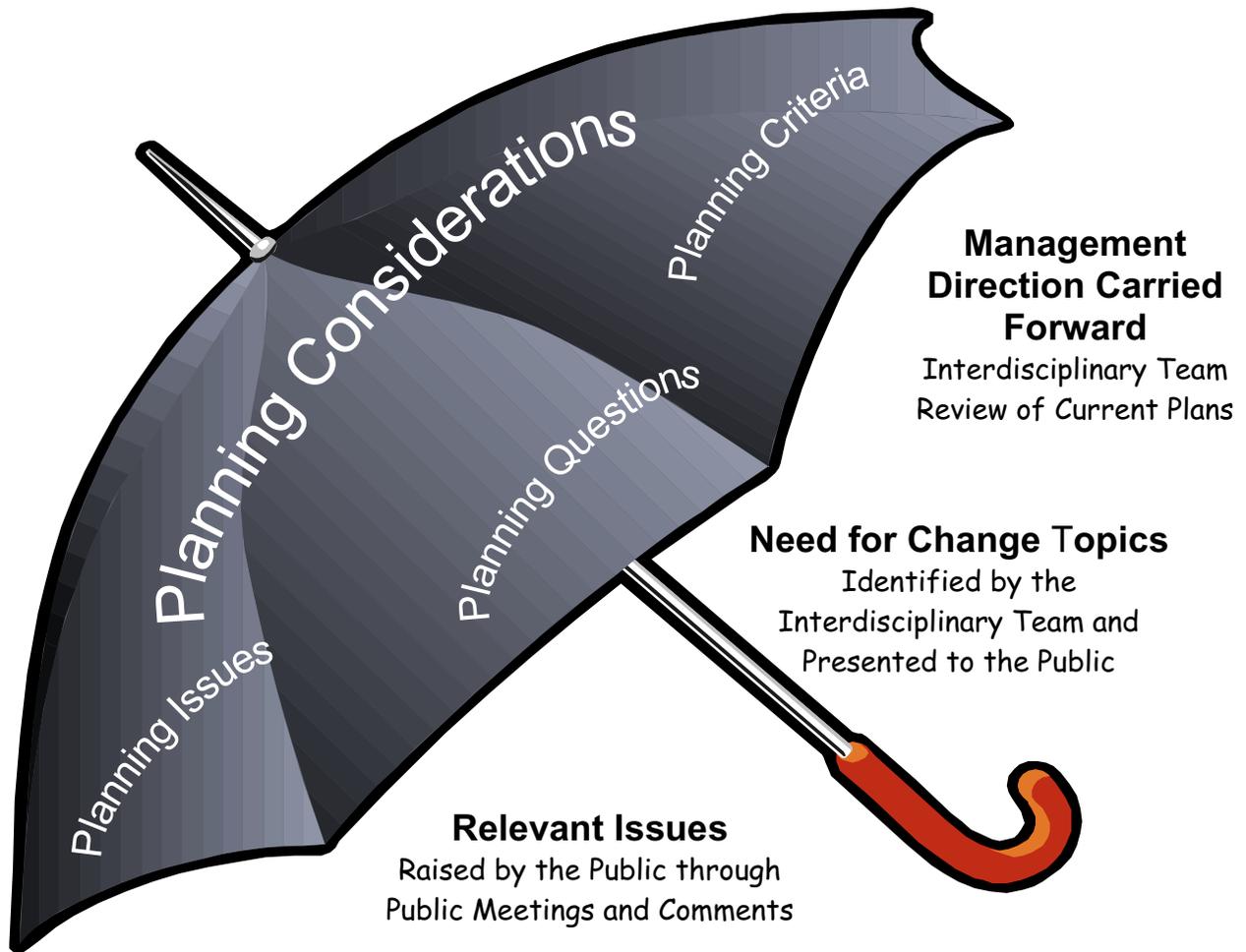
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|---|------------------------|
| 1. Publish Notice of Intent | February 2008 |
| 2. Hold Public Open House Meetings | June 2008 |
| 3. Analyze Public Comments | July/August 2008 |
| 4. Identify Issues/Develop Alternatives | October 2008 |
| 5. Issue Draft EIS/Preferred Alternative | September 2009 |
| 6. Hold Public Meetings on Draft EIS | November 2009 |
| 7. Analyze Comments on Draft EIS | November/December 2009 |
| 8. Issue Final EIS/Proposed
Resource Management Plan | August 2010 |
| 9. Protest Period | September 2010 |
| 10. Sign Record of Decision Issued | June 2011 |

RELEVANT ISSUES

Public scoping, agency coordination, consultations, and discussions with interested parties, and the resulting comments from public information meetings, are anticipated to lead to the identification of relevant issues. These issues will be instrumental in leading to the development of alternatives for the RMP and will be analyzed in the EIS.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Planning Considerations influence all aspects of the planning process including inventory and data collection, formulation of alternatives, estimation of effects, and selection of the preferred alternative. Planning Considerations are also used in analyzing Direction Carried Forward, Need for Change Topics, and Relevant Issues. Planning Considerations may be considered as the umbrella over which the entire Upper Snake RMP planning process occurs. The next section, titled Planning Considerations, goes into more detail about specific Planning Considerations and how they are tied to the resources and resource uses currently identified for the Upper Snake RMP process. Planning Considerations are not static, as they evolve and become refined throughout the RMP development process, especially as federal, state, and tribal governments; the public; coordinating agencies; and other interested parties participate in the planning process.



For the Upper Snake RMP, Planning Considerations are the umbrella under which Direction Carried Forward, Need for Change Topics, and Relevant Issues are considered. Public participation and input are important parts of the process.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES, PLANNING QUESTIONS, AND PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning Issues. Under each resource heading, there is a short paragraph briefly explaining the current "state" of the resource and any preliminary issues that were identified through BLM's initial review of the data and information available in preparation for the Upper Snake FO RMP process. These issues are not set in stone as they will be refined through public involvement and the evolution of the planning process.

Planning Questions. The planning questions are simply the planning issues framed as questions. This step helps to maintain focus and direction during information review, data collection, and analyses activities that will occur as the RMP process progresses.

Planning Criteria. Information that will be considered in answering the planning questions is referred to as planning criteria. Planning criteria are prepared to ensure that decision-making is tailored to the issues pertinent to the planning effort. Planning criteria serve as the cognitive boundary for focused consideration and analysis during the planning process. Planning criteria are finalized based upon public comment and then approved by the District Manager.

In this document, the planning issue¹ is described first, followed by the planning question(s), and then the specific planning criteria to be used in addressing the questions. This information is being provided to you for your review and comment. Please see page 28 for more information on providing your comments.

Air Quality

Planning Issues. In conducting the Upper Snake RMP effort, BLM will ensure compliance with all applicable local, state, tribal, and federal air quality laws, statutes, and regulations. The RMP will identify desired future conditions and area-wide criteria or restrictions, in cooperation with the State of Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency, to ensure that air quality standards are being met.

Planning Questions

- How will management activities be conducted to meet or exceed air quality standards?
- How will applicable smoke management requirements be achieved?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Federal Clean Air Act.
- Guidance from the Proposed Fire, Fuels, and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment and FEIS (2008) regarding air quality.
- Guidance from the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group to minimize or prevent smoke impacts from management-ignited fire.
- Compliance with applicable local, state, tribal, and federal air quality laws, statutes, regulations, standards, and implementation plans. This includes applicable

¹ Issues initially identified for public consideration/discussion. Additional issues may be added or existing issues may be modified or dropped based upon public comments.

"conformity" regulations for BLM initiated or authorized activities within designated non-attainment or maintenance areas.

Water Quality

Planning Issues. Prescribed fire, vegetation treatments, livestock grazing, road location and design, and recreational activities can all affect water quality and quantity on public lands. These activities are especially important when they occur on or near floodplains along streams and rivers. Natural events such as wildfire or floods can also have large effects. Several Idaho Section 303(d) listed streams within the planning area are affected by BLM management activities. Fragmented, complex ownership patterns often require that coordinated management across watersheds be employed. Both ground and surface water originating in municipal watersheds on public land can serve as sources of potable water. Adjudication of water rights within the Snake River Basin requires that BLM continue to claim and inventory water resources on public lands.

Planning Questions

- How will uses and activities be managed to maintain or improve water quality and quantity for both ground and surface water?
- How should public lands along streams, rivers, and floodplains be managed?
- How will vegetation management (fuels) projects be mitigated to protect water quality and quantity?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Federal Clean Water Act (CWA).
- State of Idaho Non-Point Source Management Program plans.
- State of Idaho Total Maximum Daily Load implementation plans.
- State of Idaho Agricultural Pollution Abatement Plan.
- State of Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act.
- State of Idaho Ground Water Protection plan.
- Approved best management practices (BMPs).
- Idaho State Water Law and Snake River Basin Adjudication Procedures.

Soils Management

Planning Issues. Road construction, mining, timber harvest, vegetation treatments, livestock grazing, OHV use, and fire can all contribute to accelerated soil erosion. Natural events such as wildfire and floods can also cause large amounts of erosion. Allowed to continue, excessive erosion can deplete site productivity such that the site can no longer

support sufficient vegetation to protect soils from further losses. The planning area contains some erodible soils that are sensitive to management or catastrophic events.

Planning Question

- How will public lands be managed to protect and maintain soil productivity?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (1997).
- Approved BMPs.

Vegetation—Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds

Planning Issues. Invasive plant species and noxious weeds negatively impact indigenous plant communities, special status plants, wildlife habitat, and soils. The BLM is required by the Idaho State Noxious Weed Law to control noxious weeds listed on the State of Idaho noxious weed list. Successful management of these aggressive species requires the use of integrated weed management, which includes use of mechanical, chemical, and biological control agents, use of selected cultural practices, working cooperatively with landowners, and educating the public. Most human activity affects the introduction, establishment, and spread of noxious weeds and these effects must be considered in management actions. Recently introduced species can be eradicated with early detection and application of control measures; however, once well established, noxious weed infestations generally cannot be eradicated, but can only be managed for containment. While not on the noxious weed list, continued spread of cheatgrass within the planning area threatens to dramatically alter the function of most upland plant communities.

Planning Questions

- How will public lands be managed to reduce the invasion and spread of noxious weed species?
- How will public lands be managed to minimize the effects of well established noxious weed infestations?
- What management actions can be used to minimize the spread of cheatgrass?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States (2007).
- Protection of non-target and special status plant species during weed treatments.

- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (1997).
- Federal and state laws and executive orders requiring control of invasive species on federal land.
- Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species (1999).
- Cooperate with established Coordinated Weed Management Areas.
- Incorporation of weed management considerations into all natural resource management activities.

Riparian and Wetland Area Management

Planning Issues. Riparian and wetland zones are some of the most productive and intensely-used areas on the landscape. Inventory and monitoring data over the past 15 years shows that very few riparian habitats in the planning area are "nonfunctional" and many areas that formerly were nonfunctional have either reached or are making significant progress toward proper functioning condition. Livestock grazing, road construction, mining, timber harvest, and recreation are the primary activities that have affected these areas. While the riparian and wetland zones in the planning area cover less than 1 percent of the landscape, they are critically important for many natural resource functions. Healthy riparian and wetland communities have high plant and animal species diversity and structural stability; provide fish and wildlife habitat, soil stabilization, stream bank building, and filtration of surface runoff; help improve water quality, water storage, and aquifer recharge; and provide enhanced recreation and aesthetic values. Riparian and wetland areas in the planning area include large and small rivers, streams, wet meadows, lakes, reservoirs, potholes, ponds, seeps, and springs. These areas contain a variety of riparian community or habitat types including coniferous and deciduous tree types, willow and non-willow shrub types, and herbaceous types.

Planning Question

- How will public lands be managed to maintain or improve (restore) riparian and wetland habitats?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Executive Order 11990 for wetland preservation.
- Executive Order 12372 referring to the CWA non-point source management plan per Sec. 319 of the CWA.
- BLM Idaho Riparian Policy guidance.
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game requirements.
- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (1997).

- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment, September 1999.
- BMPs for water quality.
- Maintenance, improvement, and restoration of natural riparian functions to benefit species diversity, structural stability, water storage, groundwater recharge, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitats.

Upland Vegetation Management

Planning Issues. Many land use activities continue to affect the natural function and condition of upland vegetation communities. Livestock grazing, mining, rights-of-way, wildfire, roads, and OHV operation are the major examples. Structurally diverse and healthy upland plant communities provide habitat for wildlife, soil stabilization, increased infiltration of precipitation, and for moving clean water to adjacent streams. Threats to these values include invasion by noxious and invasive plant species, increased wildfire frequency, deteriorating forest health, improperly managed livestock grazing, and OHV use. Sagebrush-dependent wildlife species have specific habitat needs that have been widely impacted.

Planning Questions

- How will sagebrush steppe be managed to maintain or improve healthy upland plant communities?
- How will forest and woodland health be maintained or restored?
- How will old growth forests, if present, be managed?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003.
- President's Healthy Forests Initiative (August 2002) and National Fire Plan (2000).
- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (1997).
- Proposed Fire, Fuels, and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment and FEIS (2008).
- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment, September 1999.
- BLM Interim Guidance for sage grouse habitat management (BLM Instruction Memorandum IM-2005-024) and/or State of Idaho Guidance.
- Protect unique and critical habitats in consultation with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Special Status Species

Planning Issues. Special status species are plant and animal species listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened or endangered, under the State of Idaho's Special Status Species lists, and/or BLM's sensitive species list. The planning area supports habitat for a number of special status species, both plants and animals. Habitats for special status species are affected by roads, timber harvest, wildfire and wildfire suppression, livestock grazing, recreation activities, and invasion of non-native species. Fragmentation of land ownership increases the complexity of meaningful habitat protection.

Planning Question

- How will public lands be managed to promote recovery of listed species and prevent listing of sensitive species?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment, September 1999.
- A Framework for Incorporating the Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Component of the Interior Columbia Basin Strategy into the BLM and Forest Service Plan Revisions.
- Conservation Agreements and Strategy plans (e.g., Canada lynx, sage grouse).
- Aquatic conservation strategy components of the Inland Native Fish Strategy.
- Biological opinions and/or letters of concurrence from the USFWS.
- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (1997).
- Idaho BLM Planning Guidance for sage grouse.
- Conservation of Greater Sage Grouse in Idaho (2006).

Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Planning Issues. The planning area contains a diversity of habitats for a wide variety of fish and wildlife species. Habitat quality has been affected by roads, timber harvest, wildfire and wildfire suppression, livestock grazing, recreation activities, urbanization and invasion of non-native species. Fragmentation of land ownership increases the complexity of meaningful habitat protection. Maintaining fish and wildlife habitats requires retention of the range of diverse, healthy plant communities, reliable water sources, connectivity of habitat, and recognition of the unique needs of some species.

Planning Question

- How will public lands be managed to enhance fish and wildlife habitats?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment, September 1999.
- A Framework for Incorporating the Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Component of the Interior Columbia Basin Strategy into the BLM and Forest Service Plan Revisions.
- Preserving biodiversity, genetic integrity and high quality habitats.
- Recognition of the intrinsic and recreational values associated with native and non-native wildlife and fish species.
- Habitat needs in consultation with other land management and regulatory agencies.
- Limit introduction and spread of invasive species and noxious weeds.
- Recognition and protection of habitats for migratory bird species.

Cultural Resources

Planning Issues. The planning area contains many significant prehistoric and historic cultural resources, which provide a record of Native American and Euro-American use of public lands and associated natural resources. Approximately 20 percent of the planning area has been inventoried for cultural resources. This information is beneficial in protecting cultural resources from activities authorized by the BLM or being degraded by recreation activities, theft, or vandalism while also making them available for scientific, social-cultural, and other authorized uses. Protection of cultural resources includes the identification and evaluation of, monitoring, stabilization, data recovery, and interpretation.

Planning Question

- How will cultural resources, including TCPs, be protected and managed?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Federal laws requiring protection of cultural resources.
- Consultation with Tribal Governments and the State Historic Preservation Office.
- Protect, preserve, and enhance sites eligible or listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Native American Concerns and Treaty Rights

Planning Issues. Because of the proximity of the planning area to the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, there is a high probability of the existence of sacred sites, cultural landscapes, and traditional use areas. While some of these are known, there are others that have not been identified for protection, which will require inventory, protection, and

interpretation to meet trust responsibilities. The Fort Bridger Treaty confers special legal rights to the use of public lands by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. Effective consultation and coordination is the key to achieving management goals for both the Tribes and BLM.

Planning Questions

- How can treaty rights and federal trust responsibilities best be met?
- How can sacred sites, landscapes, TCPs, and significant tribal historical areas be protected?
- Are potential effects to trust resources and treaty rights adequately addressed?
- What plants and animals in the planning area are typically used for traditional use purposes?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Fort Bridger Treaty.
- Protection of cultural use areas in cooperation with Tribal Government.
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.
- National Historic Preservation Act, as amended.

Socioeconomic Effects of Public Land Management

Planning Issues. Most of the wide variety uses of public lands have effects on local economies. The traditional extractive industries such as livestock grazing, logging, and mining continue to use the public lands as a source of resources. Livestock grazing makes a considerable contribution to local rural economies. Forest health concerns with emphasis towards fuels management may increase the importance of extracting timber products from public lands which, in turn, create jobs. Demand for recreational opportunities is increasing competition with the traditional uses both for space on the public lands, and in the amount of revenue generated. The large population of the Wasatch Front area is also placing more demand on BLM-administered public lands for many types of recreation.

Planning Question

- How will public land management affect the social and economic resiliency and sustainability of local economies?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Dependence of local communities upon goods and services from public lands.
- Increasing demand for outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Allowance for social and economic diversification of local economies.

Visual Resource Management

Planning Issues. BLM is required to analyze impacts to scenic values from public land management actions and uses. The visual resource is managed by identifying visual resource values, establishing objectives for managing those values, and taking action to achieve the objectives. Conflicts with VRM values within the planning area are presented by increasing OHV use, rights-of-way, urban encroachment, range improvements, and gravel pit development.

Planning Question

- Are the current visual resource classes appropriate to protect scenic values?

Preliminary Planning Criterion

- Guidance described in BLM Manual Section 8400—Visual Resource Management.

Wildland Fire Management

Planning Issues. Wildfires occur within all plant communities in the planning area. The majority of these communities are sagebrush steppe, which has a historic fire-return interval of approximately 30 to 60 years. Fire suppression has led to unnatural accumulation of fuels, expansion of junipers into adjacent rangelands, and increased outbreak of insects and disease in forested areas. In addition, invasion by cheatgrass since the 1950s has decreased the fire return interval in some areas. These changes have altered fire regimes across the planning area by increasing the potential for large, severe fires and increased fire frequency. Native plant communities, especially those containing sagebrush, and the wildlife that depend upon them have been severely affected. Fire and fuels management is necessary to return fire's natural role into the ecosystem.

Planning Questions

- What should be the landscape-level fire management goals and objectives?
- What is the appropriate management response to naturally occurring wildland fires?
- When and where should wildland fire use or prescribed fire be an accepted action in meeting overall resource management objectives?
- How can fire suppression activities be managed to minimize the adverse effects to resources while providing public health and safety and protecting private property?
- How will fire and fuels management activities be addressed throughout the field office area, including within the wildland-urban interface?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Proposed Fire, Fuels, and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment and FEIS (2008).

- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment, September 1999.
- Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003.
- President's Healthy Forests Initiative (August 2002) and National Fire Plan (2000).
- BLM Idaho Strategy for National Fire Plan Implementation as outlined in "A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment - 10 Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan."

Cave and Karst Resources

Planning Issues. The planning area has several cave and karst formations that provide both educational and recreational opportunities as well as habitat for various species. Conflicts between recreational use and wildlife resources may exist. It is important to identify how these unique resources should be managed within Upper Snake FO to reduce conflicts. Significant cave resources within the planning area need to be identified.

Planning Questions

- How should cave resources be managed to reduce resource and use conflicts?
- Which cave resources require special designations (e.g. ACEC) to protect unique characteristics?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988.

Forest and Woodland Management

Planning Issues. The planning area contains approximately 49,880 acres of forests and woodlands and includes conifer stands dominated by Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine, aspen stands, and juniper. These areas provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, watershed protection, recreational and aesthetic values, and production of forest products. Fire suppression, plant succession, and recent prolonged drought conditions have changed the character of tree species composition and have increased stand densities in many forested areas. These changes have increased the risk of wildfire, forest insects, and disease epidemics and have created forest ecosystems that are less drought resistant. Encroachment of juniper into sagebrush steppe is causing a decline in forage and habitat loss for many wildlife species.

Planning Questions

- What areas are available and have the capacity for planned, sustained-yield timber harvest or special forest product harvest?

- Where should juniper and aspen stands be actively managed for improved plant community health?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- The Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003.
- President's Healthy Forests Initiative (2002) and National Fire Plan (2000).
- Eastern Idaho Sustained Yield Unit Timber Management Environmental Analysis Record (1978).
- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment, September 1999.
- BLM Manual 5400 - Sale of Forest Products (6/18/92).
- BLM Manual 5000-1 - Forest Management (Public Domain).
- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (1997).
- Public access needs, public demand for forest products, effects on local economies.

Livestock Grazing

Planning Issues. Livestock can be properly managed to reduce conflicts with other resource values and public land uses. However, improper livestock grazing can be detrimental to many important ecological functions such as water quality, soil stability, wildlife and fisheries habitat, and native plant communities. The Upper Snake FO currently authorizes livestock grazing on 369 allotments.

Planning Questions

- How should livestock grazing be managed along riparian areas?
- How should livestock grazing be managed to reduce user conflicts and meet standards for rangeland health?
- What public lands are or are not available to livestock grazing?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (1997).
- Importance of public land livestock grazing to local economies.
- Authorize use as provided for in the grazing regulations.
- Manage livestock grazing under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

Recreation Management

Planning Issues. Public lands within the planning area provide for a wide array of recreation opportunities within varied settings. Water-based forms of recreation such as boating and fishing are popular on the Henry's Fork and South Fork of the Snake River. The St. Anthony Sand Dunes is a very popular regional destination for motorized recreation. Use levels in both developed and undeveloped settings are increasing rapidly, accompanied by an increasing demand for commercially permitted activities. Increased use has elevated demand for facilities, user information, and access. There are currently two SRMAs in the planning area: the St. Anthony Sand Dunes SRMA and Snake River SRMA.

Planning Questions

- How will resources be managed to enhance recreation experiences and quality of life while reducing impacts to other resources?
- How will management of public lands affect the social and economic resiliency and sustainability of local economies?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Rapidly increasing demand for recreation opportunities and need to minimize effects to other resources.
- BLM's Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services and A Unified Strategy to Implement "BLM's Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services" Workplan.
- Unique management requirements of SRMAs.
- Ensuring proper maintenance of existing recreation facilities.
- Availability of law enforcement.
- FLPMA Sections 201 and 202.
- Recreation 2000.
- BLM Manual 8351, Wild and Scenic Rivers Policy.
- IM 2006-060, Incorporating Benefits-Based Management within Recreation and Visitor Services Program Policy Changes.

Travel Management

Planning Issues. Many tracts of public land within the planning area have no legal, or inadequate, public access. Population growth, rural and urban development, and increasing recreational activities have increased public desire and need for more access to public lands. If landowners are willing and funding is available, the BLM can negotiate and purchase easements for public access.

A goal of BLM's Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services is to "improve access to appropriate recreation opportunities on ... managed or partnered lands and waters." Under this goal, a primary objective is to "address comprehensive travel management through the land-use planning process and through statutorily required planning efforts to improve access and recreation opportunities and experiences."

OHV and OSV use has grown rapidly in recent years. The BLM has initiated new strategies to provide a foundation for the development of a comprehensive travel management program that includes provisions for limits on motorized recreation in some areas and for non-motorized recreation.

Planning Questions

- Where is public access to public lands needed?
- Where are the appropriate areas to meet increased OHV/OSV demand or use?
- How will OHV/OSV use on public lands be managed to protect resources, reduce user conflicts, protect public safety, and provide quality recreation opportunities for all users of the public lands?
- Should single use designations be made as a part of resolving visitor use conflicts?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- FLPMA Section 205.
- Executive Orders 11644 and 11989.
- Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services, BLM Workplan Fiscal Years 2003-2007.
- Bureau of Land Management National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use (2001).
- Idaho BLM Off-Highway Vehicle Travel and Access Management Strategy (2005).
- National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan (2002).
- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment, September 1999.

Land Tenure Adjustment

Planning Issues. Land tenure adjustments can improve land management efficiency through consolidation of ownership. In addition, the public interest can be served through acquisition of lands containing values of high public interest or to improve legal access. The planning area contains many parcels of small acreages and presents opportunities for acquiring other lands containing values desirable for public ownership.

Planning Questions

- What criteria should be used to identify lands appropriate for acquisition, retention, and disposal?
- What resource values should remain in public ownership regardless of parcel size?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act of 2000.
- FLPMA Sections 203 and 206.
- The need to retain and acquire access to public lands and resources.
- Acquisition of resources valuable for public ownership.
- Maintaining or enhancing local social and economic values.
- Improve management efficiency where possible.

Rights-of-Way

Planning Issues. The planning area contains utility, transportation, and communication rights-of-way. There has also been recent increased interest in development of wind energy resources. The locations of some of these sites may not be suitable for expansion into utility corridors, communication sites, and/or wind energy sites. It is important to identify or delineate those public lands suitable for rights-of-way to effectively manage the public lands and to minimize the impacts from the proliferation of separate rights-of-way.

Planning Questions

- What lands will be available for right-of-way corridors and wind energy development?
- What limitations should be placed on further development within existing or new utility, transportation, and communication rights-of-way?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- FLPMA Section 503.
- The 1992 Western Regional Corridor Study.
- Minimize proliferation of separate rights-of-way by utilize existing/common rights-of-way to the extent possible.
- CWA, Sections 401, 402 and 404.
- I-15 Development Corridor.
- Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Wind Energy Development on BLM-Administered Lands in the Western United States (2005) and associated land use plan amendments.

Minerals and Energy Management and Development

Planning Issues. The planning area has potential for the discovery of locatable minerals, geothermal energy, leasable minerals, and salable minerals. Mineral and energy development can affect a variety of other resources such as visual quality, fish and wildlife habitat, forage availability, and soil stability. These effects can be reduced through carefully developed mitigations such as reclamation, containment of hazardous materials, and avoidance areas.

Abandoned mine tunnels and shafts may present potential public safety hazards while, at the same time, serve as important habitat for wildlife, for example, bats.

Planning Questions

- How will mineral and energy authorizations and activities be managed to provide for exploration and development while protecting natural resources?
- How should abandoned mine structures be managed to protect public safety while providing for wildlife habitat and historic values?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- Mining and Mineral Policy Act (1970)
- National Minerals & Minerals Policy Research & Development Act (1980).
- Make public lands available for the orderly and efficient development of energy and mineral resources.
- Develop a Reasonably Foreseeable Development scenario for oil, gas, and geothermal production.
- Identify areas that are to be withdrawn to protect non-mineral resource values.
- Identify areas where special stipulations or requirements are necessary to minimize effects of development.
- Identify abandoned mine lands, including those that may be important for wildlife habitat.

Administrative Designations

Planning Issues. The planning area contains existing and potential areas requiring administrative designations for protection of unique resource values. These include research natural areas RNAs, ACECs, Historic Trails, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. These special designations provide specific management direction designed to protect the resource or unique characteristics for which the area was designated. There may be resources that are best protected by additional designations, and some designations may no longer be needed. Existing WSAs will remain unchanged by the RMP process.

Planning Question

- What areas are suitable or require administrative designations to protect unique resource values?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- FLPMA Sections 102, 201, and 202.
- BLM manual 8351, Wild and Scenic River Policy.
- Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review, BLM Handbook 8550-1.

SPECIAL TERMS USED

Area of Critical Environmental Concern—BLM regulations define an ACEC as an area "within public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards."

Desired Future Condition—The condition of rangeland resources on a landscape scale that meets management objectives. It is based on ecological, social, and economic considerations during the land planning process. It is usually expressed as ecological status or management status of vegetation (species composition, habitat diversity, and age and size class of species) and desired soil qualities (soil cover, erosion, and compaction).

Proper Functioning Condition—This term is used both as a monitoring method and as a condition description. Riparian wetlands function properly when adequate vegetation, landform, or large woody debris is present to dissipate stream energy associated with high water flows. The functioning condition of these areas is influenced by geomorphic features, soil, water, and vegetation. Nonfunctional riparian areas are clearly not providing adequate vegetation, landform, or woody debris to dissipate stream energy and are not reducing erosion or improving water quality.

Research Natural Area (RNA)—An RNA is a type of ACEC that is assigned through the ACEC designation process. RNAs may include acreage within BLM-administered public lands established and managed to protect ecological processes, conserve the biological diversity, and provide opportunities for observational activities associated with research and education.

Travel Designations

Closed Area Designation—An area where OHV use is prohibited. Use may be allowed for certain reasons; however, such use shall be made only with the approval of the authorized officer.

Limited Area Designation—An area restricted at certain times, in certain areas, and/or to certain vehicular use. The restrictions may be of any type.

Open Area Designation—Any area where all types of vehicle use are permitted at all times in the area subject to the operating regulations and vehicle standards set forth in 43 Code of Federal Regulations 8341 and 8342.

HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED/WE NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE

The planning process will not be complete without your involvement. Your knowledge and concern for these lands complements our understanding and helps us to establish goals and objectives for the future management of these resources and resource uses.

Please review the identified need for change items for each resource and resource use provided in this information package. Where you have experience with a particular resource or resource use, or where you would be directly affected by an identified change in direction or new direction, please describe your concerns for us in a letter or e-mail. Also, please include any specific information you may have to support this concern.

We also ask that you review the Planning Considerations section (e.g., planning criteria) and provide comment as to how these can be improved or strengthened.

Your written comments will help the RMP team to incorporate your concerns and identify issues to be addressed during this planning effort. We look forward to your participation at the upcoming scheduled public meetings.

Your written comments may be e-mailed to upper_snake_rmp@blm.gov or sent directly to:

Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Upper Snake RMP Planning Team
1405 Hollipark
Idaho Falls, ID 83401

An Internet web site, provided below, is available to provide you with the latest information regarding the Upper Snake RMP planning effort.

http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/upper_snake/Planning/upper_snake_rmp.html

REMINDER: Please, to consider your comments during the alternative development process, we must receive your comments no later than **June 27, 2008**.

To keep you informed, we can mail you materials similar to this briefing package throughout the planning effort. However, if you wish to remain on the mailing list, you must inform us in writing or attend one of the public meetings.

If we do not receive written comments from you OR a written request to stay on the mailing list OR if you do not attend one of the scheduled public meetings, your name will be removed and you will not receive any additional information by mail.

CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE

Yes! I can't make any of the public meetings but please keep me on the mailing list!

My Name is: _____

My Street Address is: _____

My City, State, and Zip Code are: _____

Mail to:

Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Upper Snake RMP Planning Team
1405 Hollipark
Idaho Falls, ID 83401